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OTSEGO COUNTY VETERAN ENSHRINED IN SENATE HALL OF FAME

Senator Seward welcomes Thomas McMillen to Capitol for induction ceremony

ALBANY, 05/15/18 – State Senator James L. Seward (R/C/I/Ref-Oneonta) today paid tribute to Thomas McMillen of Morris as a 2018 inductee to the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame.

“Thomas McMillen is a true American hero, and more than worthy of inclusion in the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame,” said Senator Seward. **“Tom displayed superior bravery and courage while serving our nation. His two tours in Vietnam – first as an infantry platoon commander and later as a helicopter pilot – highlighted a rare skill set and demonstrated his desire to put country first. He was a gifted leader who took on new, demanding challenges throughout his military career and excelled at every turn. Our country is better because of Thomas McMillen.”**

The New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame inductees may be former members of any branch of the United States Armed Forces. The exceptional men and women are chosen for this prestigious honor based on either service in combat or notable work performed after discharge from the service.

McMillen was recognized during a special ceremony at the Capitol along with other inductees to the New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame. McMillen’s biography along with those of other inductees, past and present, can be found on-line at www.nysenate.gov/initiatives/honoring-our-veterans.

“My whole-hearted congratulations to Tom and his fellow inductees. Further, my thanks to all veterans past and present. Your courage, sacrifice and achievement are something each and every American should respect and celebrate,” Seward added.

The complete New York State Senate Veterans Hall of Fame biography for Thomas McMillen:

Thomas A. McMillen of Morris, proudly served our nation in the United States Army on active duty from 1967 to 1973 completing two tours in Vietnam. During his wartime service he

ascended to the rank of Captain and demonstrated his versatility and expertise first as an infantry platoon commander and later as a Chinook helicopter pilot.

During his first tour in Vietnam, McMillen commanded the 1st Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st Infantry Division also known as “Big Red One.” He and his platoon fully engaged with the enemy on three occasions during search and destroy operations. Despite the hardships, all twenty-five men under his command survived their six months in the bush.

McMillen rotated back to the United States where he took on a new challenge. He began helicopter flight school and later returned to Vietnam in August of 1970 as a Chinook pilot in the 242 Assault Support Helicopter Company. Over the next year, Captain McMillen logged 973 combat flying hours, taking on small arms fire on numerous occasions, but always returning safely.

Following his release from active duty, McMillen’s dedication and commitment did not waver. He retained his flight status by serving part-time in the Army National Guard, retiring in December of 2001 as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO4).

In retirement, McMillen continues to demonstrate his devotion to his country and his fellow soldiers. He belongs to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, is a member of the Vietnam Veterans Helicopter Association, and gives group presentations about his experiences.

A decorated veteran, McMillen is proud to have received the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with 6 Campaign Stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal with ’60 Device, Bronze Star Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Cluster, Army Aviator Badge, Air Medal, Army Commendation Medal, four Overseas Service Bars, and Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

In a letter of commendation, his commanding officer Major W.F. Gabella wrote, “Your cheerful acceptance of hardships, inspired leadership, loyalty and devotion to duty has earned you the respect and admiration of subordinates, peers, and superiors alike.”

Thomas A. McMillen was a strong, compassionate leader who could adapt to any situation and utilized his God-given abilities to the fullest extent to defend our rights, protect his fellow soldiers, and proudly represent the United States of America.