



# VETERANS

★★★ HALL OF FAME ★★★

## RICHARD T. GILLESPIE

Richard T. Gillespie enlisted in the military in 1943 and served in the United States Air Corps during WWII. He attained the rank of First Lieutenant.

Interested in aviation from a young age, Mr. Gillespie, after graduating high school, began studying Engineering at Syracuse University. In 1941, he earned his pilot's license through the Federal Civilian Pilot Training Program.

In order to serve his Nation in World War II, Mr. Gillespie interrupted his studies and enlisted in the military in 1943. He was assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps' 447th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. He flew a B-17 Boeing Bomber (known as the "Flying Fortress") on 21 missions over Germany, leading a nine-man crew through what was called "flak alley." He piloted the lead bomber on his last ten missions and never lost a plane to enemy fire.

For his valor and service, he earned numerous commendations and medals, including three Bronze Service Stars, the World War II Victory Medal, Air Medal, and the Distinguished Flying Cross for leading a bombing mission that destroyed a Nazi jet airbase.

Soon after Germany surrendered in 1945, Mr. Gillespie led a large formation of B-17s on an aerial victory tour of Europe with officers and ground crew members onboard. In 1945, Mr. Gillespie was honorably discharged.

Mr. Gillespie and his wife, Jean, returned to their hometown of Fulton. He became Syracuse University's first Aeronautical Engineering graduate in 1948. Instead of pursuing an aviation career, he went on to serve in the Air Force Reserve and ran the family's popular milk processing and delivery business with his wife and their four sons.

They retired and moved to Florida and eventually relocated to Penn Yan, New York in 1999. Mr. Gillespie served on the Board of the First Presbyterian Church and volunteered with Meals on Wheels and at the Yates Community Center, among others. In 2014, he was named Volunteer of the Year by the Yates County Cultural and Recreation Center.

In Fall 2013, Mr. Gillespie joined 11 other WW II-era veterans from Penn Yan as part of an Honor Flight to the Nation's capital.

Mr. Gillespie continues to reside in Yates County and celebrated his 100th birthday on August 14.



RICHARD T. GILLESPIE WAS SELECTED AS A  
2021 VETERANS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE BY  
**SENATOR THOMAS F. O'MARA.**

2021