



# VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

## JOHN HENSEL

John "Jack" Hensel, 96, is a veteran of World War II who was drafted into the United States Navy on June 22, 1943, just 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," Mr. Hensel 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, Mr. Hensel, 20 years old at the time, was severely burned and blown off the carrier and into the ocean. After regaining consciousness in the water, Mr. Hensel, 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, Mr. Hensel 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 crewmen and wounded more than 400.

For his service, Mr. Hensel earned numerous accolades, including the Purple Heart. An active and dedicated member of Central New York Chapter 490 Military Order of the Purple Heart, Mr. Hensel 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.

Mr. Hensel 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 nine great-grandchildren.



JOHN HENSEL WAS SELECTED AS A 2021  
VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY  
**SENATOR JOSEPH A. GRIFFO.**

2021