

The Office of Governor M. Jodi Rell



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Governor Rell Announces New Inductees into Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame

Congressional Medal of Honor Recipient, Decorated Hero of World War II & Longest-Serving Member of General Assembly Among Class of 2009

Governor M. Jodi Rell today announced the 11 members of the Class of 2009 approved for induction into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame Class.

Governor Rell, joined by leaders of the state's veterans' community, will formally induct the Class of 2009 in a public ceremony on Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at 5 p.m. in the Atrium of the Legislative Office Building in Hartford. At the ceremony, Governor Rell will present each honoree or family representative with an official, numbered commemorative medallion recognizing their formal induction into this select group.

"It is most appropriate that we pause each year to recognize and honor the heroes of the past and present who have so vitally shaped our nation and way of life," Governor Rell said. "These individuals not only answered the call of their nation, they have answered the call of their communities. It is what they have done beyond their military service that truly sets them apart as individuals worthy of this special honor. The example they have set, the courage they have shown and the public service they have given is most worthy of the respect and admiration of all Connecticut citizens."

Governor Rell created the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame in 2005 through Executive Order No. 5 to pay permanent tribute to those citizens who have served the nation with distinction in the U.S. Armed Forces and then returned home to enrich their communities and state through distinguished careers and selfless public service.

Forty Connecticut veterans have previously been inducted into the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame. Among them are former President George H.W. Bush, former Governor William A. O'Neill, five Medal of Honor recipients and the first woman inductee, Navy Veteran Barbara Miller.

Three of this year's inductees will be inducted posthumously. This year's class includes the late state Representative Richard O. Belden, an Air Force veteran and the longest continually serving member of the Connecticut House of Representatives from 1974 until his death in office in 2007.

Also in the Class of 2009 are Robert Genovese, co-founder of the "Veterans Who Care Committee," which raised funds for children of Vietnam veterans born with birth defects from Agent Orange exposure, and Brigadier General Dan McHale, who continues to serve after military retirement as Connecticut's military Transitional Assistance Advisor, helping to connect today's veterans to important transition resources.

Iwo Jima survivor and distinguished citizen from the town of Clinton, Daniel Vece, Jr., is also an inductee in this year's class.

The 2009 inductees to the Connecticut Veterans Hall of Fame are:

Richard O. Belden (posthumous award; formerly of Shelton)

Dick Belden served in the U.S. Air Force from 1955 through 1961. Known as "The Dean of the House," Representative Belden served in the Connecticut General Assembly continuously from 1974 until his death in office in 2007. He held many key leadership positions in the Legislature including Assistant House Republican Leader, Deputy Speaker of the House, Ranking Member of the Finance Committee and Member of the state Bond Commission. He was Director of the Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Institute of Municipal Studies and held many other significant statewide posts. Mr. Belden had a 38-year management career at Sikorsky Aircraft. He was a trustee of St. Margaret Mary Church in Shelton and a volunteer at Griffin Hospital Parent Child Resource Center, Lower Naugatuck Valley Boys and Girls Club, Hewitt Memorial Hospital, Valley Substance Abuse Council, Emmett O'Brien Regional Vocational-Technical School and the American Legion Sutter-Terlizzi Post #16.

John "Jack" Joseph Dougherty of Branford

John "Jack" Dougherty enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1966. In Vietnam, he served as an infantryman and squad leader with the 3/4 Marine Division and participated in Operation Robin South Hill 685 (Phou Noui), during which he was wounded and was awarded the Purple Heart Medal. A volunteer since 1982 with the Boy Scouts of America, he is also an active member of the Disabled American Veterans and the Military Order of the Devil Dogs. He serves as finance officer of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and has been a devoted member and officer of the Marine Corps League, serving as Detachment Adjutant and Senior Vice Commander. The Marine Corps League named him the Connecticut Detachment "Marine of the Year 2008." Mr. Dougherty has also received the New England Division Roland G. Knapp Award in 2008, the Marine Corps League Distinguished Bronze Service Medal and the Distinguished Silver Citizen Medal. He is a lector at Trinity Episcopal Church in Branford and is employed as a program coordinator for Schultz Electric Company of New Haven.

Robert L. Genovese of Naugatuck

Robert Genovese served in Vietnam in the U.S. Air Force. He is co-founder of the "Veterans Who Care Committee," which for over 20 years raised funds for children of Vietnam veterans born with birth defects due to the effects of exposure to Agent Orange. The organization also offered emergency financial assistance to veterans in need while awaiting permanent benefits. He is past commander of VFW Post #1946; past commander, Union City Chapter #11 Disabled American Veterans; and organizer of POW/MIA remembrance vigils in Naugatuck. He was Honorary Grand Marshall of the 2008 Connecticut Veterans Day Parade. As a consultant on the Connecticut production of the movie "Jackknife" starring

Robert DeNiro and Ed Harris, Mr. Genovese was instrumental in assuring that returning Vietnam veterans were portrayed accurately. A former accredited veterans service officer/counselor with the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs, he also serves on the Board of Directors of the Vietnam Veterans Agent Orange Victims, Inc., and is a member of AMVETS, Catholic War Veterans Post #708, American Legion Post #17, Italian-American War Veterans Post #8 and Veterans of the Vietnam War. A long-time member of the Naugatuck Elks Lodge #967, he was named Volunteer of the Year 1998-99 and is a member of the Elks National Service Commission. He also is a member of the Knights of Columbus Ojeda Council #33 and St. Hedwig Roman Catholic Church.

Dr. Harvey J. Grinsell, Jr., MD, of Putnam/Woodstock

Prior to completing high school in 1945, Dr. Harvey Grinsell enlisted in the Navy during World War II as a pharmacist's mate. He was called back into the Navy as a lieutenant upon completion of his medical degree from Tufts Medical School in 1954. He served as a medical officer for the Arctic Fleet through 1956. He co-developed an antidote for hydrocarbon (lead) poisoning and conducted research on methods to diagnose spinal meningitis. He was founder and director of the Day Kimball Pediatric Center, the first known hospital-based program of its kind in the nation. He served as medical director of the John Dempsey Regional Center, where he co-developed one of the state's first early intervention programs for infants with developmental disabilities. He established in-school medical exams, immunizations and screening for children in rural eastern Connecticut towns. He brought the federal Women, Infants & Children (WIC) Program to rural eastern Connecticut to improve maternal and childhood nutrition. The Quinnebaug Valley Association for Retarded Citizens named Dr. Grinsell "Man of the Year" and the Danielson Junior Chamber of Commerce gave him their "Distinguished Service Award." Dr. Grinsell was honored by the Town of Plainfield for establishing the Plainfield Day Kimball Pediatric Center at Plainfield Town Hall.

Brig Gen. John J. King (posthumous award; formerly of Hartford)

Brig. Gen. John King began his career in the U.S. Army as a captain in the infantry from 1942 to 1946. He saw combat in Italy, where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in action October 1944 at Camp diVenino, Italy. A recipient of the Silver Star, the Purple Heart and the Italian Military Valor Cross, he rose to Assistant Division Commander with the 76th Division, U.S. Army Reserves. General King became a civil engineer with management responsibility for the construction and renovation of several landmark buildings, including St. Joseph's Cathedral and the Phoenix Insurance "Boat" Building. He was Corporate Vice President of the George A. Fuller Co. and Horn Construction, Inc., of Hartford. He was one of the main organizers of the Connecticut Armed Forces Day Parades from 1970 to 1984. General King also served as President Emeritus of the Board of Trustees of St. Joseph's College. A co-founder and past president, he established the 100 Club of Connecticut, dedicated to the financial support of spouses and children of first responders killed in the line of duty. He was a incorporator of St. Francis Hospital and a member of the National and Connecticut Society of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. He served as a member of the Connecticut Department of Public Works Advisory Council and of the Retired Military Officers Association.

Rev. William D. McGee of Winsted

The Rev. William McGee served as a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps in the First Marine Air Wing in Vietnam. He was awarded the Purple Heart Medal (2 awards) and the Meritorious Unit Citation Vietnam Cross of Gallantry. Ordained with the Southern Baptist Convention and Fellowship of Connecticut Congregational Christian Churches, he has a 30-year career in the ministry, founding and serving many churches, organizations and missions throughout the United States. Rev. McGee was awarded the Presidential Volunteer Service Award for over 5,000 hours of volunteer service. He has also received national recognition from the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches for his work with youth. He is a former prison chaplain and currently serves as the chaplain of VFW Post #296 and as a volunteer chaplain for the Connecticut Chapter for the Missing in America Project. Rev. McGee

founded and is pastoral leader for Men Walking With God International Ministries. He serves as a member of the Boards of Directors for Asian Faith Mission and for Agape Childrens' Home, both located in Kerala, India.

Brig. Gen. Daniel J. McHale of Avon

Brig. Gen. Daniel McHale began his military career as an enlisted Army diver in Vietnam. Retiring with over 35 years of military service, he rose to the rank of Brigadier General, Infantry, Connecticut Army National Guard. General McHale was Commander of the Connecticut National Guard's Quick Reaction Force following the events of September 11, 2001, and coordinator of the state's Katrina Relief Operations in 2005 and 2006. He is the recipient of the Legion of Merit, Vietnam Service Medal and currently serves as the Connecticut Department of Defense Transitional Assistance Advisor, providing outreach, advocacy and benefits assistance to all generations of veterans and active duty personnel and their families. He is Co-Chairman of the Connecticut OEF/OIF Support Coordination Committee and a contributor to the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. He is a facilitator for the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program for returning Reserve and National Guard units. He volunteers as a guardian for the "American Warrior" Honor Flight Program, which takes World War II veterans to Washington, D.C., to view the national WWII Memorial. The 1st Vice President of the Connecticut Chapter of the Association of the U.S. Army, General McHale also volunteers with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) and "Give2the Troops" overseas care package program. He is a retired senior manager of the U.S. Postal Service and former Postmaster of Simsbury, Connecticut.

Theodore J. Plamondon, Jr. of Enfield

Theodore "Ted" Plamondon's 21-year enlisted military career spanned three decades with service in the U.S. Navy during World War II and with the Naval Reserves during the Korea and Vietnam War eras. He is a recipient of the Presidential Unit Citation, WWII Victory Medal and European Theater Ribbon with two stars. His volunteer service as a highly-involved local veteran includes 20 years as Chairman of the Enfield Veterans Council and service as a lifetime member. He organized and raised funds for Enfield's Memorial Day and Veterans Day parades for over 50 years. He is Chairman of the Enfield World War II Monument Committee, Treasurer and Co-Chairman of the National Purple Heart Museum and spearheaded the dedication of a new monument honoring all fallen Enfield citizens from WWI, WWII, Korea and Vietnam. He is a 20-year service officer and Chairman of multiple committees at his VFW Post #1501. In 1996, he received the Enfield Town Council "Patriot Award" and 2006 they named him a "Citizen of the Year." Mr. Plamondon is a retired police officer for the towns of Suffield and Enfield, a former deputy sheriff for Hartford County and a state marshal.

Alphonse N. Sabetta of Shelton

Alphonse Sabetta served as a U.S. Army staff sergeant during the Korean War, where he was awarded the Korean Service Medal with Two Bronze Stars and the United Nations Service Medal. He is past Commander and the current Adjutant of the Sutter-Terlizi American Legion Post #16. In 2008 he was inducted in the Connecticut American Legion Hall of Fame. Mr. Sabetta is the organizer of many annual activities for youth to raise awareness of veterans' contributions and community service including oratorical contests, fundraisers and Americanism programs in the schools. He chaired the Naugatuck Valley Area Veterans Korean War 50th Anniversary Commemoration from 2000 to 2003. He is a member of the local selection committee for Boys and Girls State and serves as Chairman of the War Memorial Scholarship Committee of Shelton. He also is a member of the VFW and Korean War Veterans Associations. A long-time organizer, coach and official for youth athletics, his devotion to young people includes service with the Bob Cousy Basketball League, Little League, New Haven Board #10 Basketball Officials, Western Connecticut Football Officials, and Valley and New Haven Umpires Association. Mr. Sabetta is a retired maintenance supervisor for the Shelton Board of Education at Shelton High School.

Daniel A. Vece, Jr., of Clinton

Daniel Vece enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1943 before graduating from high school. He saw fighting at the Battle of Iwo Jima and is an organizer of the Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain. He is a member of the Iwo Jima Survivors Association and is a frequent national speaker with other Iwo Jima survivors. He served as First Selectman of Clinton and held office on the Board of Selectmen for 13 years. A lifetime member of the Clinton Volunteer Fire Department and Fire Chief for 25 years, the Clinton Fire Department's annual "Firefighter of the Year" award is named after Chief Vece. During his tenure as chief he helped bring regional 24-hour EMS services to shoreline towns and was appointed by Governor Ella Grasso to serve as Chairman of the Emergency 911 Implementation Committee, which made Connecticut the second state in the nation to join the E-911 Program. He is a former senior member of the state Economic Development Commission and Public Works Commission. He has received the Clinton Distinguished Citizen Award, the Chamber of Commerce "Man of the Year Award" and the Clinton Spirit Award. He is an active member of the American Legion, VFW and Lions Clubs. Mr. Vece was co-owner of Shore TV and Appliance Store from 1957 through 1982.

Homer L. Wise (posthumous award; formerly of Stamford)

Homer Lee Wise, a U.S. Army staff sergeant, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions on June 14, 1944, in Magliano, Italy. He landed in Salerno, Italy on September 9, 1943, and continued his valor in action throughout Italy, including Naples and Rome, until August 1944 when he participated in the invasion of Southern France. He was pulled from combat in November 1944 to be presented the Medal of Honor by Lieutenant General Alexander M. Patch, Commander of the Seventh Army in Epinal, France. Sgt. Wise became one of the most highly decorated infantrymen of World War II – a recipient of the Silver Star, Bronze Star with Valor Device, Purple Heart with two Oak Leaf Clusters, Italian Military Cross of Valor, French Croix DeGuerre and the Combat Infantryman's Badge. Sgt. Wise was discharged in 1945 and reenlisted in the Army in 1947, serving in multiple recruiting and administrative positions in Stamford, Germany, France, Italy and Ft. Devens, Massachusetts. He received the high honor of being selected as one of six honorary pall bearers at the dedication of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in 1958 under President Dwight D. Eisenhower. He retired from the U.S. Army in 1966 with the rank of master sergeant and then worked in the Stamford area, where he was known locally for his humility regarding his heroic deeds and frequent individual kindnesses to neighbors and strangers.

"This is an exceptionally distinguished class of inductees – but they represent the dedicated military and public service of the many veterans in our state," said Governor Rell. "They have made countless and important contributions to others with deeds and accomplishments that span a lifetime. They and their families should be immensely proud of this distinctive honor. I am very proud to be their Governor."

This year's inductees were selected from a field of 47 nominations and recommended to the Governor by an appointed executive nomination committee that includes Department of Veterans' Affairs Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz; the state Adjutant General, Air Force Major General Thaddeus J. Martin; members of the General Assembly and other state veterans.

Veterans who served in all military conflicts are eligible to be considered, including World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf and service in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nomination packets for the 2010 Hall of Fame Class must be received by June 30, 2010. Nomination packets and additional information can be accessed at www.ct.gov/ctva.

