



For Immediate Release

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Ohio World War II Veterans Awarded French Legion of Honor

COLUMBUS – Two Ohio veterans who helped liberate France during World War II were awarded that country’s Knight of the Legion of Honor by Governor John Kasich in a Statehouse ceremony Monday.

Bob Garrett, 87, of Marietta, and Charles Spray, 87, were presented the medals in front of family, friends and a class of students from Columbus Centennial High School. The ceremony was hosted by Ohio Department of Veterans Services Director Tom Moe. The Republic of France was represented by Anne Cappel, Honorary Consul General for Southern Ohio, who presented a history of the award.

The Legion of Honor was created by Napoleon, and is presented to “...those who have achieved remarkable deeds for France.”

Both veterans expressed deep gratitude to France, and remembered the comrades they fought with.

“I’m not a hero, but I served with a company of heroes, and one of them is here today,” Mr. Garrett said, referring to Mr. Spray.

“I feel very humbled. I think an award should be given to those who didn’t come home,” Mr. Spray said.

Mr. Garrett was a rifleman in Company D, 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry of the 101st Airborne Division in Normandy and was wounded in June 1944. He also participated in the Rhineland, Ardennes and Central Europe campaigns and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with one oak leaf cluster and the Purple Heart Medal with three oak leaf clusters, among other decorations.

Mr. Spray was a Private First Class who served in Company C, 18th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Infantry Division. He participated in the Normandy and Northern France campaigns, and was wounded in action in July 1944 at St. Gilles, France. His military awards include the Bronze Star Medal and the Purple Heart Medal, among other decorations.

In letters to both veterans, the Consul General de France Jean Baptiste Main de Boissiere wrote, “The French government pays tribute to the soldiers who did so much for France and Western Europe. More than 60 years ago, you gave your youth to France and the French people. Many of your fellow soldiers did not return, but they remain in our hearts.

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“Thanks to the courage of these soldiers, to our American friends and allies, France has been living in peace for six decades. They saved us and we will never forget. I want you to know that for us, the French people, they are heroes. Gratitude and remembrance are forever in our souls.”

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