



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Celebrates Region's Veterans WITH Fort Drum Event

PATTY RITCHIE May 2, 2012

| ISSUE: **MILITARY AFFAIRS, VETERANS**



Announces "Adopt-a-Platoon's" Plummer Inducted to Veterans Hall of Fame

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Senator Patty Ritchie will honor 39 local veterans from across Central and Northern New York at a special ceremony at Fort Drum Thursday, and announce retired US Army Col. Michael Plummer, founder of the "Adopt-a-Platoon" program, as the 2012 inductee to the State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

The 39 veterans all were nominated by family, friends, co-workers and comrades-in-arms for their military service to our nation, and their continuing work and involvement in causes that benefit and improve our local communities.

“I am very pleased to have this opportunity to show my appreciation to these local heroes, whose service spanned the globe from Omaha Beach to Korea and Vietnam, Cold War outposts and recent conflicts in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan and the Global War on Terror, and who continue to serve our communities and veterans causes after they returned home,” Senator Ritchie said.

“We can never pay the debt we owe the men and women who served our nation as members of the Armed Forces. But I am pleased to recognize these individuals who were nominated by their fellow veterans, family and friends.”

Senator Ritchie will present each nominee with a plaque outlining highlights of their service at the ceremony, which will be held at **USO Fort Drum’s Heritage Center, from 2 to 4 pm, on Thursday, May 3**, where representatives of the Army’s 10th Mountain Division will also be on hand to recognize the honorees.

Senator Ritchie will announce that she has chosen Col. Plummer from among the nominees to be inducted to the Senate’s Veterans Hall of Fame, representing the 48th Senate District. That induction will take place at the Capitol in Albany on May 22.

“Col. Plummer has become synonymous with Fort Drum and veterans through his work as an advocate for the 10th Mountain Division and the military in New York State,” Senator Ritchie said. “His Adopt a Platoon program pioneered here in Watertown has become a model for communities across the United States.”

Biographies of all 39 veteran nominees will be posted to Senator Ritchie’s website at

www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.

Oswego County

Richard Erb Sr. of Fulton – After serving in the US Marine Corps, he returned home where he was named Fulton’s Veteran of the Year for his service to the American Legion and the VFW

Rev. Moritz Fuchs of Fulton – After fighting to defeat Germany, he served as a bodyguard to the presiding judge of the Nuremberg War trials before returning home where later joined the priesthood and continues serving his fellow veterans

Francis Kehoe of Fulton – A former US Marine who served in Korea and later as a guard for President Eisenhower at Camp David before joining the Naval Reserves, he has spent his life serving veterans in the VFW and the American Legion

Russell Marsden of Mexico - Served as a helicopter crew chief in the Air Cavalry after joining the Army in 1969. He serves veterans as commander of the VFW Post in Mexico

John McGraw of Fulton – A survivor of the D-Day invasion where he helped clear the Germans and the landmines from Omaha Beach, he has continued serving his fellow veterans as Fulton’s American Legion Commander and Fulton’s Veteran of the Year

John E. Rucynski of Parish – As the seventh Command Sgt. Major of the Army Reserve, the former Vietnam Marine Corps veteran could best be described as the enlisted man’s top union representative

Ronald Sakonyi of Constantia – After earning 10 air medals in the Navy during the Vietnam War, serving in the Army at the National Military Intelligence Center, he has continued serving his community as a county legislator and veterans leader at the local, county and state level.

Michael Vaughn of Cleveland – After earning a silver star for heroism in Vietnam, he returned home where he has served as a children’s basketball coach and volunteer EMT.

Jefferson County

Timothy Ambrose of Black River – former Legion of the Year Award winner and Vietnam era member of the US Air Force who brought his firefighting skills home to Black River

Michael Bice of Watertown – a NY State Police sergeant, volunteer firefighter and member of the Army National Guard who is currently deployed, has already served overseas in Japan and Australia, and in combat missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan

Paul Cortright – a 20-year Army veteran who has dedicated his life to veterans, rising from Post Commander to the American Legion's New York State Department Commander

Luther Farnsworth – 30-veteran of Kuwait, Iraq and the Global War on Terror, he has continued to serve veterans as a past commander of his local American Legion and serving in the Sons of the American Legion and the American Legion Riders

Cassandra Gould of Fort Drum – After 22 years of service in the Army, she continues serving her fellow veterans through the American Legion

Judy Gonzalez-Wallace of Carthage – Army veteran who has continued to serve the veterans community as a member of the American Legion, the auxiliary and the Legion Riders

Willie Hairston of Deferiet – Vietnam veteran who has continued to serve in the American Legion, where he served as post commander, and in the VFW where he served in positions at both the county and state department level

Stanley Kaminski of Watertown – 20-year veteran who served in Somalia, Bosnia, Vietnam and Desert Storm before advocating for veterans through veterans organizations as co-chair of the Fort Drum retirees council

Russell Lynch of Antwerp – after earning two Bronze Stars and being shot in the leg battling the Germans in WWII, he returned home where he played an active role in his community, serving as president of the rural letter carriers association

Leo Marc-Aurele Jr. of Evans Mills – Navy veteran who has continued to serve his fellow veterans in the American Legion

Charles McConnell of Brownville – Veteran of the US Air Force who served in Kosovo, Desert Storm and Desert Shield, he has continued to serve his community as a village trustee, member of the fire department and member of the American Legion

James Nasworthy Jr. of Watertown – After serving in the Global War on Terror, he has been an exemplary employee at Fort Drum, earning the customer service award and helping veterans through the VFW

Gerald F. “Jerry” Tighe of Watertown – After 24 years in the Navy submarine service during the Cold War, he has continued serving area veterans through the Veterans of Foreign Wars

Edward Wallace of Carthage – After serving in the Army in Germany, Egypt, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia where he was in the front line of during the first Gulf War, he has continued serving veterans in the American Legion

Rishel “Rick” White of Adams – During the Battle of Bulge he was taken prisoner by the Germans, but lived to tell the tale and has continued to educate new generations about WWII

James Williams Jr. of Felts Mills – A 20-year veteran of the Army, he has continued serving veterans in the American Legion, where he serves as post commander

Charles Van Sickle of Black River – A Vietnam veteran, he has continued to serve his fellow veterans as the past commander of his local American Legion, Sons of the American Legion and VFW.

Madison Cobb of Henderson – A survivor of what many described as a suicide mission at Pointe du Hoc during the D-Day invasion, the Army veteran returned home where he continued to serve his community.

Raymond Gandia of Natural Bridge – Friends described the Army Ranger as a “soldier’s soldier,” but even after he left the service, when terrorists attacked on 9/11 he volunteered to help at Ground Zero.

Tyler Pickett of Antwerp – Killed in action during his second tour in Iraq, he was active in the

American Legion in Antwerp and the VFW in Corning.

Joseph Theinert of Evans Mills – A member of the Army National Guard, he also made the ultimate sacrifice while serving with the 10th Mountain Division in Afghanistan.

St. Lawrence County

Clarence Berry of Ogdensburg – Veteran of U.S. Army in WW II, Korea and Vietnam era, longtime veterans activist and military historian

Nellie Coakley of Canton – Vietnam War Army Nurse who pioneered efforts to help veterans with post traumatic stress issues in Northern New York

Donald Cooke of Ogdensburg – Vietnam combat veteran, longtime member of the Army Reserves, and Ogdensburg veterans activist who helped bring the Moving Vietnam Wall to the city

Ronald “Joe” Fields of Lisbon – Air Force veteran who waited for orders during the Cuban Missile Crisis on whether he would bomb Havana and longtime Lisbon veterans affairs and community activist

Jeremiah Pete Havens of Ogdensburg – For 32 years, as New York State Veterans Counselor, Pete Havens advocated for North Country veterans

Thomas Morrison of St. Lawrence County – Army Russian interrogator who saw the end of the Cold War in Europe and uses his experiences to inspire his social studies students in the classroom

Patrick Rourk of Norwood – 24-year Air Force veteran and former St. Lawrence County Veterans Services Director and veterans advocate.

Arthur G. Wilson of Ogdensburg – WWII and Korean sailor and longtime veterans activist and advocate for disabled vets in St. Lawrence County.