



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Schuyler County veteran, who 58 years ago today was engaged with fellow soldiers in one of the Korean War's notable victories, will be inducted into Senate's Veterans Hall of Fame next week

THOMAS F. O'MARA June 10, 2011

| ISSUE: **VETERANS**



Albany, N.Y., June 10—Senator Tom O'Mara (R-C, Big Flats) and his state Senate colleagues will pay tribute to Philip C. Smith, a highly decorated Korean War combat veteran and well-known figure in Schuyler County government and veterans' affairs, by inducting him into the Senate's online Veterans Hall of Fame.

Fifty-eight years ago today, on June 10, 1953, Smith was engaged with his fellow soldiers in one of the Korean War's notable victories -- the defense of "Outpost Harry."

Smith will join nearly 50 other veterans, representing state legislative districts from across New York, at an induction ceremony on Flag Day, Tuesday, June 14, 2011 in Albany. The June 14 event will take place in the Legislative Office Building and include an induction ceremony, a reception for veterans and their guests, and a U.S. Army Color Guard presentation.

“Phil Smith served our nation with uncommon bravery and valor, then returned home to Schuyler County where’s he’s lived a life devoted to his family, successful work, exemplary citizenship and, especially, service and dedication to the well-being of so many local veterans,” said O’Mara. “Phil Smith stands as a source of pride and respect throughout our region. He’s a citizen of the first order and I’m proud to have this opportunity to pay Phil a well-earned, well-deserved and enduring tribute. It’s a privilege to recognize Phil’s military and civilian service, and to honor his dedication to his family, his country, and his community.”

O’Mara said that Smith’s three children – Deborah Betz, Maureen Columio, and Philip J. Smith – nominated their father for this year’s award.

In a joint statement, Smith’s children said, "As our father, we know what a wonderful, honorable, kind and generous human being he is. It is a privilege for us to be able to share his accomplishments with others and to have preserved a record of all that he has given to his family, his community and his country. We love you Dad and are so proud of you."

The Senate established its [online Veterans Hall of Fame in 2005](#). 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. The Hall currently includes the following three area veterans, who were inducted during the tenure of O’Mara’s predecessor in the Senate, former state Senator George Winner:

-- the late [Frank C. “Fritz” Pesesky](#), a veteran of World War II and former director of the Chemung County Veterans Service Office, who was the region’s inaugural inductee in 2005;

-- [William K. Kastner](#), a Vietnam veteran and longtime director of the Steuben County Veterans Service Agency, who was inducted in 2006; and

-- in 2008, [Robert Laskaris](#), a highly decorated combat veteran and well-known figure in Chemung County veterans’ affairs, who passed away on March 31, 2011, at the age of 82, at the Bath Veterans Hospital.

Smith was drafted into service in the United States Army in 1951. He attended leadership school at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and Officer Candidate School (OCS) and jump training at Fort Benning, Georgia.

He was sent to Korea and served as a Second Lieutenant (Company G, 15th Regiment, Third Infantry Division) from January to July of 1953. He participated in one of the Korean War’s most well-known engagements, the eight-day defense of “Outpost Harry,” a remote allied war station protecting what was considered the most direct route to Seoul, the South Korean capital, and one that was highly desired by the Chinese forces. During the eight-day battle, from June 10-18, 1953, more than 88,000 rounds of Chinese artillery fell on the outpost. The successful defense and preservation of Outpost Harry is viewed as one of the war’s notable victories. It’s been written about in many books and articles, including *A Morning in June: Defending Outpost Harry* (University Alabama Press, April 2010). Additional information can also be found on the website of the [Outpost Harry Survivors Association](#), whose motto is “We Held.”

Smith was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge and the Silver Star, the nation’s third-highest military decoration, for his actions during the successful defense of Outpost Harry.

Upon his return to the states from Korea in 1953, Smith served in the Army Reserves for several years and attained the rank of Captain. He considered making the Army his career but remained in Schuyler County to help run the family-owned local grocery store, Smith’s IGA. Smith and his wife, Judy, successfully ran the business for 38 years until it was destroyed by fire in 1991.

In addition to running the family business, Smith became involved in local government and politics. He served on the Odessa-Montour School Board (1968-1970) and served as a member of the Schuyler County Legislature for 23 years, from 1972 to 1995, including seven as chairman (1984-1991).

He has long been active in the VFW, American Legion and AM Vets. In 1995, New York Governor George Pataki awarded Smith one of the state’s highest military awards, the prestigious Conspicuous Service Cross.

For nearly the past 15 years, beginning in 1997, Smith has served as the Director of the Schuyler County Veterans' Service Agency, where over the years he's helped to connect area veterans with the local, state and federal services and benefits available to them. Smith is well known for volunteering to drive area veterans to appointments and willingly sharing his wisdom and compassion to help those who served their country.

Schuyler County Administrator Tim O'Hearn said, "We are extremely proud of Mr. Smith and his tireless efforts on behalf of Schuyler County veterans. To be inducted into the Hall of Fame is a fitting tribute to this individual and it is gratifying to know that Phil's accomplishments have earned him statewide recognition. Phil is the consummate professional who epitomizes the core community values of service, dedication, and leadership. We offer our sincere congratulations upon achieving this latest milestone in a distinguished career!"

[\[View Philip C. Smith's Hall of Fame induction panel\]](#)