

**WASHINGTON, DC** –“ Congressman Joe Courtney on Monday presented an award made from granite used to build the National WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. to WWII veteran and submariner Ernie Plantz of Gales Ferry. The piece of granite was one of 435 blocks given to members of Congress.

[A photo from the ceremony is below, and more are available upon request]

“In the purest sense of the word, Ernie Plantz is a hero,” said Congressman Courtney. “When I accepted a piece of granite from the WWII Memorial on behalf of the Second District, I thought of Ernie right away. His story of heroism in the face of brutal conditions is an inspiration to us all and an amazing example of The Greatest Generation.”

Ernest “Ernie” Plantz grew up in West Virginia, and joined the Navy in 1940 at age 19. He served on a battleship and then volunteered for submarine duty. His first submarine assignment was the USS Perch (SS-176), which was in the Java Sea on its second war patrol when it encountered an enemy convoy on March 1, 1942. The next morning after an extended battle, the captain gave the order to abandon ship. Plantz and 53 of his fellow submariners jumped into the water and were later picked up by the Japanese.

He was held captive for 1,297 days, leaving the prison camp on September 17, 1945. He spent approximately 10 months recuperating at a Navy hospital near Chicago, IL, before returning to active duty. He retired as a Lieutenant in 1970, and has remained an active member of the SubVets and other organizations. He was in the first class of the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame.