

High honor awarded to Hall of Honor family

Cong. Bill Enyart presented the Presidential Unit Citation to son of World War II internment camp liberator

BY EMILY ROTH
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

MT. VERNON — On Wednesday United States Cong. Bill Enyart presented the Presidential Unit Citation to Mt. Vernon resident Gary Chesney, son of the late Technical Sargent Walter Chesney, at the Jefferson County Hall of Hon-

or, located inside the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport.

According to an airport press release, Technical Sgt. Chesney, a member of the Army's 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion, was part of a team that liberated over 2,000 allied prisoners of war in the Philippines during World War II. The liberation of the Los Banos

Internment Camp occurred 25 miles behind enemy lines.

In late 2013 Gary Chesney presented documents and photos of his father to the Jefferson County Hall of Honor to have an individually constructed Tribute created and placed on display. During his research, volunteer graphic artist Cliff Christensen discovered the Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to the 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion in July of 2011 for the Los Banos Raid. Because Sgt. Chesney passed away in 1989, the family did not know that their

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loved one was eligible for the award.

Gary Chesney, a Vietnam veteran, accepted the award on behalf of his father. "My father seldom spoke about his service," said Chesney, "If he was here today, I am sure he would have said that it was our duty, as so many veterans do."

The Army's announcement reads: "For outstanding performance of duty in action at Luzon, Philippine Islands, on 23 Feb 1945. ... The 672nd Amphibian Tractor Battalion demonstrated exceptional courage, resourcefulness and determination in skillfully undertaking a coordinated thrust 25 miles behind enemy lines, which made possible the liberation of 2,147 Allied civilians and prisoners of war

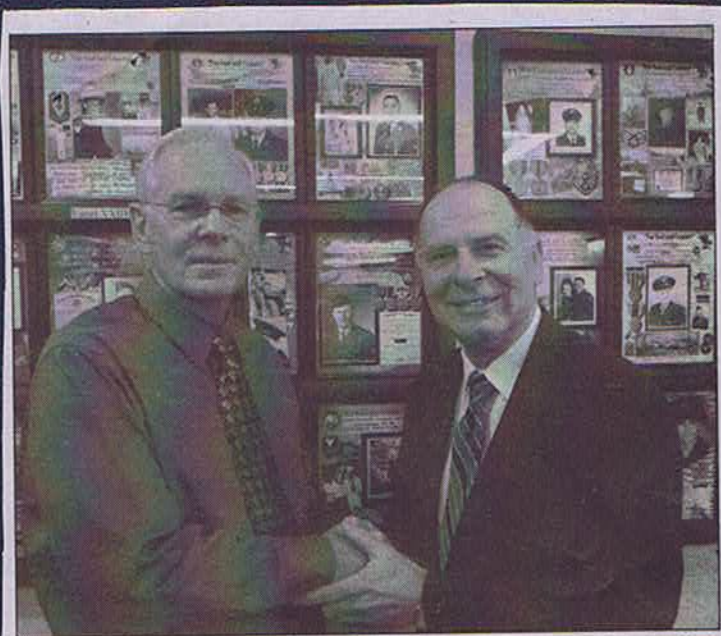
interned at Los Banos Internment Camp, Los Banos."

The Jefferson County Hall of Honor is a permanent memorial dedicated to area veterans on display in the Mt. Vernon airport.

"As a veteran myself, I am humbled to be able to present Sgt. Chesney's family with the Presidential Unit Citation, a true honor for anyone serving in our military," said Enyart. "The designation of this honor shows how courageous and fearless the 672nd Battalion was that day in the Philippines."

Several graphic artists composed tributes for the Hall of Honor and Christensen, "was the volunteer that took on the project of doing the tributes for Gary and his other relatives," explained Chris Collins, airport director. "Gary brought three different packets for us to do. Cliff did the research and the tribute for Walter."

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Submitted Photo

HIGH HONOR — On Wednesday, Congressman Bill Enyart, **RIGHT**, presented the Presidential Unit Citation to Mt. Vernon resident Gary Chesney, son of Technical Sgt. Walter Chesney, a member of the Army's 672nd Amphibious Tractor Battalion that liberated prisoners of war in World War II.

4-26-14