

## Lore of the Corps

### Three Unique Medals to an Army Lawyer: The Chinese Decorations Awarded to Colonel Edward H. “Ham” Young

By Fred L. Borch  
Regimental Historian & Archivist

While it is not unusual for a judge advocate in today’s Army to be awarded a foreign *badge* for proficiency in parachuting, marksmanship or physical prowess, the award of foreign decorations and medals is another matter, if for no other reason than these are rarely presented to judge advocates. Additionally, because of the constitutional prohibition on any “Person holding any Office” from accepting “any present . . . or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign state,” the Army has traditionally been reticent about permitting servicemembers to accept and wear foreign medals—especially during peacetime.<sup>1</sup>

With this as background, the award of not one or two, but three foreign military decorations to Colonel Edward H. “Ham” Young is a story worth telling. Young was awarded all three decorations by the Chinese government, in recognition of his outstanding service as the senior Army lawyer in China, from 1944 to 1947.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in June 1897, Edward Hamilton “Ham” Young entered the U.S. Military Academy in June 1917.<sup>2</sup> Since the Army needed officers badly as it expanded during World War I, Young and his classmates graduated in November 1918, just 18 months after arriving as cadets. Commissioned in the Infantry, Second Lieutenant Young was immediately sent to Europe, where he visited the Belgian, French, and Italian battle fronts and also observed the American Army in occupation duties in Germany.<sup>3</sup> After

returning from Europe, Young served in a variety of company, battalion, and regimental assignments in the Philippines and the United States in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>4</sup>



Colonel Edward H. “Ham” Young, circa 1947

In 1933, Young was sent to New York University School of Law, where he took a course in law, then went to West

<sup>1</sup> U.S. CONST., art. 1, § 9, cl. 8. After the Persian Gulf War, for example, a small number of high ranking Soldiers, including Generals Colin L. Powell and H. Norman Schwarzkopf, were awarded the Knight Commander, Order of the British Empire (KBE) by the U.K. government. *List of Honorary British Knights and Dames*, WIKIPEDIA, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_honorary\\_British\\_knights\\_and\\_dames#Military](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_honorary_British_knights_and_dames#Military) (last visited Dec. 14, 2015). Ordinarily, recipients of the KBE are entitled to be addressed as “Sir” (as in “Sir Colin” or “Sir Norman”), but because of the constitutional prohibition in Article 1, Section 9, Generals Powell and Schwarzkopf were not permitted to accept this honorific. U.S. CONST., art. 1, § 9.

Despite the constitutional obstacles to accepting a title accompanying a foreign decoration like the KBE, the Congress began enacting legislation in World War I that gave blanket authority to “any and all members of the military forces of the United States . . . to accept . . . decorations” awarded to them by Allied governments. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY REG. 600-45, AWARD AND SUPPLY OF DECORATIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS (9 Mar. 1922). Similar legislation was enacted during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam so that judge advocates serving in those conflicts were permitted to accept (and wear) Belgian, British, Dutch, French, Italian, Korean, and Vietnamese decorations and medals. See Act of Aug. 1, 1947, Pub. L. No. 80-314 (authorizing the acceptance of decorations, orders, medals, and emblems by officers and enlisted men of the armed forces of the United States tendered them by governments of cobelligerent nations, neutral nations, or other American Republics); Act of May 8, 1954, Pub. L. No. 83-354 (authorizing certain members of the Armed Forces to accept and wear decorations of certain foreign nations); Act of Oct. 19, 1965, Public L. No. 89-257

(authorizing certain members of the Armed Forces to accept and wear decorations of certain foreign nations (codified as 5 U.S.C. § 7342 (2015))).

Today, Army Regulation 600-8-2, *Military Awards*, paragraph 9-3, provides that a foreign decoration which has been awarded in recognition of “active field service in connection with combat operations,” or which has been awarded “for outstanding or unusually meritorious performance,” may be accepted and worn upon receiving the approval of Commander, U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC), Awards and Decorations Branch, Fort Knox, Kentucky. U.S. DEP’T OF ARMY REG. 600-8-2, MILITARY AWARDS para. 9-3 (25 June 2015). To ease the approval process, however, paragraph 9-27 provides that any foreign decoration listed in Appendix E of the regulation is pre-approved by Human Resources Command (HRC) for acceptance, provided it is approved by a commander who is a brigadier general or a commander who is a colonel with general court-martial convening authority. *Id.* para. 9-27, Appendix E. A decoration not listed in Appendix E cannot be accepted or worn without HRC approval. *Id.* para. 9-27.

<sup>2</sup> Fred L. Borch, *From West Point to Michigan to China: The Remarkable Career of Edward Hamilton Young (1897-1987)*, ARMY LAW., Dec. 2012, at 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> M.S. Young, *Edward H. Young 1919*, ASSEMBLY, Sept. 1990, at 154. For more on Young, see Borch, *supra* note 2.

Point to be an instructor in the academy's law department.<sup>5</sup> Three years later, he joined the Judge Advocate General's Department, and in 1938, finally completed his law studies and passed the New York Bar Exam.<sup>6</sup>

When the United States entered World War II, Young was in Washington, D.C., where he was the deputy chief of the Military Affairs Division. Then, in February 1942, Major General Myron C. Cramer, The Judge Advocate General, selected Colonel Young to be the first commandant of The Judge Advocate General's School, United States Army (TJAGSA), then located at the National University Law School.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly thereafter, when TJAGSA moved to the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Young went with it.<sup>8</sup> Working with a small group of Army lawyers, Young successfully planned, organized, and administered a comprehensive course of instruction. During his tenure as commandant, TJAGSA trained more than 1700 officers and officer candidates to be judge advocates.<sup>9</sup> As this constituted two-thirds of the active duty strength of the entire Judge Advocate General's Department,<sup>10</sup> it was a remarkable achievement by any measure.

In December 1944, Colonel Young was transferred to the China, Burma, India Theater where he assumed duties in China as the Theater Judge Advocate, U.S. Forces in China.<sup>11</sup> He was also the legal advisor to the U.S. Embassy and the Far East United Nations War Crimes Commission.<sup>12</sup> After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Colonel Young remained in China as the Staff Judge Advocate, Nanking Headquarters Command and Advisory Group.<sup>13</sup>

When he left China in June 1947, Colonel Young's tenure had been unique in the history of the Corps, as no other judge advocate had served as Theater Judge Advocate before him—and no one followed Young in the assignment.<sup>14</sup> He was decorated by his boss with the Legion of Merit for his extraordinary service.<sup>15</sup> But the Nationalist Chinese government of General Chiang Kai-shek also saw Young's service as worthy of recognition, and decorated him with three medals: the Special Collar of the Order of the Brilliant Star, the Special Breast Order of the Cloud and Banner, and the Special Breast Order of Pao Ting. He is the only judge

advocate in history to be awarded all three Chinese military decorations.<sup>16</sup>



Order of the Brilliant Star Award to Colonel Young

Founded in February 1941 as an award for outstanding merit, the Order of the Brilliant Star was created in nine classes or grades. Colonel Young received the Third Class or "Special Collar" class of the decoration with its purple neck ribbon. Very few awards of the Order of the Brilliant Star have been awarded; by 1968, the Nationalist Chinese government (relocated to the island of Taiwan in 1949) had only made 875 awards of the decoration.<sup>17</sup>



Order of the Cloud and Banner Awarded to Colonel Young

<sup>5</sup> Borch, *supra* note 2, at 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 2.

<sup>7</sup> JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS, THE ARMY LAWYER: A HISTORY OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS, 1775-1975, at 188 (1975). Founded in 1869, the National University Law School merged with the George Washington University School of Law in 1954. *History, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY*, <http://www.law.gwu.edu/School/Pages/History.aspx> (last visited Dec. 1, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S CORPS., *supra* note 7, at 188.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 187.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 169.

<sup>11</sup> Borch, *supra* note 2, at 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> For more on Young's service in China, see Fred L. Borch, *Contracting in China: The Judge Advocate Experience, 1944-1947*, ARMY LAW., Aug. 2012, at 1.

<sup>14</sup> Borch, *supra* note 2, at 2.

<sup>15</sup> Young, *supra* note 4, at 154.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> ROBERT WERLICH, ORDERS AND DECORATIONS OF ALL NATIONS 86 (1990).

The Order of the Cloud and Banner was created in 1935 as an award for exceptional acts of bravery by members of the Chinese armed forces. By World War II, however, its award to foreigners also was permitted. Like the Order of the Brilliant Star, the Order of the Cloud and Banner also came in nine classes or grades. Colonel Young received the Fourth Class award with its wide blue stripe edged in narrow red/orange and bordered in white.<sup>18</sup>



Ribbon Bar Worn by COL Young



Order of Precious Tripod Awarded to COL Young

Finally, Colonel Young was awarded the Special Breast Order of Tao Ping or “Precious Tripod.” Created by Chiang Kai-shek in 1929, for either valor or outstanding service by a member of the Chinese armed forces or foreigners, the medal features a green and white tripod in its center. Colonel Young received the Fourth Class of the award, as evidenced by the white enamel band surrounding the tripod, and the blue and white ribbon.<sup>19</sup>

The obverse of each Chinese medal is depicted in this “Lore of the Corps,” along with Colonel Young’s original ribbon bar from his dress uniform. Note that the three Chinese decorations follow all Young’s American medal ribbons (Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, American Defense Service Medal, Army of Occupation of Germany Medal, World War I Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, and World War II Victory Medal).<sup>20</sup>

“Ham” Young retired from active duty in 1954 and died in Florida in 1987.<sup>21</sup> He is interred in Arlington National Cemetery.<sup>22</sup> As for his Chinese decorations, they were donated to the Judge Advocate General’s Corps by Colonel Young’s descendants, and are part of the historical collection at the the Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center and School, United States Army.

*World War II Judge Advocate General’s School Scrapbooks on the Library of Congress Website*

In 1942, the Judge Advocate General’s School opened on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Initially, the School was under the leadership of Colonel Edward H. “Ham” Young, who determined the curriculum and put together the initial staff and faculty. When Young departed for a new assignment in late 1944, he was succeeded by Colonel Reginald C. Miller, who served as Commandant until the school closed in 1946. During its operation at the University of Michigan, the school transformed hundreds of civilian lawyers into Army judge advocates. These military lawyers ultimately served as uniformed attorneys in a variety of world-wide locations, including Australia, China, England, France, Germany, India, Japan, and Morocco. These scrapbooks contain photographs, newspaper articles, graduation programs, and other documents related to the operation of the school from 1943 to 1946.

*See the scrapbooks here:*

[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military\\_Law/Scrapbooks.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/Military_Law/Scrapbooks.html)

*More historical information can be found at*

The Judge Advocate General’s Corps  
Regimental History Website

<https://www.jagcnet.army.mil/8525736A005BE1BE>

*Dedicated to the brave men and women who have served our Corps with honor, dedication, and distinction.*

<sup>18</sup> *Id.* at 88.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.* at 87.

<sup>20</sup> JOHN E. STRANDBERG & ROGER JAMES BENDER, THE CALL OF DUTY: MILITARY AWARDS AND DECORATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (2004).

<sup>21</sup> Borch, *supra* note 2, at 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*