

Legion of Honor Awarded to Local Resident

Command Sgt. Maj. (ret) Daniel R. Soria didn't know that on the night he jumped out of an airplane during a onslaught of anti-aircraft fire that he would someday be given France's highest award, "Légion d'honneur" or Legion of Honor.

He and many of his fellow Soldiers felt they were just doing their duty.

Tom Brokaw described Soria's generation in his book "The Greatest Generation" by saying "Millions of men and women were involved in this tumultuous journey through adversity and achievement, despair and triumph. Certainly there were those who failed to measure up, but taken as a whole this generation did have a "rendezvous with destiny" that went well beyond the outsized expectations of President Roosevelt when he first issued that call to duty..."

At 12: 01 a.m. June 6, 1944 Soria's "rendezvous with destiny" brought him to the 101st Airborne, jumping into darkness and emerging into the light on Nov 20, 2011, when France proclaimed their gratitude for his contribution in the fight to liberate France.

Consul General of France, Romain Sermon, who personally presented the medal said, "It's really difficult for me if not impossible to imagine how much courage and bravery it must have required to jump over Normandy. To land in France at that time and save, as you did, France and Europe from hell. ...your courage and your Bravery are precisely the reasons why the President of the French Republic Nicolas Sarkozy has decided to award you the highest, *the highest*, French recognition."

Soria said after receiving the medal "I can't tell you how much I appreciate this day. I thank the French for their generosity...and especially ninety seven of my buddies who did not come back... so I'm accepting this for them also."



Also present to express appreciation for Soria's service was Major General Johnson, representing The Adjutant General for the California National Guard and the 40th Division. He gave Soria a 40th Division Sunburst coin to commend him for his service in the California National Guard and to commemorate his special day.

The Camp Parks Garrison Commander, Lt. Col. David James and Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick McKie, who hosted the event, also gave small tokens of their appreciation and thanked Soria for his service.

The event concluded with Soria giving a short account of the day he jumped into Normandy, his capture by the Nazi's and his subsequent escape almost one year later.



Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel R. Soria (right) is officially awarded the Legion of Honor for the participation in the liberation of France by the French Consul General, Romain Sermon. The event was located at the Camp Parks Chapel and hosted by the Camp Parks Garrison command



What is the *Légion d'honneur*?

The Legion of Honor, or *Légion d'honneur*, is France's highest order, or decoration, that recognizes military and civilians alike for their bravery or honorable service to the country. On 19 May 1802, Napoleon Bonaparte established the Legion of Honor as a way to distinguish civilians and soldiers in a way that had nothing to do with chivalry. The French Revolution and its dislike for all that was royal destroyed the previous orders of the kingdom. Where previously only nobility and officers of militaries could hope to achieve such a designation, the Legion of Honor recognized anyone who exhibited merit.



Notable Americans who received the Legion of Honor

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, LTG. James M. Gavin, Gen. David Petraeus, Audie Murphy, Walt Disney, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Jerry Lewis, Miles Davis, Admiral Mike Mullen, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Barbra Streisand, Clint Eastwood, Wynton Marsalis, Sgt. Lee M. Brown (2009), (US), World War II U. S. Army 5th Ranger Battalion "for his valor on Omaha Beach during the D-Day landing", James T. Conway (2009), (US), General, United States Marine Corps Commandant, Jacob Noah Cutler (2009), (US), Army veteran of World War II - V Corps Patton's 3rd. Army; for valor on Omaha Beach during the D-Day landings., Raymond Farrell (2009), (US), Highly decorated World War II & Korean War Veteran John Harry Kellers (2009), (US), Navy veteran of World War II- LCT 539- for valor on Omaha Beach during the D-Day landings

D-Day, A personal account.

I jumped into Normandy at 1201 hrs on 06 June 1944 while we were encountering much anti-aircraft fire. This fire disrupted our flight formation and our landing plans. I was 21 kilometers from my drop-zone which was near St. Mere Eglise.

For four days it was a mess - we tried to retrieve our 75 howitzer guns - to my knowledge, we never fired our guns. We couldn't find them so we became Infantry. As I said, it was a mess!

On the fourth day (10 June 1944) I was sent out on the right flank to establish a perimeter defense. Figley (now dead) and I went

over the hedgerow and got captured. I had no idea the Krauts were there. Figley got wounded five times - I didn't get a wound. Lucky?

For an estimated 42 days I was in France at three different POW camps - first STARVATION HILL - no news or food; second was Alecon for two weeks and third was Chartres for seven days. Slipped out to Germany in box cars for four days - we were strafed and bombed by our troops—friendly fire! Spent the remainder of time in in Stalag XIIA - Limberg on the River Lahn,

Stalag IVB - Muehlberg on the River Elbe; IIIB - Fuerstenberg on the River Oder and IIIA - Luckenwalde in Germany.

Battles and Campaigns: Normandy to France, Rhineland, Central Europe

Escaped 15 May 1945 - home on 03 June 1945.

Discharged 14 September 1945.

For more photos of the award presentation click here

