

# It's time we honor vets

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Unsung war heroes aren't hard to find.

But U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander seems determined to track down all of them in northeastern Louisiana, and give them the merit they earned — even if a half century or more has passed since their acts of valor.

John I. Miles Jr. of Monroe was awarded eight medals, including the Purple Heart and Bronze Star, last week for his heroic service in World War II.

He stood in Alexander's office a day before his 90th birthday and

63 years since he fought for our country in far-off and forgotten battlegrounds in Guadalcanal, New Guinea, the Philippines and Luzon.

By Miles' own account, he spent three years "mostly in the jungle."

More than earning belated medals, he is proud simply that he survived.

"Sixty-three years later and the government finally does it," Miles said. "I'm most thankful to God I survived it all."

Alexander, R-Quitman, presented the medals in a short ceremony at the congressman's office. Miles earned the medals as a U.S. Army infantryman with

the 43rd Infantry Division.

An infantry shell fragment cut through his right leg on one of the nine islands in the South Pacific.

He was forced to endure war's hell, then come home and make a productive life in a world that couldn't understand and could never truly appreciate all he had been through.

He and his wife, Mary, who died 16 years ago, married two weeks after Pearl Harbor was bombed. She also served in the Army and was stationed at Selman Field and the Pentagon in Washington.

U.S. Rep. Rodney Alexander, R-Quitman, presented the eight

medals to Miles "on behalf of President Bush and the rest of Congress, who appreciate your sacrifice."

The rest of us do, as well. And while we carried on our lives for 63 years since he earned our thanks, we hope the belated appreciation has meaning to Miles and those who stood beside him.

And those who continue to stand for our freedom.

Don't let the words ring hollow: We thank you for your service, John Miles.

You've deserved your medals for a long, long time.