



*Always Ready  
Always There*

# The Gem State Guardian

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## Honoring a Member of the Greatest Generation

From the Office of Congressman Raúl R. Labrador

(Lewiston) – Sixteen million Americans served in World War II, but fewer than 700,000 remain with us. This week, I had the high honor of thanking one of them, Corporal Gordon Ashcraft.

Several months ago, my office was working to help Ashcraft, 95, receive additional home-care services from the Veterans Administration. My Lewiston-based aide, Scott Carlton, learned that Ashcraft lost the medals he'd earned during his two years on the front lines in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

At a ceremony at the Lewiston Armory on March 29, Ashcraft said he'd given up on ever seeing them again. "I'm just flabbergasted," he said. "It's just overwhelming, really. I can't believe it happened."

Gen. Gary Saylor, commanding general of the Idaho National Guard, presented seven medals to Ashcraft, saying, "I've been involved in a lot of presentations in my



role as adjutant general, but never have I had the honor or the privilege of presenting medals to World War II veteran."

Ashcraft smiled as Saylor spoke. When handed a handmade box containing the medals, Ashcraft offered his thanks and said, "This floors me."

Ashcraft said he loved serving during wartime, even when bombs fell and bullets flew. As a member of the 15<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, he was among America's best-trained and best-led soldiers. Gen. Lucien Truscott, Jr., commanded the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. His men were famed for the "Truscott Trot," marching at 4 miles per hour, far faster than the standard 2.5 mph. Their swift advance in July and August 1943 were a key turning point in the war.

"I always figured the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division was just as good as the Marines were!" Ashcraft said, winning laughter and applause from the crowd.

He was especially happy with the European-African-Middle Eastern campaign medal with three campaign stars, representing fighting in French Morocco and Tunisia, Sicily, and the Italian mainland. That medal was omitted when he was first decorated, but was included when the Army researched his record. "We put three campaign streamers on the regimental flag," Ashcraft recalled. "That was the most beautiful flag in the world."

As Ashcraft accepted congratulations following the ceremony, he removed his hat to salute Gen. Saylor and other officers.



Above: Gordon Ashcraft, center, smiles as his achievements during WWII are read aloud to a crowd gathered in his honor March 29, at a ceremony in Lewiston, Idaho. Below: Congressman Raul Labrador presents the American Flag to Ashcraft, as a show of appreciation for duty and sacrifice. Ashcraft served honorably in the Battle of Fedela, French Morocco as well as the Tunisia Campaign, the Sicily Campaign and the Italian Campaign Idaho National Guard. Photos by Maj. Chris Borders

On his hat was pinned a button peculiar to the 15<sup>th</sup> Regiment, reading, "CAN DO."

"Can do," Ashcraft said. "And we did do, believe me."

During my five years in Congress, my office has helped secure medals for 20 other veterans. I love the ceremonies and seeing veterans get together to lift each other up. Most importantly, I am grateful for their sacrifice. My heartfelt thanks go out to Corporal Ashcraft and millions like him to whom we owe our freedoms.

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