

# National Montford Point Marine Association, Inc.



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Press Release

## OBITUARY ANNOUNCEMENT

### Thomas W. Snowden, among the nation's first black Marines

by Susan Snyder,

Sgt. Thomas W. Snowden, 95, of Philadelphia, among the nation's first black Marines, died Friday at the Chestnut Hill nursing home where he has lived for about five years.

Mr. Snowden was among about 400 members of the Montford Point Marines who received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2012 for their service during World War II. The group trained at Montford Point, a segregated and substandard boot camp about five miles from all-white Camp Lejeune, N.C., from 1942 to 1949.

"We lost another hero... in Original Montford Point Marine Sgt. Thomas Snowden," said Joseph H. Geeter III, national public relations and legislative officer for the Montford Point Marine Association. "All of the Montford Pointers are heroes because of what they went through to just serve our country in time of war. I'm so glad that Sergeant Thomas lived long enough to receive his, and the Montford Pointers', long overdue recognition with the Congressional Gold Medal."

Proud of his military service, Mr. Snowden wore his Montford Point hat daily at the nursing home and had his room filled with Montford Point pictures and posters, said his wife of more than 70 years, Louise Snowden.

"He was proud of that," she said. "He loved the marines."

Born and raised in Philadelphia, Snowden graduated from Overbrook High School and got a degree in architecture



from Temple University, his wife said. He was a professional carpenter and did all the work in the couple's home.

"If it was to be fixed, he could fix it," she said.

He also spent 32 years working in sales for Bailey Banks & Biddle fine jewelers, she said.

He was in the ammunition unit of the Montford Point Marines and served eight years, including a year in the reserves for the Korean War, according to an article in the Philadelphia Sunday Sun newspaper.

"Sgt. Snowden served a lot of time in the Pacific during WWII and was an Iwo Jima survivor and went on patrols with legendary Montford Point Marine Sgt Major Gilbert 'Hashmark' Johnson in Guam after the main battle to ensure the remaining Japanese, who never fully surrendered the Island, didn't sabotage the newly established bases there," Geeter said.

The Montford Point Marine Association, a nonprofit group, was founded in Philadelphia in 1965 after a group of Montford Point Marines, including the lawyer and civil rights activist Cecil B. Moore, a former drill instructor at Montford Point, held a meeting in a hotel in Center City. Chapters were later opened across the country.

A viewing for Mr. Snowden will be held Tuesday, Oct. 16 from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., and services will follow at St. Paul's Baptist Church, 1000 Wallace St., Philadelphia.