

Section 1: Nomination Form

Thomas Savage Rice [Tom]

850-302-0266

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Ft. Walton Beach, FL 32548

DOB April 21, 1948

Section 2: Verification of Veteran's Status

DD 214. (attached) ^{not} upon Request

Section 3: Summary of Education and Training requirements

- Fort Walton Beach Elementary School
- St. Mary School
- Pryor Junior High School
- Choctawhatchee High School (graduated in 1966)
- Okaloosa-Walton Junior College (Associate of Arts Degree)

Section 4: Summary of Professional and Employment History

- U.S. Army, 1969 – 1996. Active Duty and Reserve Duty. Retired as a First Sergeant. Awards include the Joint Service Achievement Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal W/2 Bronze Service Stars and the Saudi Arabian Kuwait Liberation Medal.
- Perri's Italian Restaurant 1962-1969—first employment
- 1972-1980—post Active Army Duty
- The Sound and The Seagull restaurants—1980-1991
- Magnolia Grill—1996-present
- Received National Restaurant Association "2004 Restaurant Good Neighbor Award" for its diverse community outreach programs

Section 5: Summary of Nominee's Advocacy on Behalf of Veterans

Mr. Rice's advocacy on behalf of and service to veterans are legendary in our local community. Specific projects he was responsible for include the following:

- *Veterans Florida*. Member of the Board of Directors (appointed by the Senate President) and Treasurer. Established by Florida House Bill 7015, this Board seeks

to make Florida a veteran-friendly state, assist veterans with finding employment, and encourage veterans from other states to relocate to Florida.

- *Fisher House of the Emerald Coast* (on Eglin Air Force Base). Founding Board Member, Past President, Master of Ceremonies at the Groundbreaking/Ribbon Cutting and Dedication of the Fisher House. Volunteer of the Year in 2013. Lead guest speaker and advocate of the Fisher House being built at Eglin AFB.
- *Emerald Coast Honor Flights for World War II Veterans* (total of nine flights). Escorted 900 World War II veterans to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. Served as a member of the Board of Directors for the Honor Flights, raised fund to pay for the flights, served as a guardian trainer, and served as a flight guardian. Traveled the entire First Congressional District of Florida as an Honor Flight Ambassador to raise awareness for the Program and to encourage WWII veterans to be a part of the flights.
- *Veterans Tribute Tower at Beal Memorial Cemetery*. Serves as President of the Veterans Tribute Tower Committee, led the community-wide effort to raise \$300,000 for the planning and constructing of a 30 feet tall clock tower and its 300 pound Freedom Bell, and served as Master of Ceremonies for the dedication of the tower. The Bell was cast locally and rung for the first time by Navy veteran and Florida Governor, Rick Scott on September 11, 2014. Beal Memorial Cemetery is the final resting place for more than 1,600 veterans.
- *Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies*. Produces and directs the Memorial Day and Veterans Day Ceremonies at Beal Memorial Cemetery --details of which include obtaining guest speakers, arranging for tents and chairs, contacting members of the community to participate in the Program, including Jr. ROTC cadets, musicians to play TAPS, a Color Guard for flag presentation, and representatives of all local military facilities to offer invocations, introduce speakers, and make special presentations.
- *Air Force Enlisted Village (Bob Hope Village) for Widows of Air Force Veterans*.
- Serves as a member of the development committee. Bob Hope Village now houses more than 500 widows of veterans (average age of 84).
- *We Honor Veterans Program*. Volunteer member. Members join with Covenant Hospice (now known as Covenant Care) to render a final salute to veterans who are in hospice care. Volunteers are encouraged to wear their uniforms to the ceremonies for these dying veterans.
- *Academy Appointments Board*. Serves on the Academy Appointments Board for Senator Marco Rubio and his predecessors Senator George LeMieux, and Senator Mel Martinez.

- *Special Events of Note for Veterans.* These events include: 1) Reunion of the Descendants of World War II Rangers held in 2015 (helped organize the event and raise the funds to pay for it), 2) Retirement ceremony for Staff Sergeant Arron Hale in 2013 (SSGT was an Army EOD specialist who was blinded in the performance of his duty), and 3) Assist with memorial services at the 7th Special Forces Group Chapel.
- *Employment of Veterans.* Mr. Rice makes a point of employing veterans in his restaurant in Fort Walton Beach, Florida (Magnolia Grill). He currently employs two veterans and one Air Force widow at the Magnolia Grill.
- *Employment of future Academy Cadets.* During the last decade, three Magnolia Grill employees have graduated from high school and been accepted as Cadets at the Military Academy at West Point. Two former cadets now proudly serve in the U.S. Army as a Lieutenant and a Captain, and one is successfully making his way through his first year at West Point.

Section 6: Summary of Civic Activities and Contributions

The bulk of Mr. Rice's civic memberships are in veteran-related organizations and include the following:

- Salvation Army of Okaloosa and Walton Counties; Chair of Community Advisory Board
- Emerald Coast Chapter of the Association of the United States Army (Senior Vice-President of the local chapter)
- Air Commando Association (ACA)
- Air Force Association (AFA)
- EOD Master Blasters Association
- West Point Society - Northwest Florida Chapter
- Designated a "Friend of West Point" by the West Point Association of Graduates in 2015
- NW Florida State College Foundation Board Member

Section 7: List of Awards and Honors

- Volunteer of the Year Award, Fisher House, 2013
- Ellen Hardin Walworth Medal for Patriotism, Daughters of the American Revolution, 2012
- Profiled in "Reader's Digest," October Issue, 2005 (Feature on Lasting Friendship Cast in War)
- James E. Plew Community Ambassadors Award. Eglin Air Force Base, 2008
- U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute, Presented by General George W. Casey, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, 2010

- Featured by Chef Emeril Lagasse on Emeril's Florida, Season 3, "Veterans Owned & Operated" broadcast on the Cooking Channel and Food Network in 2015 and in reruns and Youtube today.
- Person of the Year, Northwest Florida Daily News, 2015
- Commemorative Partner to the nation's 50th Vietnam War Commemoration Committee, by providing the field kitchen, which prepared a free lunch to the 2000 veterans and family members who attended the recent local event hosted at the Air Armament Museum in November, 2016.

Section 8: Narrative

In the greater Fort Walton Beach community, Tom Rice's name is synonymous with service to veterans and the military. Nobody gives more of his time, effort, and money to supporting veteran-related causes than Tom Rice. His restaurant, the Magnolia Grill, is used continually to raise funds to support veteran-related causes. He is typically the master of ceremonies for veteran and military tributes, ceremonies, and celebrations in our community. The purpose of the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame is to thank, honor, recognize, and showcase Florida veterans who have or are still making a difference in our state, especially in service to veterans. This is precisely what Tom Rice does day in and day out. From building the Fisher House to organizing the Honor Flights for World War II veterans, Tom Rice is a dynamo of dedication. Even more important than all of the considerable work he does personally on behalf of veterans, Tom Rice reaches out to others in the community who can make a difference and brings his indefatigable energy and influence to bear on getting them involved. It is widely known throughout this community that a telephone call from Tom Rice means that veterans need help and Tom is going to get you involved in providing that help. He honors the uniform he wore for so many years and the State of Florida by unstintingly serving veterans and veteran-related causes every day. I recommend him for induction into the Florida Veterans Hall of Fame with enthusiasm and without reservation.



SOUL OF THE COMMUNITY

Tom Rice, owner of the Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach, is the Daily News Person of the Year. Rice's support of the military and community has made him a standout.

Photos by NICK TOMECEK | Daily News



2015

PERSON OF THE YEAR

If you live in Okaloosa County, your life's been touched by Tom Rice

By KELLY HUMPHREY
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When the Daily News set out to name its Inaugural Person of the Year, the goal was to recognize a resident whose influence and impact extended around the Emerald Coast and beyond.

While there was no shortage of candidates to choose from, local restaurateur and philanthropist Tom Rice's name quickly rose to the top of the list.

He and his wife, Peggy, who own the Magnolia Grill in Fort Walton Beach, have helped a wide array of local charities and organizations for many years.

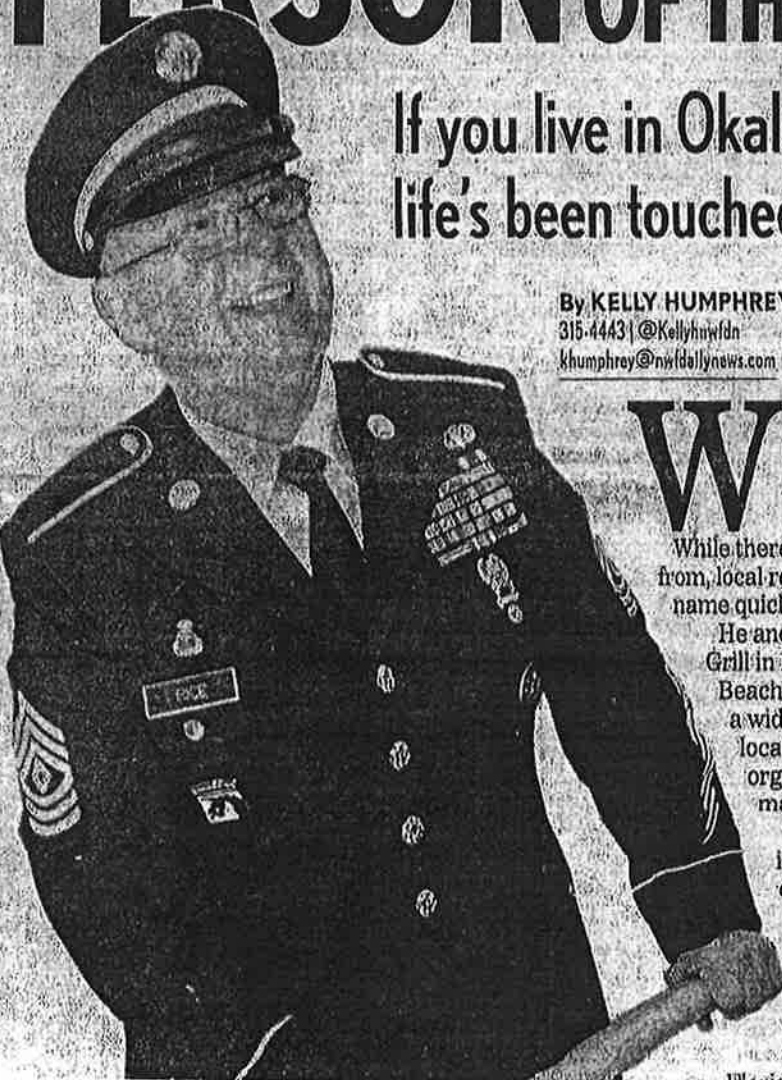
But this is an award for achievements in 2015, a year when the 67-year-old Rice celebrated the successful culmination of several long-term projects.

A very busy year

At the start of the year, he helped get the fledgling organization Veterans Florida (formerly Florida Is for Veterans Inc.) off

ON THE NET

See more photos at nwfddailynews.com.



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FLORIDA VETERANS' HALL OF FAME

This is to certify that:

1SGT Thomas S. Rice, USA Retired Veteran

has been inducted into the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame

The Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame pays tribute to those men and women who honorably served their country through military service and who continue to achieve and inspire their fellow citizens with exemplary deeds and outstanding accomplishments in post-military life.

The Legislature of the State of Florida created the Veterans' Hall of Fame on July 1, 2011, to increase the awareness of outstanding veterans and to honor their lifetime contributions to society and the State of Florida.

Given under our hands and seal this 27th Day of November 2017.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott".

Rick Scott, Governor of the State of Florida

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn W. Sutphin, Jr.".

Glenn W. Sutphin, Jr., LTC, USA Retired
Executive Director, Department of Veterans' Affairs

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ray Quinn".

Ray Quinn, SGM, USA Retired
Chairman, Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council