



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Joseph A. Griffo

Griffo, Miller honor Clinton World War II veteran

JOSEPH A. GRIFFO October 11, 2024

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New York State Sen. Joseph Griffo, R-C-Rome, and Assemblyman Brian Miller, R-C-New Hartford, recognized the exemplary military service of Kenneth Thayer, a 99-year-old World War II veteran who lives in Clinton.

PFC Thayer served as a combat infantryman of Company K, 119th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division in the U.S. Army. He is believed to be one of the first soldiers of the Allied Armies to cross over from Belgium into the Netherlands prior to the Allied combined ground/airborne operation known as Market Garden. The goal of the operation was to seize key River Rhine crossings to advance into northern Germany.

Thayer's eleven-month tour of combat duty in the European Theater from July 1944 to May 1945 saw him actively participate in some of the most critical campaigns of the war. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross, two Bronze Stars, four Purple Hearts and the Presidential Unit Citation Medal, one of the highest honors a U.S. military unit can receive.

A retired Air Force civilian employee who served four decades in a supervisory capacity at Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, Thayer was recently honored by the people of Limburg Province and presented to King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of The Netherlands in commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of The Netherlands.

Sen. Griffo presented a New York State Senate Liberty Medal to Thayer in recognition of his decorated military service. The Liberty Medal is one of the highest civilian honors a New Yorker

can receive and is given to individuals who have merited special commendation for exceptional, heroic, or humanitarian acts and achievements on behalf of their fellow New Yorkers.

Assemblyman Miller gave Thayer a special proclamation recognizing the veteran's exemplary service and commitment to the nation.

"It is an honor to present a New York State Senate Liberty Medal to Kenneth and to recognize his selfless and decorated service to our nation," **Sen. Griffo said.** "Kenneth is a shining example of America's Greatest Generation who demonstrated remarkable courage and bravery while facing the dangerous and extreme conditions of war. On behalf of the residents of the 53rd Senate District, I extend my sincere gratitude to Kenneth for his commitment to his country, the sacrifices that he made on its behalf and the patriotism that he has continued to demonstrate throughout his life."

"It is a profound privilege to honor Kenneth Thayer for his extraordinary service to our nation," **Assemblyman Miller said.** "His bravery and dedication during World War II exemplify the highest standards of military heroism, and his lifelong commitment to serving others is an inspiration to us all. We are forever grateful for his service and unwavering patriotism. We are proud to have such a remarkable man represent not only the United States but also Oneida County on this historic occasion."

Thayer is the author of *The Young Liberators: Volume One: From Citizen to Soldier* and *Volume Two: From Mortain to Victory in Europe*. He is also the past National Vice President of the Air Force Association, whose mission is to educate the public about aerospace power and its importance in defending the United States. For several decades, Thayer served as Treasurer for the Central Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. In 2023, CABVI named a new building in Utica in his honor.

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