



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Senator Helming Inducts Canandaigua WWII Vet Into Veterans Hall of Fame

SENATOR PAM HELMING April 11, 2019

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GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that 1st Lt. Donald Barton, of Canandaigua, has been selected as the 2019 inductee into the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame from the 54th Senate District. First Lt. Barton served in the Army Air Corps during World War II. He was nominated for the Veterans Hall of Fame by Ms. Adrienne O'Brien and Mr. and Mrs. Milan and Barbara Kutner, and he was honored at Senator Helming's Ontario County Veterans Recognition Ceremony in November.

“The New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame was created to honor and recognize outstanding veterans from the Empire State who have distinguished themselves both in military and civilian life. First Lt. Donald Barton certainly fits that description with his heroic and courageous service during World War II as well as his tremendous leadership as a member of the Greatest Generation. First Lt. Barton is the epitome of a veteran dedicated to his country and his community, and he is worthy of this prestigious honor. I am pleased to recognize 1st Lt. Barton by inducting him into the Veterans Hall of Fame. Thank you to all 120 of our veteran nominees and their families for your service and sacrifice for our great country,” Senator Helming said.

A college junior at the time, 1st Lt. Barton joined the Army Air Corps Reserve following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was called up quickly for both navigation and bombardier training. He served from April 1942 to December 1945. From February to July 1944, he served as lead bombardier on 12 of 19 successful B-17 combat missions of the 457th Bomb Group, 369th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force. He and his crew were based in Peterborough, England.

Among his missions in occupied France were Melun, Lille, and Pointe du Hoc on D-Day. A week after D-Day, on June 14, 1944, he was lead bombardier on a mission to destroy gasoline storage tanks close to the Rouen Cathedral in occupied France. His exceptional skill preserved the historic cathedral, leaving it untouched. This brought him a commendation from the General of his Bomber Wing.

On his 20th mission, 1st Lt. Barton was the lead bombardier of a 36-plane wing over Augsburg. His plane was shot down by Messerschmitt fighter aircraft on July 19, 1944, and four of the crew members did not survive. First Lt. Barton landed on an Austrian Alp, broke both bones in one leg, and dislocated his ankle. He was captured by the Germans and held captive in Stalag Luft 1 for almost a year. Toward the end of the war, he and the 9,000

prisoners there lived on a starvation diet. For his service, he earned the Air Medal with three clusters, the Purple Heart with two clusters, and the Prisoner of War Medal.

Following his military service, 1st Lt. Barton earned his doctorate in genetics from the University of California Berkeley and then worked as a professor at Cornell University. He served for 22 years as the Director of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva. For 12 years, he performed worldwide consulting on agricultural research management in 17 countries. Currently, he is a notable community guest speaker for patriotic anniversaries to remember and honor those who served. He has been interviewed for the Library of Congress World War II history series.

First Lt. Barton said, “I am very honored that I have been selected as the 2019 New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame inductee for the 54th Senate District. I am grateful to Senator Helming for this wonderful honor, and I will do my best to meet whatever is needed to fulfill the responsibilities of this recognition. I have high regard and respect for the millions of men and women who have given so much so that our great nation may survive the serious threats it has encountered and is encountering.”