



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 11, 2021

FAYETTE COUNTY VETERAN 'KNIGHTED' BY FRANCE FOR WWII SERVICE ***97-year-old William Rostich of Footedale Has Much to Celebrate This Veterans Day***

Uniontown, PA – William Rostich of Footedale was recently awarded France's highest military and civilian order of merit for his service during World War II, an honor he will cherish this Veterans Day.

Known as the French Legion of Honour Medal, the order of merit is awarded at increasing degrees. The French government officially named Rostich a knight, or "Chevalier."

Already a highly decorated veteran, Rostich received the medal via mail earlier this year and was formally recognized during a flag ceremony outside the Uniontown Mall in June. The Honorary Consul of France, Monsieur Jean-Dominique Le Garrec presented Rostich, traveling all the way from France to bestow the honor.

Rostich, who celebrated his 97th birthday in July, said the medal means he's finally being recognized for what he went through during the invasion of Normandy in June 1944.

"It was a great surprise to be honored by the French government after all of these years and to receive such a high award for helping the French people," he said.

Rostich enlisted in the U.S. Navy at age 18, after graduating from Uniontown High School. As part of the Seabees 111th U.S. Naval Construction Battalion, he soon found himself on a supply boat during the Battle of Normandy; and spent several months fighting as part of the Allied Forces on Omaha Beach.

Upon receiving the rank of Carpenter's Mate Second Class, he was honorably discharged after nearly three years of service. After the war, he worked as a coal miner until his retirement in 1986.

According to his Footedale neighbor, Nikki Fabrycki, Rostich has always been "very community-minded" and loves educating younger generations about World War II and his military service.

"'Bill' is a longtime family friend. He's been a part of my family's lives for three generations now. He's been like a grandfather to my kids and loves us unconditionally, as if we were his own," Fabrycki said. "He's always very caring and really sets an example for my boys. They know all about him being in the Seabees and the Construction Unit; his time in the Philippines and at Normandy. They also know he's very patriotic, and he tries to instill that in them by sharing his stories."

Fabrycki said she and her entire family, along with countless United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) members and other friends attended his recognition ceremony to show their continued support.

"We're very proud. Things like this touch him so much, and we want him to be happy. When you're an older person living on your own, it gets hard. He talks about his experiences over and over. He keeps those memories with him all the time," she said. "Anything that is done for him is never left

unrecognized. Things like this definitely keep him going. He loves Footedale, and he loves Fayette County, and we're just so proud of everything he's done."

Since the 1940s, Rostich has returned to Normandy three times to tour what are now historic memorial sites and reflect on his years of service. He said receiving the French Legion of Honour Medal makes him feel proud for serving his country at such a young age, when it needed him the most; and to now be part of the "greatest generation of World War II veterans."

"I hope the next generation feels the pride, the joys, and the great honor of serving this wonderful country," Rostich said. "To be ready when your country needs you and to serve to the best of your abilities - that will stay with you forever."

To learn more about the French Legion of Honour, visit www.legiondhonneur.fr/en.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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This communication is part of the Fayette County PR Initiative, which is funded through the Fayette County Local Share Account (LSA) and Hotel Tax Grants in cooperation with the Fayette County Board of Commissioners, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, The Redevelopment Authority of the County of Fayette, The Redstone Foundation and other partners. This funding has been designated for the continued promotion and marketing of Fayette County, PA.

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