

NEW YORK STATE SENATE
VETERANS

Hall of Fame
2014



SPONSORED BY
SENATOR KATHY MARCHIONE
SEPTEMBER, 2014 - HALFMOON, NEW YORK





Senator Kathleen A. Marchione

Septmeber 2014

Dear Friend:

The New York State Veterans Hall of Fame was created to honor past members of the US Armed forces whose valor, dedication and distinguished service to our nation is only complemented by their continuing service to our communities.

I am pleased to sponsor the Veterans Hall of Fame, and even more pleased to be able to recognize the exemplary individuals who have been nominated from the 43rd Senate District for this honor.

This recognition is but a small tribute for the service, sacrifice and commitment you have shown to the residents and communities of the 43rd Senate District.

On their behalf, please allow me to extend my gratitude, and welcome you to our celebration of the 2014 Honorees to the Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathy".

Senator Kathleen A. Marchione

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2014 Honoree

Gary L. Flaherty, Columbia County

Nominated by Richard C. Howland Jr.

Gary L. Flaherty served in the United States Army for over 23 years. He rose from the rank of Private to the highest enlisted rank in the Army and retired as a Command Sergeant Major. His duty assignments include Germany, Vietnam and Korea as well as several locations in the U.S. One of the highlights of his career was serving as a member of the White House Task force on transitioning from a draft Army to the current all volunteer Army. His awards and citations include the Legion of Merit, Soldiers Medal for Heroism, Bronze Star, 2 Meritorious Medals, 6 Army Commendation Medals, 2 Army Achievement Medals, 6 Good Conduct Medals, Humanitarian Medal, National Defense Medal, 3 Overseas Medals, 2 Vietnam Service Medals, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, Vietnam Civic Action Medal, Korean Defense Medal, Gold Recruiter Badge, and New York Conspicuous Medal with 5 devices. He was cited from various veterans' organizations in Kingston, NY in 1971 for entering the Draft Board and removing a live hand grenade that Vietnam protesters had thrown through the window. Due to his outstanding service, he received a Direct Commission and held dual status when he retired as both a Command Sergeant Major and Captain.

He is a very active volunteer in his community. Gary served on the Canaan Town Board and is a former Canaan Town Supervisor. He participates in various activities in support of his community including advocating for the VA Medical Center to come to Canaan twice a year to register veterans who could not travel to Albany. He is the Past President of the NYS Council of Veterans' Organizations, Jr. and Sr. Vice CDR Rip Van Winkle VFW Council, Quartermaster Canaan VFW, life member of DAV, volunteer for Annual Stand Down (18 years), Committee for Homeless Veterans, life member of the Vietnam Veterans of America, 2nd National VP of the American Military Retiree Assoc, Legislative Coordinator for the Non Commissioned Officer Association, member of the Advisory Council to the Albany VA Medical Center and a Fire Policeman for the Canaan Fire Company. He walked 100 miles (57 on crutches) to raise funds to build a monument to military personnel from Clinton County, NY who were killed in Vietnam. He was selected to be a Veterans Advisor for Senator Gillebrand and Congressman Gibson. For the past 20 years he and his wife have placed American Flags on the graves of veterans each Memorial Day.

He is currently the Columbia County Director of the VetTrac program to assist returning OEF/OIF veterans. He has been married to his wife Tammy for 26 years. He has 5 children and 7 grandchildren.

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2014
New York State
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Nominees

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Al Soria
Rensselaer County
Nominated by Leo A. Kellogg

Al Soria was 15 years old in 1940 when he immigrated to the United States with his family from Turin, a city in Northwest Italy located at the foot of the Alps. He and his family came to the United States to escape from the dictatorship of Mussolini and his Fascist Regime. During high school he read about and watched many newsreel reports about the elite unit of Ski Troops. This unit trained at Camp Hale located at 9200 feet in the mountains of Colorado on the Continental Divide. As an expert skier and with his interest in the Ski Troops, joining the 10th Mountain Division was an obvious choice.

On January 12, 1945, Al and the 10th Mountain Division landed in Naples, Italy. Soon after they arrived, the division was sent to the front line where they were involved in many major battles including the assault of Riva Ridge and Mount Belvedere. Al had three close calls during these engagements – he was the radio operator for the Captain and while talking on the handheld radio the enemy shot the radio out of his hand. He survived a direct mortar attack where all his comrades were killed and the third time he was wounded when a U.S. A-20 bomber was commandeered by the Luftwaffe and attacked the 10th Mountain unit killing 14 and wounding 30 including Al. His leg was severely damaged; he was moved several times, had three surgeries and then was shipped to Rhodes General Hospital in Utica, New York for rehabilitation and remained there until October 1945. He is proud to have had the opportunity to fight in Italy and help liberate his native land from Fascism and German oppression.

After his military service, Al attended Columbia University and graduated in 1948 with a B.A in Chemistry. He was hired by Sterling-Winthrop Research Institute as a Chemist and moved to East Greenbush. He retired from Sterling-Winthrop in 1988 after 40 years.

Al was very active in his community. He was a member of the National Ski Patrol and the 10th Mountain Division Alumni Association. He served on the East Greenbush Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Board of Directors of the East Greenbush Community Library. Al is a good neighbor, always willing to provide transportation or other assistance to those in need. Currently he is providing customer service to the capital region as an Ambassador at the Albany International Airport.



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Brian K. Wilsey,
Saratoga County
Nominated by Dawn M. Britt

Brian K. Wilsey proudly served in the United States Marine Corp. After graduating from in 1961, he enlisted in the United State Marine Corp where he served until 1965, having reached the rank of Corporal, E-4. From August 1966 to September 1997, he served in the New York Army National Guard, First Sergeant, E-8. From September 1997 to August 2002, he served in USAR Control Group Control Group (Retired) ARPERCEN.

His awards and citations include Meritorious Service Medal, Army Commendation Medal with 2 Oakleaf clusters; Army Achievement Medal with 2 Oakleaf Clusters; Marines Corps Good Conduct Medal; National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster; Marine Corps Expeditionary Medal; Armed Forces Reserve Component Achievement Medal, 7th Award; Army Reserves National Guard Recruiter Badge; Armed Forces Reserve Medal with 2 Hourglasses; NCO Professional Development Ribbon, with numeral 3; Army Service Ribbon; Army Reserve Overseas Training Ribbon, 3rd Award; New York State Long & Faithful Service Medal, 30 years.

After completing 35 years of military service, Brian was employed by the Town of Wilton Parks Department and retired with eleven years of service in June, 2009. He is affiliated with several organizations including the Ballston Lake Baptist Church, VFW Post 420, American Legion Post 70, American Motorcycle Association, Gold Wing Road Riders Association, National Rifle Association and New York State Rifle & Pistol Association.

Brian also continues to serve with his wife, Phyllis Laing Wilsey, as a Patriot Guard member. They enjoy doing this together, serving other soldiers in many different capacities including welcoming them home as they return from far away, to giving those that have served and died an honorable burial.



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Charles Hoffman,
Rensselaer County
Nominated by the
Stephentown Veterans

Charles joined the United States Army in 1944 at the end of World War II. He went to Basic Training at Fort Wolters, Texas and was then assigned to the 289th Infantry Regiment, 75th Division. Charles was sent to France and Belgium where he fought in the Colmar Pocket along the Rhine River. His brother Sherman was fighting in the same conflict only ten miles away and was killed during the battle. Charles survived to see the end of the war. He extended his enlistment for an additional 18 months after the war ended. He joined the Signal Corps and was placed on duty during the occupation of Germany. Charles served in the Army until 1948 at the rank of T-4 the equivalent to the rank of Sergeant.

He was awarded the Bronze Star for action against the enemy, Combat Infantry Badge, Germany Occupation Ribbon and Campaign Ribbons.

After the war, Charles returned to Stephenstown and eventually joined the Carpenter's Union where he worked until his retirement. He served as the Post Commander of the VFW Post 8162 in Nassau. Charles is currently an active member of the Stephenstown Veterans.

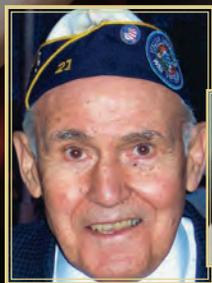


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Christopher R. Sgambati
Saratoga County
Nominated by
Christina Sgambati Pickett

Christopher R. Sgambati of Mechanicville is a proud US Navy veteran of WWII, from 1943-1946, and served overseas aboard the USS LST 614 in the South Pacific. Chris was awarded the American Theater Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Theater Medal-3 stars, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon-2 stars, and the WWII Victory Medal.

A veteran's advocate, Chris is a life member of the American Legion, the VFW, and a charter member of the ITAM Veterans Post #21, where he continues to serve as Commander. He participates in many services honoring veterans including, as Co-Chairman of the Honor a Deceased Veteran committee, a monthly ceremony in Saratoga County where he leads all those present in singing Amazing Grace and God Bless America.

In addition to his numerous veterans' activities, some of his other volunteer activities include serving on the Board of Commissioners of the Mechanicville Housing Authority for over 30 years and as a volunteer timekeeper for the Mechanicville High School basketball teams for 64 years.

Chris was devoted to his wife of over 65 years, the late Lucy Forte Sgambati, and together they had three children, seven grandchildren, and five great grandchildren. Chris was elected to the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors from the City of Mechanicville and served for 30 years. He is a retired Prudential Insurance Company agent, after 29 years' service. Prior to that, he had been employed by the Boston and Maine Railroad for 15 years. Chris Sgambati has devoted his life to his family, community, church, and country.



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Eugene J. Ratigliano
Saratoga County
Nominated by George J. Eckert

Veterans of Foreign Wars District 3 Commander Eugene J. Ratigliano, enlisted in the US Naval Reserve in 1965. He was ordered to active duty aboard the USS Guadalcanal. He served on active duty until 1968. Returning home he graduated from SUNY at Oswego in May 1973. While in college he continued his affiliation with the Naval Reserve. In August 1973 he returned to active duty in a Navy Recruiting pilot program. Over the next 18 years Gene advanced to Chief Recruiter and Command Master Chief for a ten state recruiting region.

Gene retired from the US Navy as a Master Chief Petty Officer after more than twenty-six years. During his military career, Gene was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, Meritorious Unit Commendation (2), Navy Good Conduct Medal (4), Naval Reserve Meritorious Service Medal (2), National Defense Service Medal (2), Foreign Expeditionary Medal, Navy Recruiting Ribbon (9), Navy Recruiting Gold Wreath Award (5), Armed Forces Reserve Medal (2), Navy Sharpshooter Medal, Navy Expert Rifleman Medal, NYS Conspicuous Service Medal, NYS Long and Faithful Service Medal, NYS Conspicuous Service Cross and the NY Naval Militia Recruiting Ribbon.

Not quite ready to fully retire, Gene became employed by the Department of Energy as an Administrative Specialist from which he recently retired after 21 years. He was honored by the award of the National Nuclear Security Administration's Distinguished Career Service Award.

Commander Ratigliano joined the VFW in 2004 and he has served as Chaplain, Junior Vice Commander, Post Commander. In 2008 he earned the All State Commanders Award in 2008 and 2009. He served on the Dept. of NY Veterans Service committee, By-Laws committee and currently serves as Chairman for the Gold Chevron committee. He serves on the National Legislative committee and is a regular member on Capitol Hill as an advocate for veterans.

He was instrumental in the organization and planning for the establishment of a homeless women's veteran shelter in Saratoga County. He also participated as an active partner in the refurbishment of the War Memorial in Congress Park, a participant and organizer for the annual Saratoga Memorial Day parade.

Gene has been married to his wife Nancy Jean for 43 years. They have 2 children; Jennifer and Andrew and one grandson Jack.



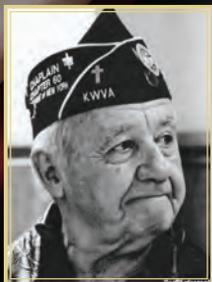
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Paul O'Keefe,
Rensselaer County

Paul was drafted into the Army and attended Basic Training at Camp Atterbury, Indianapolis, Indiana. Private First Class Paul O'Keefe was station in Japan, Pusan and Korea. He served in Korea for 7 months. While in Korea Paul served with the 24th Infantry Division (known as the Victory Division) and they were the first U.S. troops called to South Korea to fight with the R.O.K troops. The 24th Infantry Division and R.O.K. troops were completely outnumbered, but just battled on and were able to delay the North Korean forces from advancing for seven hours. The 24th Division, despite overwhelming odds continued holding off the North Korean Forces, allowing United Nations to build up their forces to help South Korea. The 24th Division suffered 3,735 killed and 7,395 wounded during the War.

Paul is the Chaplain and active member of the Adirondack Chapter No. 60 of the Korean War Veterans Association. Paul can be seen at many community events representing the Adirondack Chapter of the Korean War Veterans, as well at attending numerous veterans events throughout the Capital District individually, showing his support for active duty and veterans as a whole. Paul is also a very active member (from 1985 to present) at the Hemstreet Park Fire Dept. in Mechanicville, New York.

Paul continually serves his community. In November 2013, Paul spoke at the Mechanicville Elementary School about Veterans Day and made a huge impact on his young audience. Paul is always eager to educate those around him, while doing everything he can to be a humble active member of the community and very involved head of his family.



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Senator Kathleen A. Marchione
would like to thank the 43rd District
Veterans Hall of Fame Advisory Panel
for their diligence and integrity in
selecting the 2014 43rd Senate District
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43rd Senate District Veterans
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Allen Ayotte,
Halfmoon, Saratoga County

Allen is a lifetime resident of the Town of Halfmoon. He is a veteran of the United States Air Force. Was stationed at Chanhute Air Force Base, Illinois where he was trained as a support specialist, dealing with aircrew members in-flight safety, survival equipment and procedures for ejection seat operations. Was then assigned to Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina. Was nominated for and received the 363rd Combat Crew Training Wing Airman of the Year. Was then promoted to the rank of Sergeant.

In December of 1967 was assigned to the 16th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Airbase, Saigon, Vietnam. Was honorably discharged in December, 1968. Allen was awarded the Air Force Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Defense Medal and the Vietnam Campaign Medal.

Allen returned home to Halfmoon was married to Denise and had two daughters. Served as a New York State Capital Police Office, Fire Protection Specialist with the New York State Department of State and New York State Fire Instructor. He has been a member of the West Crescent Fire District, W.K. Mansfield Hose Co. for 48 years. Allen is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 1498, Halfmoon Clifton-Park and a member of the Halfmoon-Clifton Park American Legion Post 1450. Allen is also a member of the Halfmoon Historical Society.



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Jody Luskin,
Rensselaer County

Jody Luskin is a resident of the Town of Pittstown and lives there with her husband, Ken. She has spent much of her adult life raising their three children, and now caring for her grandchildren. In addition, she cares for many farm animals.

In 2011, Jody Luskin and her husband Ken were among several volunteers that started a grass roots salute to veterans. The result was the Veterans Hall, located in the old Freihofer building at the Schaghticoke Fairgrounds. The idea came to fruition the first year with volunteers using a small section of the building to display photos of Rensselaer County veterans as well as military related items that had been donated. The response from the public was very encouraging and the second year the entire building was utilized. Jody has organized fund raisers such as bake sales, a Veterans Hall booth at fair events and creation of a challenge coin. She along with other volunteers have used the money to improve the building both in structure and appearance. The Veterans Hall has brought a great deal of comfort to many veterans and their families.

The Veterans Hall is a Salute to Veterans Past and Present. Fairgoers have visited Veterans Hall or have come to an Open House to pay tribute to our veterans and say thank you. In addition, the volunteers are compiling a list of veterans' names from Rensselaer County. This will be an ongoing objective for years to come. The hope is to include neighboring counties in the future.



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43rd Senate District Veterans
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John Wapner, Ph.D
Columbia County

John Wapner is a Consulting Clinical Psychologist practicing in the Capital District since 1975. He was first employed as a staff and then Chief Psychologist at the Albany County Mental Health Clinic. He then served as the founding Director of the Psychological Services Center at SUNY Albany. He has been in full time private practice since 1986. Dr. Wapner served as President of the Chatham School Board for 7 years. He has resided in Old Chatham since 1978.



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43rd Senate District Veterans Hall of Fame 2013 Honorees

Eugene J. Corsale, US Navy, Saratoga County

James M. Coyne, US Army National Guard, Saratoga County

Robert DeSio, US Air Force, Saratoga County

Vincent Devlin, US Army Air Corps, US Air Force, Rensselaer County

George H. Doin, US Marine Corps, Saratoga County

George "Jack" Eckert, US Navy, Saratoga County

Corneilus L. Gray, US Army, Rensselaer County

James A. Haggerty, US Marine Corps, Columbia County

Thomas E. Hendry, Jr., US Army, Rensselaer County

Edward H. Johnson, US Army, Saratoga County

Franklyn C. Mooney, US Navy, Rensselaer County

Howard Snyder, US Air Force, Rensselaer County

Hawley Waldron, US Marine Corps, Saratoga County

Robert D. Webster, US Army, , Saratoga County

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