



September 2025
Stratford Veterans Museum
VETERAN OF THE MONTH



JOHN R. TOMASKO



Grumman TBF Avenger Bomber

John Raymond Tomasko entered the U.S. Navy in January of 1943, months before his eighteenth birthday to join the fight during World War II.

After recruit training, John reported to Aviation Machinist School, before reporting to the U.S.S. Ticonderoga CV-14 with Torpedo Squadron 80 as a Gunner on a Grumman Avenger Torpedo Bomber in the South Pacific.

During action while aboard the Ticonderoga with Torpedo Squadron 80, John, along with a radio-man and the pilot flying the Torpedo Bomber took part in bomber attacks against Japanese forces. During those actions the following citations were entered into his service record.

“The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting Machinist’s Mate, Petty Officer Third Class John R. Tomasko the Meritorious Achievement Medal and the U.S. Navy Air Medal for distinguishing himself by meritorious acts while participating in an aerial flight against Japanese forces in the Philippine Islands area. His gallant service along with the pilot and crew were executed in a highly commendable manner in the face of withering anti-aircraft fire. Tomasko participated in a coordinated attack on an enemy heavy cruiser and assisted the pilot in scoring a torpedo hit which contributed to the vessel’s destruction. In faithfully carrying out his duties under fire in his superb manner, he demonstrated courage, coolness and skill that were at all times in keeping with the highest traditions on the United States Naval Service.”
This citation was signed by Vice Admiral John S. McCain & Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal.

A second citation was written as follows:
The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the **DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS** to John R. Tomasko, Aviation Machinist’s Mate Third Class Petty Officer, The citation read:

“For heroism and extraordinary Achievement in aerial flight as Gunner on a Torpedo Plane in Torpedo Squadron Eighty, attached to the U.S.S. Ticonderoga, during a bombing attack against heavy enemy shipping in the China Coast Area on January 16, 1945. Although wounded by enemy aircraft fire during the attack in which his plane scored a direct hit on an enemy freighter which sank. TOMASKO rendered first aid to the more seriously wounded radioman and assisted in abandoning the plane when a water landing was necessary because of the battle damage. His courage and devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon TOMASKO and the United States Naval Service.”
Signed by Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal.

Petty Officer Tomasko also received a Purple Heart for his wounds during action.

The Stratford Veterans Museum is proud to recognize Petty Officer John R. Tomasko for his extraordinary record in the service to our country during World War II.