



Chester R. Edwards Veteran of the Year for 2024



Photo courtesy of
Mark O'Rourke

COL (Ret) Chester R. Edwards (left) and BG (Ret) Barry Hartman, at the ceremony honoring Edwards as Veteran of the Year, which was held on October 22, 2024

The Friends of the New York State Military Museum, and the Association of US Army — Capital District of NY Chapter, held their Veteran of the Year ceremony on Tuesday, October 22, 2024, at the Saratoga-Wilton Elks Lodge #161 in Saratoga Springs.

The recipient of the Veteran of the Year award was COL (Ret) Chester R. Edwards, NY Guard, a Vietnam Mobile Riverine Force Veteran. Edwards resides in Port Chester, NY.

The Veteran of the Year award was presented by the Presidents of the two sponsoring organizations — Roy McDonald of the Friends of the NYS Military Museum and Don Roy of the AUSA-CDNYC.

In addition to the award, proclamations were presented to Edwards by Phil Barrett, Chairman of the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors, New York State Assemblyman Steve Otis, New York State Senator Shelley Mayer, and Congressman Jamal Bowman.

Remarks were given by the Adjutant General of the State of New York.

Presentation and retirement of the colors was done by students from LaSalle Academy. The invocation and benediction were given by Rev. Charlene Robbins. The National Anthem and “God Bless America” were sung by Mallory Dominguez. Refreshments were donated by Stewart’s.

Chester R. Edwards served in the U.S. Navy from 1966 to 1972. His service at that time included combat duty in Vietnam as an Assault Support Patrol Boat Coxswain with the Mobile Riverine Force, as well as assignments on a Submarine Tender and an Ocean-Going Tugboat. Edwards received numerous awards for his Navy service, including the Naval Achievement Medal w/Combat V (2 awards), Combat Action Ribbon, Presidential Unit Citation w/2 Bronze Stars and Combat “V,” and others.

After that service, Edwards returned to civilian life, spending over 35 years as a corporate financial executive and financial consultant.

Even while working in finance, in the aftermath of the attacks of 9/11, Edwards joined the New York State Guard in 2003. His service in the Guard involved several deployments in New York State, assisting with civil authorities during storms and civil unrest. His service with the Guard included a three-month deployment in command of the New York Guard forces at Camp Smith, managing force movement into areas impacted by Hurricane Sandy. Edwards also received various awards and decorations for his service in the Guard, including the NYS Military Commendation Medal (awarded twice) and NYS Medal for Meritorious Service, among others.

Edwards has given a great deal of time giving back to his community. Over the years, he has volunteered with many community organizations in Westchester County, as well as various veterans groups. Also, after retiring from corporate work, he spent 12 years as a Middle and High School Teacher and Dean at a school in Harlem.

Chester Edwards was inducted into the NYS Veterans Hall of Fame in 2023 by State Senator Shelley Meyer.

Edwards has been married to his wife, Mary, for 52 years. He is the proud father of two daughters and proud grandfather of two granddaughters.

Kevin Weddle Receives Friends' Inaugural “Preserving Our Military Heritage” Award



Photo courtesy
of Paul Fanning

COL (Ret) Kevin J. Weddle addresses the audience at the
New York State Military Museum on October 16, 2024

COL (Ret) Kevin Weddle, author of the book [The Compleat Victory](#) (Oxford University Press, 2021), was awarded the Friends of the New York State Military Museum’s inaugural “Preserving Our Military Heritage” award at a ceremony at the Museum on October 16, 2024.

Weddle’s book, formally entitled [The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution](#), tells the story of the Battle of Saratoga, part of the campaign in New York and Vermont in 1776 and 1777 in which the American military dealt a significant blow to the British, convincing the French to provide assistance to the Americans.

The book, published in 2021, is part of an Oxford University Press series called “Pivotal Moments in American History.” It has received numerous awards, including The Fraunces Tavern Museum Book Award, The Gilder Lehrman Military History Prize, and The Society of the Cincinnati Prize.

Kevin Weddle is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point (Class of 1979). He also has Master’s Degrees from the University of Minnesota in history and civil engineering, and a Ph.D. in history from Princeton University. Weddle taught Military History at West Point, prompting his interest in the Revolutionary War in general and the Battle of Saratoga in particular, and he has also taught at the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

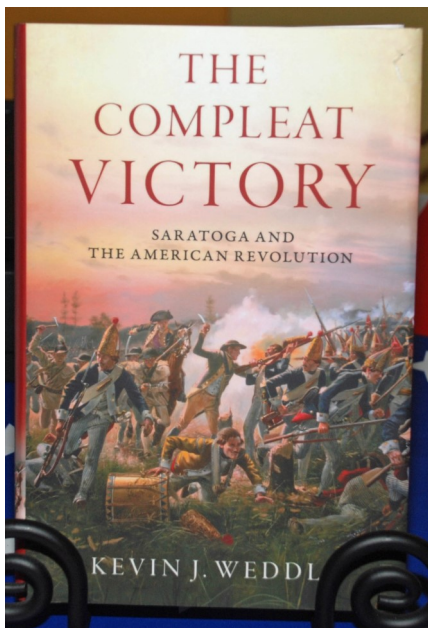




Photo courtesy of Paul Fanning

Pictured from left: Friends President Roy McDonald, Friends Trustee Barry Hartman, Kevin Weddle (the Honoree), Chief Warrant Officer (US. Army, Ret.) Bob Nevin of the AUSA, MG Michel Natali, and Museum Director Courtney Burns

Weddle served over 28 years in the U.S. Army as a combat engineer, retiring as a Colonel. His assignments included service as a platoon leader, assistant battalion operations officer, company executive and company commander. He had tours of duty at West Point, in Germany, at the Defense Intelligence Agency and at the Pentagon.

Weddle also served as operations officer for the 555th Combat Engineer Group, battalion commander of the 299th Engineer Battalion, 4th Infantry Division, and he was selected for brigade command before joining the faculty at the U.S. Army War College. Weddle is a distinguished fellow at the War College, as well as Professor Emeritus of Military Theory and Strategy and the former Elihu Root Chair of Military Studies.

In addition to The Compleat Victory, Weddle has written the book Lincoln's Tragic Admiral: The Life of Sameul Francis DuPont (University of Virginia Press, 2005), which won the 2006 William E. Colby Award and the Army War College's faculty writing award and was runner-up in the Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Naval History prize competition. He has also written numerous articles for scholarly and popular publications.

Weddle is married to the former Jean Buechner of St. Paul, Minnesota. They reside in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Colonel and Mrs. Weddle have one daughter, Anne.



Photo courtesy of Paul Fanning

Mark O'Rourke, a U.S. Army veteran and Friends Trustee, speaks at the event honoring Kevin Weddle; O'Rourke served as the Master of Ceremonies for the award ceremony



Photo courtesy of Paul Fanning

BG (Ret) Barry Hartman speaking at the ceremony honoring Kevin J. Weddle with the Preserving Our Military History award

The award was presented to Weddle by Friends President Hon. Roy McDonald, a U.S. Army veteran, Friends Secretary BG (Ret) Barry Hartman, and Col. Jake Larkowich, Deputy Commandant of the U.S. Army War College, who appeared also on behalf of Major Gen. David C. Hill, Commandant of the U.S. Army War College.

Additional congratulatory remarks and presentations were made by Major Gen. Michel A. Natali, Assistant Adjutant General, New York Army National Guard, on behalf of Major Gen. Raymond F. Shields, New York Adjutant General; and by Chief Warrant Officer (USA Ret) Bob Nevins, on behalf of the Capital Region Chapter of the Association of the United States Army.

According to Friends Trustee Mark O'Rourke, the "Preserving Our Military Heritage" award was created to recognize people, institutions and organizations that have made meaningful contributions to preserving New York's military history. The award was specifically planned to be given in October, because October is New York State History Month. O'Rourke says that the Friends hope to continue to give the award annually, also in October, and that the Friends may consider creating another annual award, to be given annually in May, in conjunction with National Military Appreciation Month.

Thank you to the following people for their efforts in creating and/or distributing this issue of the Newsletter: Fred Katz, Tim Sinnott, Bill F. Schmeelcke, Melissa Thompson-Flynn, Diana Flynn, Mark O'Rourke, Bill Watkins, Charlie Wheeler, Lee Coleman, Paul Fanning, Courtney Burns, Colleen Maheux, Bruce Farley, and Francis Crandall (Flight Creative Group).

Melissa Thompson-Flynn Tells the Story of a Boat Used in Covert OSS Operations During World War II

Museum Docent Melissa Thompson-Flynn has taken on the task of telling the story of the service of her father-in-law, James Henry Flynn, in covert operations during World War II. Our thanks to Melissa, as well as Diana Flynn, for providing information on Flynn's service.

Flynn was born in Baltimore in 1913 but moved to Troy, NY as a young child. He enlisted in the Navy in 1929 (his mother approved his enlistment despite his being only 16 years old). After having been honorably discharged from the Navy in 1933, he was subsequently drafted into the Army in 1942. After testing and training, he was selected for special assignment by the OSS (the forerunner of the CIA) and promoted to Warrant Officer. After receiving further training, he was sent to the China-Burma-India (CBI) theater of operations and appointed First Mate on a Boat designated P-564.

Boat P-564 was designated as and intended to look like an Air-Sea Rescue Boat, sometimes referred to as a "Crash Boat," which was used to rescue downed air crews at sea. But in reality, the Boat was a modified version of a Crash Boat, used for clandestine operations against the Japanese in the CBI theater, and Flynn was often in operational command of the boat.



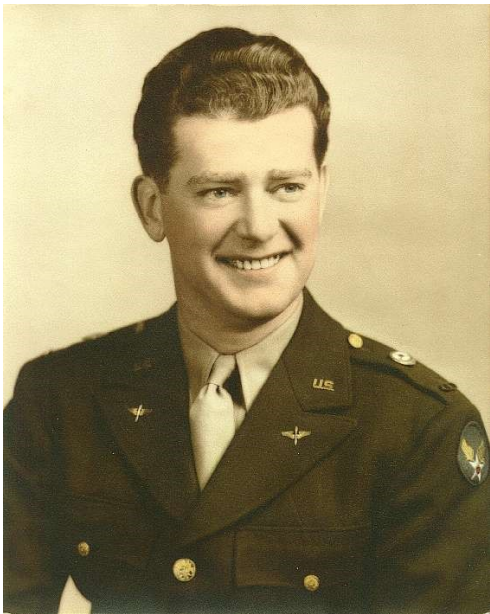
85-Foot Air-Sea Rescue Boat, P-564
Built by Herreshoff Manufacturing Company, 1944
Conducted OSS Operations in Burma, 1944-45
First Mate Warrant Officer James H. Flynn
Model Built by Melissa Thompson-Flynn

Boat P-564 engaged in various covert activities behind Japanese lines. Those activities included landing special ops forces, planning and executing sabotage and guerilla activities, doing surveillance of enemy troops, and supporting the action of Frogmen. You can read more about the operations of P-564 and other at Crash Boats at the following website: uscrashboats.org.

Melissa Thompson-Flynn recently completed a model of Boat P-564, built from scratch. Shown on the prior page are pictures of the model, as well as a plaque which identifies the boat and Warrant Officer Flynn's involvement.

Melissa presented the story of the Crash Boats, as well her personal story of constructing the model, to the Model Shipwrights Guild of Western New York on Thursday evening, November 14th. Anyone interested in seeing the recording of her presentation can see it at this link:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/rB3Xj81caoDJuflCwFxht6dcbXJ6P7aphAFeQqIRlqfegd09j0-0NcCj4z_Qv4qP.aWxsWnShEvlxx8Er?startTime=1731629405000, using the passcode X\$QY.S4? (Melissa's portion covers the first 40 minutes).



James Henry Flynn, in uniform

Photos
courtesy of
Diana
Flynn and
Melissa
Thompson-
Flynn



James Henry Flynn's children Jim and Diana
with a model of Air-Sea Rescue Boat P-564

New York State Military Museum & Veterans Research Center
61 Lake Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
Phone: (518) 581-5100
Website: www.museum.dmna.ny.gov

Museum Hours: Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 AM—4:00 PM

**Museum Bookstore and Shop: Tuesday through Saturday,
11:00 AM — 4:00 PM**

Museum Participates in Program at Saratoga Battlefield

The New York State Military Museum was well-represented at the Veterans Day Commemoration and Family Day on Saturday, November 9 at the Saratoga National Historical Park.

Museum Docents Paul McCarthy, Wayne Rozen, Bill Schmeelcke and Tim Sinnott manned a table at the event to talk about and distribute literature concerning the Museum. In addition, Museum volunteers Hady Finch and Lucille Millarson prepared a packet entitled “Preparing for Veterans Day.” The packet, intended in part as an educational tool for children, contains information and activities regarding Veterans Day and America’s military history.

Museum Docent Bill Schmeelcke delivered an address at the ceremony. Bill was in the Navy for 27 years, serving on several nuclear-powered aircraft carriers. Bill focused on the often-heard phrase, “Thank you for your service.” As Bill said, that phrase is common now, although it wasn’t so common in earlier years. Bill’s late friend, Brian, was a Vietnam vet. Bill noted that “Brian never got a proper welcome home at the airport, never got a parade, and I doubt if he was thanked for his service as I and my fellow veterans of the current era are.” Bill closed by thanking the veterans present for their service to our country.



Photo courtesy of Bill Schmeelcke

Museum Docent Bill Schmeelcke delivers a presentation at the program at the Saratoga Battlefield (Saratoga National Historical Park) on November 9, 2024

Update on Education Outreach Program

The Museum has played host and will be playing host to nearly 200 high school students from the following schools during November, December 2024 and early January 2025:

November 8, 2024 — Stillwater High School

November 21, 2024 — Gloversville High School

December 4, 2024 — Utica High School (cadets)

December 6, 2024 — Shaker High School (North Colonie schools)

January 10, 2025 — Schenectady High School

Students are being taught about the Museum's exhibits by Education Outreach Program member-volunteers Bill Watkins (EOP chairman), Bill Cooney, Paul Hauschen, Lisa Munday and Tim Sinnott.

Other visits are already scheduled for later in 2025.



The NYS Division of Military and Naval Affairs was given the above award by the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation for the restoration of the roof at the NYS Military Museum

Friends Hold “Trivia Night” Fundraiser



Photo courtesy of
Bill F. Schmeelcke

The scene at the Friends’ Trivia Night Fundraiser, held on Saturday, September 14, 2024 at the Elks Colonial Hall in Saratoga Springs



Photo courtesy of
Bill F. Schmeelcke

The winning team: The Nerd Herds — Diana Flynn, Melissa Thompson-Flynn, Paul McCarthy, Bill F. Schmeelcke, Tim Sinnott, Bill H. Schmeelcke (Bill F.’s son), and Bruce Farley; the winners graciously donated a portion of their winnings to the Friends of the NYS Military Museum