



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo honors Hensel for military service

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO November 10, 2021

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New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-I-Rome, announced today that John “Jack” Hensel, a World War II veteran from Whitesboro, has been inducted into the New York State Senate Veterans’ Hall of Fame. The Hall of Fame was created to honor and recognize outstanding veterans from New York State who have distinguished themselves both in military and civilian life.

Sen. Griffo recognized Hensel at a special Veterans Day ceremony in Whitesboro. Hensel received a plaque, poster and book to commemorate his induction.

“It is an honor to recognize Jack and all the other men and women who are being inducted this year into the Senate’s Veterans’ Hall of Fame,” **Sen. Griffo said.** “Jack selflessly served his nation in the Navy and has remained dedicated to helping other veterans and their families in the region. He is the epitome of the ‘Greatest Generation,’ and we are eternally grateful for all that he has done on our behalf.”

A bio of Hensel is below:

John “Jack” Hensel, 96, is a veteran of World War II who was drafted into the U.S. Navy on June 22, 1943, one day before receiving his high school diploma. While serving on the Navy Aircraft Carrier U.S.S. Franklin CV-13, which was nicknamed “Big Ben,” Jack volunteered as an aircrewman and flew combat missions as an aerial gunner in a VT5 torpedo bomber.

During the U.S.S. Franklin's launch operations on March 19, 1945, two 500-pound Japanese bombs hit the carrier without warning. The bombs exploded and ignited the gasoline lines lying on the carrier’s deck along with the remaining planes that were loaded with bombs and rockets. During the attack, Jack, 20 years old at the time, was severely burned and blown off the carrier and into the ocean. After regaining consciousness in the water, Jack, who was still wearing all his clothing that included heavy shoes and a steel helmet strapped under his chin, struggled to stay afloat in the rough seas. "I remember seeing the burning carrier going away from me," he recalled years later. "I remember several sailors popping to the surface with me. They had a strange stare with no expression, and in my struggle they just seemed to disappear. I thought afterwards they must have been killed. For a few moments, I felt all alone in the wide ocean and scared." Eventually finding a raft, Jack and other sailors were rescued by the U.S.S. Hickox and taken to a hospital ship to recover. Sadly, this enemy attack killed more than 800 crewman and wounded more than 400.

Jack is the recipient of several awards and honors, including the Purple Heart. An active and

dedicated member of CNY Chapter 490 Military Order of the Purple Heart, he has helped at all the chapter's events. He received the Military Order of the Purple Heart Distinguished Service Award in 2015 in recognition of his activism and dedication to helping veterans and their families.

Jack married the late Mary Follett in 1949. The couple resided in Whitesboro and had six children: Richard, Jill, Mary-Lynn, Nancy, John and Mark. They also are the proud grandparents of 15 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

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