



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara inducting Steuben County WWII veteran into Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame on Tuesday: Tribute to Warren Thompson of Savona, WWII vet who exemplifies the 'Greatest Generation'

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 14, 2018

| ISSUE: **VETERANS HALL OF FAME**



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Elmira, N.Y., May 13—Approaching this year's **Memorial Day** observances across the state and nation, Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) said that the New York State Senate will induct

Warren A. Thompson -- a lifelong Steuben County resident and farmer, and a stalwart in civic and veterans affairs in the county -- into the **New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame**.

The formal induction will take place at a ceremony in Hearing Room B of the Legislative Office Building in Albany on Tuesday, May 15. O'Mara selected Thompson from among nearly a dozen nominations he received this year from throughout his 58th Senate District. Thompson will represent O'Mara's district and join approximately 60 veterans from throughout the state inducted into the Hall of Fame this year. Senators select one inductee annually from their respective legislative districts.

The Senate established its online Veterans' Hall of Fame in 2005 and, including this year, has inducted more than 400 veterans. The Hall salutes New York veterans for their service in the United States Armed Forces and their civilian accomplishments.

O'Mara said, "Warren Thompson is a Steuben County legend and I am proud to have this opportunity to salute his remarkable life and service. He truly stands for America's 'Greatest Generation' as a model of citizenship, sacrifice and service as a soldier, a prisoner of war and a veteran who returned home and went on looking out for his community, family, friends and fellow veterans. His is truly a story of love of country and family, brotherhood, courage, determination, honesty, perseverance, toughness, goodwill, gratitude and a remarkable joy in living. He represents everything that the New York State Senate Veterans' Hall of Fame is intended to honor."

Carl D. Peters, Jr. of Savona, a close Thompson family friend, nominated Thompson for this year's induction.

Peters said, "Warren Thompson is an icon in our area. His work ethic, accomplishments as a businessman and farmer, and integrity are legendary."

Thompson was born on his family's farm in Eagle Valley and graduated from Savona Central School in 1942. As a boy he dreamed of flying airplanes and, upon the start of World War II, he decided he wanted to fly military planes. Following his high school graduation, Thompson enlisted in the Army, passed the air cadet exam and started his pilot training. On August 30, 1943, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Army Air Corps and trained as a pilot on B-26, Martin Marauders.

The Army needed A-20 Douglas light bomber crews for deployment to the European theater, so Thompson transferred to the A-20's and was assigned to the 647th Bomb Group in Gosfield, Essex County, England. On May 27, 1944, his plane was shot down on his first mission over Amiens, France. He escaped capture and worked with the local French Resistance until his capture by the Nazis in St Just, France on July 20, 1944. Thompson was a prisoner of war (POW) in the Paris Prison, Buchenwald Concentration Camp, Stalag Luft 3 camp and Nuremburg camp before being liberated at the Mooseburg camp by General George S. Patton's 3rd Army on May 15, 1945.

He continued to serve in the Army Air Corps following the end of the war until his discharge on March 10, 1950. He returned to the family farm in Savona where he and his wife of 65 years, Ruby, raised three children: Becky, Doris and Gary.

Thompson successfully grew his farm and Thompson Farms remains a well-known, working farm under his son, Gary. For nearly four decades, in addition to farming, he served as rural postal carrier.

Thompson has served the local community in numerous ways, including as a Savona school board member and President, Commander of VFW Post 1470, member of the Bath Planning Board, member and sponsor of the Savona Fire Department, and President of the Steuben County Veteran's Memorial. He is widely recognized and honored as the driving force behind the construction of the Steuben County Veterans Memorial.

In 2015, the nation of France awarded Thompson the Chevalier (Knight) of the Legion of Honor Medal for his service to the liberation of France during WWII. It is the highest French honor awarded to foreign soldiers.

Thompson currently resides at the Bath VA community living center and will celebrate his 94th birthday on June 20, 2018.

O'Mara's previous Veterans' Hall of Fame inductees were:

- > 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 a widely admired fixture in Chemung County government as the Chemung County historian;
- > in 2013, Painted Post Mayor and World War II combat veteran **Roswell L. "Roz" Crozier, Jr.**;
- > in 2014, **Anthony J. "Tony" Specchio, Sr.**, a distinguished Korean War veteran and widely respected for his long-standing and active service to veterans and government in Watkins Glen and throughout Schuyler County; and
- > in 2016, **P. Earle Gleason**, a lifelong Yates County resident and long-time director of the Yates County Veterans' Service Agency.

Other area veterans who are Hall of Fame members are **Frank C. "Fritz" Pesesky**, a veteran of World War II and former director of the Chemung County Veterans Service Office (2005); **William K. Kastner**, a Vietnam veteran and longtime director of the Steuben County Veterans Service Agency (2006); and **Robert Laskaris**, a highly decorated combat veteran and well-known figure in Chemung County veterans' affairs (2008).