



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara, Senate colleagues will induct Watkins Glen native Tony Specchio into Veterans' Hall of Fame at Albany ceremony today

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 20, 2014

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**



Watkins Glen, N.Y., May 20—To coincide with this year's upcoming Memorial Day observances across the state and nation, State Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) and his colleagues today will induct Anthony J. "Tony" Specchio, Sr., a lifelong Watkins Glen resident and a fixture in civic and veterans affairs, into the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame.

Specchio will represent O'Mara's 58th Senate District and be among approximately 60 distinguished veterans statewide joining the Hall this year. Inductees are chosen annually by state senators from within their respective legislative districts. A Hall of Fame induction

ceremony will be held in Albany's Legislative Office Building this morning.

“Tony Specchio’s nomination for this honor said it best, that he’s a ‘living symbol of patriotism and honor’ for local veterans,” said O’Mara. “I’m proud to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Tony’s love of country, community, family and service. It’s a well-earned and well-deserved honor for someone who has given a lifetime of commitment and service to our nation, our state and the community of Watkins Glen.”

Specchio was nominated for the Veterans' Hall of Fame by Brian J. O’Donnell, former president of the Watkins Glen School Board.

O’Donnell said, “Tony is a real credit to his family, his church, his community and his country. A gentle man who always puts others first, Tony is a true American patriot and I’m proud to call him my friend!”

[read more in today's *Corning Leader* and *The Odessa File: News of Schuyler County* -- and stop back later for more on today's ceremony]

A distinguished Korean War veteran, Specchio was drafted into the United States Army in 1953. His training included a stint at Camp Desert Rock in Nevada where he witnessed the detonation of an atomic bomb from a distance of less than 10,000 feet, thereby earning him the rare distinction of being called an “Atomic Veteran.” In 1954 he served in Korea on the combat line at the 38th Parallel (DMZ) as a Tank Commander and Squad Leader with the rank of Corporal.

Following his discharge from the Army in 1954, Specchio returned to Watkins Glen, where he and his wife, Annabelle, raised seven children. The couple has 11 grandsons. Tony has served in local government and remained an active, admired and widely respected member of the community – in particular for his dedication and devotion to veterans affairs.

Over the past six decades, he has especially become known as the driving force behind the annual Veterans’ Day, Memorial Day and Flag Day observances in Watkins Glen, and has remained active in numerous organizations include BPOE Elks Lodge No. 1546, American Legion Post 555, the Watkins Glen Fire Department, the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the 2nd Indian Head Division. For over 20 years, he has been the Veterans Service Representative at the VA Hospital in Bath, New York. He also remains active as a member of St. Mary’s of the Lake Church, where he has served as an usher for over 50 years.

Active in local government, Specchio has served as Town of Reading Supervisor, as a member of the Schuyler County Legislature and, since 1978, on the Schuyler County Soil and Water

Conservation District Board of Directors where he's been the chairman since 1986. In 1995, he retired as Superintendent of Public Works for the village of Watkins Glen.

The Senate established its [online Veterans' Hall of Fame in 2005](#) and, including this year, approximately 300 veterans have been inducted. It's designed to honor New York veterans whose service in the United States Armed Forces is accompanied by service to the community and accomplishments as a civilian, and includes veterans representing Senate districts from throughout New York State. It can be viewed through a link on the home page of O'Mara's Senate website, www.omara.nysenate.gov.

O'Mara's previous Veterans' Hall of Fame inductees have been:

- in 2011, [Philip C. Smith](#), a highly decorated Korean War combat veteran and well-known figure in Schuyler County government and veterans' affairs;
- in 2012, [J. Arthur "Archie" Kieffer](#), a World War II combat veteran and well-known figure in Chemung County government as the Chemung County historian; and
- in 2013, Painted Post Mayor and World War II combat veteran [Roswell L. "Roz" Crozier, Jr.](#)

Following is the biography that accompanies Specchio's Veterans' Hall of Fame induction:

Anthony J. "Tony" Specchio, Sr. proudly served his nation upon being drafted into the United States Army in January 1953. A distinguished Korean War veteran, he has dedicated a lifetime of commitment and service to his country and to the community of Watkins Glen, New York.

In 1953, Tony completed his U.S. Army training at Camp Pickett in Virginia with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. He was among a select contingent of soldiers who continued training at Camp Desert Rock in Nevada where he witnessed the detonation of an atomic bomb from a distance of less than 10,000 feet, thereby earning him the rare distinction of being called an "Atomic Veteran."

He went on to serve with distinction in Korea on the combat line at the 38th Parallel (DMZ) as a Tank Commander and Squad Leader with the rank of Corporal.

Following his discharge from the Army in December 1954, Tony returned to his native Watkins Glen where he and his wife, Annabelle, raised seven children. The couple has 11 grandsons. Tony has served in local government and remained an active, admired and widely respected member of the community – in particular for his dedication and devotion to veterans affairs.

He is especially known as the driving force and main organizer for the annual Veterans' Day, Memorial Day and Flag Day observances. He is a 50-plus-year member of BPOE Elks Lodge No. 1546; the Watkins Glen Fire Department, where he has held the rank of Chief and currently serves as Chaplain; and American Legion Post 555, where he is a Past Commander and has served as Adjutant since 1984. He is a Life Member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), and the 2nd Indian Head Division. For over 20 years, has been the Veterans Service Representative at the VA Hospital in Bath, New York.

Over the course of the past six decades, Anthony J. “Tony” Specchio, Sr. has become a living symbol of patriotism and honor for veterans in Watkins Glen, our state and our nation.