

## Melbourne vet among first in Hall of Fame

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John Cleland

Written by

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Retired Army Maj. Gen. John Cleland has been selected for the inaugural class of the new Florida Veterans Hall of Fame.

Cleland, of Melbourne, said that while he knew he had been nominated, he was surprised and pleased that he was selected to be among the first class of inductees.

"I'm greatly honored to have been selected," Cleland said.

### **Inaugural class**

The first class of inductees to the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame are:

- John R.D. Cleland, retired major general, U.S. Army (Melbourne)
- The late Rep. Sam M. Gibbons, former U.S. Army major (Tampa)
- John L. Haynes, retired major, U.S. Marine Corps (Monticello)
- Robert F. Milligan, retired lieutenant general, U.S. Marine Corps (Tallahassee)
- Jeanne E.G. Rubin, retired captain, U.S. Navy (Sunrise)
- Robert J. Silah, retired captain, U.S. Navy (Tampa)

Cleland, who served on the Army General Staff and the Joint Staff, and served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, was cited for service to the community and the state. Focus is on the inductee's post-military contributions to the state through civic, business, public service or other pursuits.

Nominations go to a seven-member advisory panel. The panel sends the recommended list of nominees to the governor and cabinet, which make the final choices.

The first class is comprised of six veterans.

"I know John Cleland's background and dedication and what he has done for the community and the state," said retired Air Force Maj. Joe Oblack, who nominated Cleland.

Oblack said he submitted a 10-page nomination highlighting some of Cleland's involvement in civic and community affairs. He has served on the board of trustees at Cape Canaveral Hospital and as an adviser to ROTC cadets at Florida Institute of Technology. He also served on the committee to preserve the Grand Canal and has been involved in many other civic activities.

At first, Cleland told Oblack not to waste time on a nomination, but later agreed to it when his friend insisted.

"I basically forgot about it," said Cleland, who retired in 1980 after 37 years of military service.

Court Yelle, president of the Cape Canaveral Chapter of the Military Association of America, announced Cleland's selection Saturday night at the organization's annual Past President's Dinner at the Eau Gallie Yacht Club in Indian Harbour Beach.

"I really couldn't believe it," Cleland said. "You really could have knocked me over with a feather."

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