Established in 2015, the Stanley M. Zedalis Military Affiliated Student Scholarship is an annual grant of $500 designed to support a military affiliated student enrolled at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA), while honoring yearly the service of a disabled veteran of the US Armed Forces. The Scholarship is open to all graduate, undergraduate or high school students who meet the eligibility requirements. Award recipients are selected by the UNCSA Military Affiliated Student Task Force. An annual grant of $500 will be awarded to two recipients in 2015. The Scholarship is to provide money for educational supplies/costs.

The Scholarship is named for Stanley M. Zedalis, a veteran of WWII who served in the US Navy aboard the naval refueling tanker USS Niobrara. During World War II, the Zedalis family was one of numerous immigrant families from the coal-mining region of northeastern Pennsylvania who had multiple sons signed into active duty. “Stan” and all four of his brothers served in various theaters ranging from Guadalcanal and the South Pacific, to Europe alongside Patton’s 3rd Army. Three brothers returned home wounded, and one lived out the remainder of his life in a Veteran hospital.

The 2015 Scholarship honors Joseph Zedalis.

Joe was an artist. As early as grade school teachers coveted his drawings, prints and cartoon work. By high school, he put his talent to work designing and painting signs professionally for local businesses in the anthracite coal region where he grew up. Like his brothers, Joe was also a talented athlete. When WWII rolled around, Joe and all four of his brothers enlisted. Although his father died years earlier of black lung disease, Uncle Sam had a safety net in place to make sure one son always remained at home. During the winters of 1944 and ‘45, three separate telegrams arrived at their mother’s doorstep that stated a son had been wounded in combat: Vince at Pelé lieu, Joe and Johnny in Europe.

Joe had been an Artillery Observer with the Army 79th Division, serving in Europe. During deployment, his Jeep hit a mine and flipped over crushing several vertebrae and causing a host of other injuries. Joe was returned to the States and sent to Deshon Army Hospital in Pittsburgh and then later to Valley Forge Veterans Hospital in Pennsylvania. After a lengthy healing process and extended rehabilitation, Joe was discharged.

Although Joe’s mother was delighted to have her son back home, she quickly noticed a change. Joe had grown irritable and easily agitated. He had difficulty dealing with his injuries and the associated pain. He had developed a reduced tolerance for stress, became impulsive and was quick to flare. His younger brother Stan had returned earlier from his service in the Navy and was playing baseball in Florida. When spring training ended, Stan traveled home to check on family. By then, Joe’s outbursts and mood swings had become so pronounced that his mother began to fear for her own son. Convinced that medical help was needed, she asked Stan to assist by signing papers in order to commit Joe to a VA hospital for treatment.

At that time, Shellshock and Battle Fatigue were common diagnoses for individuals returning from combat regions; however, the impact of the physical and psychological injuries brought on by war wounds were little understood. Joe’s symptoms were classic characteristics for what may be diagnosed today as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a possible TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury), two signature wounds that often occur together and whose symptoms are difficult to distinguish. During hospitalization, Joe’s condition grew worse and eventually a new medical treatment of the era, a frontal lobe lobotomy, was performed. Joe lived out the remainder of his life in a VA hospital until he passed away in 1987, leaving behind an unintended legacy.