



Major General Melvin J. Maas Award

The Major General Melvin J. Maas Award for Professional Achievement recognizes and honors annually a blinded veteran with service-connected blindness who has attained a high level of proficiency in adjusting to life without sight, and who has achieved a high level of professional success and accomplishment in a chosen career field. The purpose of the award is the positive enhancement of the public image of blind persons and the elimination of the notion of dependence among blinded veterans.

The storied career of Major General Maas, a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, included service in both 20th century World Wars and 16 years in the Minnesota delegation of the U.S. House of Representatives. During the final phase of the Battle of Milne Bay at the beginning of September 1942, Major General Maas volunteered as an observer and auxiliary gunner of a bomber plane for a reconnaissance mission. During the eight-hour flight, he helped disable enemy airdrome and participated in the dropping of food and supplies to the isolated U.S. Army outpost. For his efforts during the mission, he was decorated by the Army with the Silver Star.

Major General Maas suffered facial wounds in the 98-day Battle of Okinawa in 1945 that eventually left him totally blind in 1951. Shortly thereafter, he joined BVA and in 1953 was elected National Vice President. He was elected National President in 1960, serving for one year. He was a member of the President's Committee on Employment of the Physically Handicapped for 15 years, 10 of those as Chairman of the Committee from 1953 until the time of his death in 1964.

Nominations must include the following:

- A cover letter introducing the candidate and the party submitting the nomination
- A biographical sketch of the nominee
 1. Military experience
 2. Education
 3. Work experience
 4. Honors, if any
 5. Professional organizations
 6. Hobbies/Pastimes
 7. Additional comments or amplifying data that may help in evaluating achievements
- A detailed outline of professional activities and success (why this veteran is deserving of the Maas Award)
 1. Is the veteran totally blind or partially sighted?
 2. Are there additional disabilities?
 3. What does he/she do in an average day?
 4. How much help does the veteran receive in performing his/her work?
 5. Is the help provided of a nature specifically required by anyone performing the same job?
 6. How has the candidate excelled in the job?

7. Was the job secured through personal effort or was the veteran placed by VA or another agency?
8. How did the veteran obtain the training to perform the job?
9. Outline in detail the veteran's attitude toward the disability.
10. Outline in detail the veteran's attitude towards sighted people.
11. Outline in detail the veteran's active participation in local community life, civic organizations, etc.

An individual may receive the Maas Award only once. BVA employees, even if they are members of the Association, are not eligible for the award. There is no limit to the number of nominations a BVA member can submit.

Please submit nominations, postmarked on or before the final Friday in April, to:
Blinded Veterans Association
Attn: Administrative Director
1101 King Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314

Or online [here](#).

The recipient of the Maas Award receives a complimentary registration to the national convention at which the recognition is to be presented, as well as a modest stipend.