

Legion of Honor Medal Award to Fernald Shaw, Feb. 19, 2015

Presented by Jack Cowan – Honorary Consul of France for Washington State

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's a great pleasure and honor for me to be in the presence of a national hero today and to award him the highest-ranking order and decoration of France. I would like first to speak about recognition. Recognition of the brave American soldiers who arrived in June 1944 in a foreign land, on beaches they had never seen before, in order to free the world from the Nazi domination. We celebrate today the unforgettable sacrifice that you, Mr Fernald Shaw, and your brothers-in-arms did more than 70 years ago to raise the flag of Freedom.

Please let me now remind you of a few words inscribed in the National World War II Memorial in Washington DC. "They have given their sons to the military services. They have stoked the furnaces and hurried the factory wheels. They have made the planes and welded the tanks, riveted the ships and rolled the shells. We honor those twentieth century Americans who took up the struggle during the Second World War and made the sacrifices to perpetuate the gift our forefathers entrusted to us: a nation conceived in Liberty and Justice."



*Jack Cowan (Honorary Consul) at left;
Fernald Shaw at right.*

Fernald Shaw: You were born on November 1st 1924, in South Paris, Maine. On May 5, 1943, you were inducted into the United States Army, at Ft Devens Mass., and assigned to Service Battery 12th Field Artillery Battalion. You also fought in battles and campaigns in Northern France, Normandy and Brest. After basic training at Fort Bragg, N Carolina, you left from Camp Shanks N.Y., arriving in Liverpool, England, November 2nd 1943. You participated in the invasion of France at Omaha Beach, in Normandy. You were deployed to Brest and then into Northern France; from there to Belgium during the Battle of the Bulge. And then to Germany and Alsen in Czechia where you met the Russian Forces.

During the war you served as a Supply Clerk-truck driver. For your bravery and dedication in battle, you were awarded:

- ETO 5 Battle Stars
- European-African-Middle Eastern (EAME) Campaign Medal
- The Good conduct medal
- Victory Medal-Occupation Rhineland

You were honorably discharged from the U.S. Army on October 22, 1945 at Camp Swift, Texas and spent your career as a Papermaker at Mechanic Falls Paper Mill for 38 years and at an Electric Company afterwards. You married Hilda in 1946. After Hilda's death, you married Helen in 1971. You moved to Washington State in 2006 to be closer to your son Robert and family, then you moved to Columbia Ridge Senior Living. Your activity in community services included the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Vets Hospitals and helping the needy. You also have hobbies: polishing and cuttings gems, woodwork, gardening.

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Dear Fernald Shaw

Napoleon Bonaparte created the Legion of Honor in 1802 to reward the great men who served the nation. Through your bravery, your dedication, your supreme selflessness, your fight for human conscience and peace and your decisive contribution to the liberation of France and Europe, you are today one of these great men of the history of France. We, the French people, know exactly what we owe to the American people, to the American military, and to you personally.

I am very honored today to celebrate the men and women of a generation who defied every danger. As our current American president said for the 70th Anniversary of D-day; "What more powerful manifestation of America's commitment to human freedom than the sight of wave after wave of young men boarding those boats to liberate people they'd never met? "

To liberty; to equality; to freedom; to the inherent dignity of every human being: that claim is written in blood on these beaches, and it will endure forever.

I want to ensure you, Fernald Shaw, that the flame of remembrance which the French people feed from generation to generation will not be extinguished, I mean never. The French people keep in mind, throughout their lives, the faces of their saviors to remember that they live in freedom.

Fernald Shaw, you are a hero, serving your country you helped to liberate France. 70 years later, on behalf of the nation of France, I pay you tribute and express to you our undying gratitude.

Before concluding this tribute in French, please allow me to quote the former French President, while he was celebrating the 65th anniversary of D-day.

"You are the symbol of America which we love. America which defends the highest spiritual values and morals. America which fights for Freedom, Democracy and Human Rights. Open, tolerant, generous America."

Au nom du Président de la République et en vertu des pouvoirs qui nous sont conférés, nous vous faisons chevalier dans l'ordre national de la Légion d'Honneur.



At left, Mr. Shaw with his granddaughter and great-granddaughter. At right, Shaw with Jack Cowan and VFW representative. Photos by Linda Witt.

