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IU HESA Alum Awarded Silver Star

The following is the written Silver Star presentation for Dr. Louis C. Stamatakos by U.S. Senator, Carol Levin, Michigan Capitol Building.



Louis C. Stamatakos

On Wednesday, February 17, 2010, U.S. Senator Carl Levin (D-Michigan) presented the Silver Star for extraordinary heroism in combat against the enemy to Dr. Louis C. Stamatakos, 84, a resident of Okemos, Michigan, for his actions nearly 65 years ago during World War II. The medal was presented in Lansing, Michigan at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in the Speakers' Library, Room 252 of the State Capitol. The Silver Star is one of the Army's highest honors.

On February 28, 1945, Stamatakos, then 19, was flying his 23rd mission with the 8th Air Force as a tail gunner in a B-17 bomber. The objective of the mission was to destroy the railroad marshaling yards in Kassel, deep in Nazi Germany. As the bombs dropped, two of the 250 pound bombs got hung up in the bomb bay when the bomb shackles failed to release. One bomb was swinging freely by a shackle ring. The pilot asked Stamatakos to "take a look" at the situation. Stamatakos crawled forward from the tail through the frigid air rushing into the plane from the open bomb bay doors, and stood up in the waist of the plane.

Seeing the swinging bomb, Stamatakos decided to dislodge it. To maximize his mobility, he removed his chest parachute and then donned a portable

oxygen bottle, grabbed a fire axe, jumped with one foot onto the catwalk (a narrow, metal walkway between the two bomb bay doors) and launched his other foot toward the ribs of the plane's fuselage, straddling the open bomb bay as Germany passed by 25,000 feet below. Stamatakos swung the axe repeatedly in an attempt to dislodge the freely swinging bomb. During this time, Stamatakos saw that the propeller vane in the nose of the bomb had spun off, the arming wire was hanging from the shackle and the bomb was live. The bomb was swinging back and forth almost touching the inside of the plane. If the bomb hit any part of the plane, the plane and the crew would be lost.

"If the bomb hit any part of the plane, the plane and the crew would be lost."

By now, Stamatakos' oxygen was running low. He extracted himself from his position, replaced the oxygen bottle, and, for a second time, leaped onto the catwalk, straddling the open bomb bay. After several attempts, he was able to strike the axe against the shackle ring that had hung up the bomb and the bomb dropped nose first out the bomb bay doors. With more effort, he swung the axe and cut through the shackle rings of the second bomb, and it too, cleared the aircraft without harm.

Stamatakos' actions recently came to light when he wrote a private autobiography for his sons about the war. Years after the war, Stamatakos learned from a former crew member, radio operator Saul Minkoff (Col., U.S.A.F., Ret.), that, after the mission over Kassel, the crew had agreed that Stamatakos should be nominated for the Silver Star for his actions on the mission, but nobody knew whether Stamatakos had been nominated or what came of it. In 2009, Stamatakos' sons discussed the matter with Col. Minkoff and one of the other known survivors of the crew, navigator Richard Rainoldi (Col., U.S.A.F., Ret.).

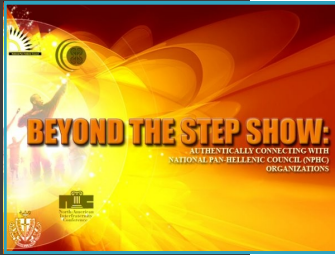
Col. Rainoldi nominated Stamatakos for the Silver Star. Stamatakos was unaware that he had been nominated. On Christmas Eve, 2009, a package from the U.S. Department of the Army arrived at Stamatakos' home and Stamatakos learned that he had been awarded the Silver Star.

Stamatakos was raised in Dayton, Ohio, and is one of four children of immigrant parents. In 1943, he volunteered for the Army Air Corps, flew 31 missions over Europe, and is credited with one aircraft kill. Stamatakos' other medals include the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, the Good Conduct Medal, the European Theatre of Operations Medal with three Battle Stars, the American Theatre of Operations medal, the Victory Medal, the Presidential Medal with an Oak Leaf Cluster, the Sharp Shooter Badge, and Gunner Wings.

"Stamatakos holds three degrees from Indiana University..."

Stamatakos holds three degrees from Indiana University, including a doctorate, served for 17 years as a student affairs administrator and was a Professor at Michigan State University for 25 years. He retired in 1992 as Professor Emeritus of Higher Education Administration. Stamatakos lives in Okemos, Michigan with his wife, Bess, a retired MSU Humanities Professor. They have three sons, Philip, Theodore & Timothy, and seven grandchildren.

Personal Successes



Presentations

Derrick Tillman-Kelly
Presented a session at AFLV/NBGLC in St. Louis, Missouri on February 13, 2010. The presentation was called "Beyond the Step Show," and was about how to connect with National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organizations on college campuses.

Conferences

Clayton Slaughter
Hosted the Indiana Commission for Higher Education Student Leaders Conference at IUPUI on February 5, 2010. The Conference was entitled "Using Student Services to Recruit, Retain, and Graduate Students".

Awards

Don Hossler
Was awarded for his distinguished service on February 21, 2010 from the Midwest Region of the College Board.

Acknowledgements

Don Hossler



The National Student Clearinghouse has appointed Indiana University School of Education Professor Donald Hossler as executive director of the

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (NSCRC).

The NSCRC is the non-profit organization that maintains a comprehensive registry of higher education student data. Hossler will remain on the faculty at IU, splitting his time as he continues to teach graduate classes and conduct research. His appointment starts February 8.

Joliana Yee

Will be going on an alternative spring break trip to Biloxi, Mississippi with Y'ALL (Youth Advocating Leadership & Learning), www.yallrelief.org as their Graduate Advisor.