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Ono Takes His Place On The Wall Of Legends

STARKE COUNTY – Medal of Honor recipient Pfc. Frank H. Ono joined three other legends from northwest Indiana on the South Shore Wall of Legends during an induction ceremony Dec. 18. Located at the Indiana Welcome Center in Hammond, the Wall of Legends recognizes natives of the area who exemplify “exploration, courage, creativity and innovation,” according to John Davies, founder and coordinator of the program.

Ono, who lived in North Judson, received the Medal of Honor for his service in the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Nisei were American-born sons of Japanese-Americans, who faced prejudice in the United States, and many families on the west coast were moved into internment camps.

Charles Weaver, executive director, nominated Ono on behalf of the Starke County Economic Development Foundation. In his comments at the induction ceremony, Weaver said, “In 1943, yielding to pressure, the United States consented to Japanese-Americans having the right to fight for their country. Frank H. Ono was a member of Company G of the 442nd, attached to the 34th Infantry Division in Italy. Their experiences were similar to those of other races – while they fought the Germans in Europe, they also had to fight prejudice in America.”

Ono was recognized for his extraordinary heroism in action on July 4, 1944, when his unit was in battle near Castellina, Italy. He originally received the Distinguished Service Cross for advancing ahead of his unit and single-handedly defending his position on the frontline, while his squad leader reorganization the rest of the platoon in the rear.

Jacalynn Ono Ciboch, Ono’s niece, and other family members were present at the induction ceremony. Ciboch said, “Uncle Frank’s heroism in battle was his defining moment, although he did not realize it at the time.”

Ono told Jacalynn that he “did not act out of any sense of heroics, but I did it because my friends were being hurt.”

Ono returned to Starke County following the War, where he died at the age of 56 on May 6, 1980. He is buried in Highland Cemetery, North Judson.

Other area legends inducted during the ceremony included: Astronaut Frank Borman, who was born in Gary; Dr. William M. Scholl, born on a dairy farm in LaPorte, who invented more than 1,000 foot-care products; and Neil Ruzic, who authored 12 books and was a former Michigan City newspaper reporter.

The South Shore Wall of Legends celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, with nearly 30 people now highlighted on the Wall. The organization also provides scholarships, with Susan Strong, a Purdue University Calumet student, named this year’s Legends Scholar. Scholarship recipients must demonstrate the same qualities as Legends inductees.

Weaver also served as one of 13 judges selecting Legends inductees and the scholarship winner.



Pictured with the plaque presented at the induction ceremony are (L to R), front row: Jane Ellen Felchuk; Violet Ono, wife of Frank's brother George; and Jeannette Wobith, former wife of Frank; back row: Tyler Ciboch; niece Jacalynn Ono Ciboch; and nephew George Ono, son of Violet and George.



Pfc. Frank H. Ono

ABOUT SCEDF

The Starke County Development Foundation is a not-for-profit local economic development organization (LEDO) providing economic development opportunities on behalf of Starke County, Indiana, the City of Knox, and the Towns of North Judson and Hamlet through the development of industrial parks, rail spurs, greenfield sites, shovel-ready sites, infrastructure and workforce development. For more information regarding Starke County Development Foundation, visit www.starkecounty.com.

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