

Enrolled
Senate Concurrent Resolution 19

Sponsored by Senator BOQUIST; Senators OLSEN, RILEY, Representatives EVANS, MCLANE, MEEK, REARDON, WILSON

Whereas Brigadier General James Burdette Thayer was born on March 10, 1922, in Portland, Oregon; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was raised by his grandparents on their family farm in rural Oregon, and he graduated from Carlton High School in 1940; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer attended the University of Oregon on a journalism scholarship, but he answered his nation's call by enlisting in the United States Army in the aftermath of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was selected for Officer Candidate School shortly after enlistment, and he was commissioned a second lieutenant and subsequently assigned to combat duty with the 71st Infantry Division, which was then operating in Normandy, France; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer, as a mine platoon commander, exemplified the core values of the United States Army while leading his platoon across France and training his soldiers in the methodology of clearing pathways and securing anti-personnel mines in areas near the Maginot Line; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was then reassigned to command of a reconnaissance platoon, which he successfully led on many missions, one of which was a battle in a small Austrian town against a much larger enemy force, which resulted in the surrender of more than 800 German troops; and

Whereas on May 4, 1945, during a reconnaissance mission, Brigadier General Thayer and his platoon discovered and liberated the Gunskirchen Lager concentration camp, saving the lives of approximately 15,000 prisoners; and

Whereas for his heroic and selfless service in World War II, Brigadier General Thayer earned numerous medals and commendations, including the Silver Star and the Bronze Star; and

Whereas after the war, Brigadier General Thayer returned to the University of Oregon and graduated with a degree in economics in 1947; and

Whereas in 1954 Brigadier General Thayer married Patricia Cunningham and together they raised five children: James Jr., Anne, John, Tommy and Mike; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer had a long and illustrious career in business and as a civic leader, and his countless leadership roles included serving as president of the Oregon Historical Society, president of the Beaverton Chamber of Commerce, president of the Port of Portland and interim president of Tuality Community Hospital; and

Whereas despite his very active and successful civilian life, Brigadier General Thayer remained in military service after World War II in the United States Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of colonel in 1982; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer continued his service to the nation as Oregon's civilian aide to the Secretary of the Army from 1989 to 1994, for which he was awarded the Secretary of Defense Medal for Outstanding Public Service; and

Whereas in 2000 Brigadier General Thayer was reactivated into military service as commander of the Oregon State Defense Force, and was promoted to brigadier general; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer modernized the Oregon State Defense Force, providing the State of Oregon with enhanced capacities for emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery operations; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer was a coach, mentor and teacher to generations of Oregon National Guard troops, who recognized his humility, intelligence, leadership and patriotism; and

Whereas in 1991 Brigadier General Thayer was inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia; and

Whereas in 1996 Brigadier General Thayer was awarded the Grand Decoration of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria for his role in liberating the Gunskirchen Lager concentration camp; and

Whereas in 2005 Brigadier General Thayer received the University of Oregon Alumni Association Distinguished Alumni Award; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer always denied being a hero and spoke of his wartime service with quiet dignity and rare humility; and

Whereas in 2017, reflecting on his wartime service, Brigadier General Thayer said, "Honor, duty and service to our country is something we just did, we never questioned it," and he expressed the hope that "in our pursuit of freedom, tolerance and democracy, our world will be a better place for generations to come"; and

Whereas Brigadier General Thayer died on September 16, 2018, as a good and faithful servant to the State of Oregon and our nation; now, therefore,

Be It Resolved by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Oregon:

That we, the members of the Eightieth Legislative Assembly, celebrate the life and enduring legacy of Brigadier General James Burdette Thayer, and we recognize and honor his duty, devotion and service to his nation, state and community; and be it further

Resolved, That a copy of this resolution shall be presented to the family of Brigadier General Thayer as an expression of our sympathy and condolences.

Adopted by Senate May 14, 2019

Lori L. Brocker, Secretary of Senate

Peter Courtney, President of Senate

Adopted by House June 5, 2019

Tina Kotek, Speaker of House