



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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By Magen James

Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition

## **Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Recognizes Alaska Territorial Guard Member**

**Anchorage, Alaska** — Alaska's Office of Veterans Affairs receives many walk-ins from service members, veterans, their families and the general public inquiring about benefits and anything to do with veteran services. They received a special walk-in last Friday when Private Tommy Heckman, his wife, Martina, and their daughter, Irene, stopped by the office in East Anchorage.

Pvt. Heckman served in the Alaska Territorial Guard from 1942 to 1947 in Pilot Station as a scout. As a 12-year old child, Heckman monitored the airways of Pilot Station for Japanese incendiary balloons, scouted the coast and monitored for Japanese ships, in addition to military ancillary training.

During a routine visit to Anchorage, his family was referred to the VA division of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs from the Alaska Vet Center because he mentioned in passing that he was a member of the ATG. As a result, Heckman was awarded the Alaska Territorial Guard Service Medal and the Alaska Veterans Honor Medal. He was also presented with the Alaska Distinguished Veterans Honor Coin. Martina received the Alaska Veterans' Spouse Coin for her commitment to her husband and country.

July 20 marks the first time Heckman filed his first claim for benefits with the State of Alaska Office of Veterans Affairs, as he was previously unaware that he was eligible for benefits.

In 2000, ATG members were granted US veteran status acknowledging the contribution of the Native Alaskans who bravely served our country during WWII. The ATG Task Force was assembled and has been searching for ATG members in order to provide them with honorable service records, including an honorable discharge.

The task force is committed to finding and assisting these veterans, their families, dependents and survivors in receiving all the benefits and rewards entitled to them. The Office of Veterans Affairs' goal is to locate 100 percent of the ATG members, continue correcting oversights of the past, and allow future generations access to their ancestors' service records. For more information, please contact Magen James, Executive Director, Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition at [Magen.james2@alaska.gov](mailto:Magen.james2@alaska.gov), 907-334-0873.

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### **PHOTOS**

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.

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From the left, Verdie Bowen, Director, Alaska Military and Veterans Affairs, Amy Arsenault, Program Technician, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Tony Nannaga, PVT Tommy Heckman, Martina Heckman and Irene Heckman recognize PVT Heckman's Alaska Territorial Guard service during a July 20 ceremony. (Photo by Magen James, Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.)



Verdie Bowen, Director, Alaska Military and Veterans Affairs, presents Martina Heckman with Alaska Veterans' Spouse's Coin during a July 20 ceremony. (Photo by Magen James, Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.)



Verdie Bowen, Director, Alaska Military and Veterans Affairs, presents PVT Tommy Heckman with the Alaska Distinguished Veterans Honor Coin during a July 20 ceremony. (Photo by Magen James, Alaska Forget Me Not Coalition.)