

EX-POW BULLETIN

the official voice of the
American Ex-Prisoners of War

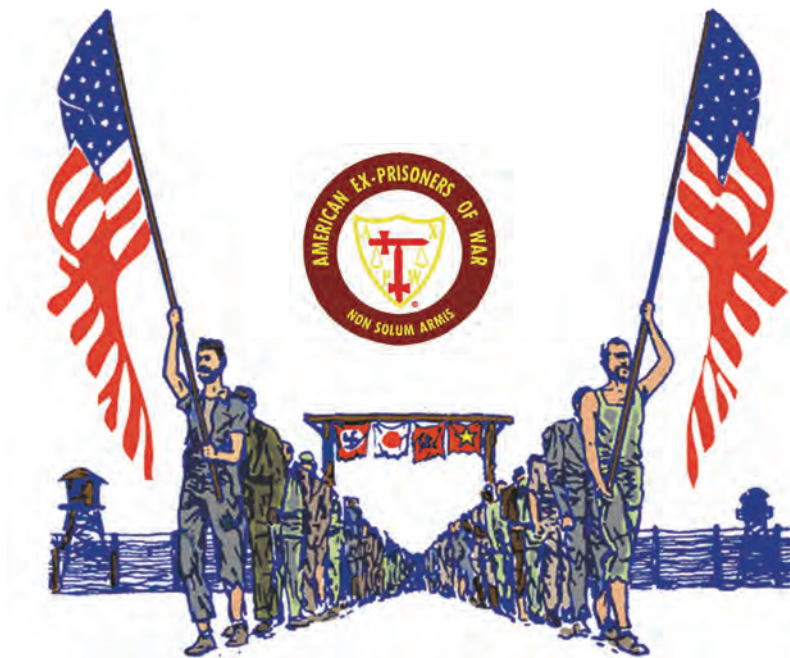
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January/February/March 2020




We exist to help those who cannot help themselves



Capture of the USS Pueblo


Veterans Day
Wreath Laying
and
National Ceremony
 Monday, November 11, 2019, 10:30 a.m.
 Arlington National Cemetery
A reception hosted by the
 Catholic War Veterans follows at
 Patton Hall
 Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, VA
Box 35
 VETERANS DAY NATIONAL COMMITTEE




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 Arlington National Cemetery
 November 11, 10:30 a.m.
Section I
 VETERANS DAY NATIONAL COMMITTEE



Veterans Day
National Ceremony
 Arlington National Cemetery
 November 11, 10:30 a.m.



The Secretary of Veterans Affairs
 and
 The Veterans Day National Committee
 cordially invite you to attend the
 Annual Veterans Day National Ceremony
 on Monday, the eleventh of November
 two thousand nineteen
 at ten-thirty o'clock
 Memorial Amphitheater
 Arlington National Cemetery

January-March 2020

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Deadline for the Apr-June 2020 issue is March 31, 2020
Please send all materials to the editor at the above address.

FREEDOM!

The release of U.S. POWs began in Hanoi on February 12, 1973 as part of the Paris peace settlement. The return of U.S. POWs began when North Vietnam released 142 of 591 U.S. prisoners at Hanoi's Gia Lam Airport. Part of what was called Operation Homecoming. The first 20 POWs arrived to a hero's welcome at Travis Air Force Base in California on February 14. Operation Homecoming was completed on March 29, 1973, when the last of 591 U.S. prisoners were released and returned to the United States.

After the surrender of tens of thousands of American troops during the Battle of Bataan, many were sent to Cabanatuan prison camp following the Bataan Death March. The Japanese transferred most of the prisoners to other areas, leaving just over 500 American and other Allied POWs and civilians in the prison. On Jan. 30, 1945, United States Army Rangers, Alamo Scouts, and Filipino guerrillas liberated more than 500 from the POW camp.

On January 9, 1945, the U.S. Sixth Army waded ashore at Lingayen Gulf and began moving south. During their trek, troops liberated American and other Allied POWs in several camps. One of the most spectacular liberation efforts was that conducted by the 6th Ranger Battalion at Cabanatuan. A Ranger task force, assisted by Filipino guerrillas, penetrated deep into Japanese territory and, after crawling more than a mile on their bellies, attacked Cabanatuan prison and freed some 500 POWs, bringing them 20 miles to safety. Nearer Manila, elements of the 1st Cavalry assaulted the campus of Santo Tomas University and freed more than 3,500 civilian internees.

At Bilibid Prison, on February 4, 1945, Commandant Ebiko presented the camp's chairman with a document freeing the internees. The Japanese were not seen after that. A patrol of the 37th Infantry broke into the prison thinking it was a Japanese ammunition dump; they found 700 military prisoners and 500 civilian prisoners.

AND CAPTURE

On January 23, 1968 USS PUEBLO (AGER-2) was attacked in international waters by North Korean forces. Eighty-two surviving crewmembers were captured and held prisoner for eleven months. On the cover: Original oil painting by artist Richard DeRosset for USS PUEBLO crewmember Tom Massie. North Korean hull and aircraft have their actual numbers of the attacking forces.

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Happy New Year!

As we complete the second decade of the 21st century, I think about what my mother used to say about the 20th century. "Think of all the changes that have taken place. And how fast these changes happened." They couldn't imagine that much more could be in store.

My grandfather was a Marine during World War I. The planes of his service looked like Snoopy's Sopworth Camel as he dive-bombed the Red Baron. My dad was in the Army Air Corps. His plane – the ONLY plane I knew growing up – was the B-24 Liberator with a crew of 10. (See the picture). Today, there are crews on the ground directing drones.

When I was in college, our computer was the size of a large classroom. Today it is on my wrist and infinitely more powerful.

Antibiotics make our lives longer and better.
Nuclear weaponry makes our lives scarier.
Television and the Internet can be both.

I am an incurable optimist. Each January I make my resolutions (breaking them by February) and look forward to the future. I hope each of you can feel the wonder and the hope that a new year brings.

The American Ex-Prisoners of War is on an exciting trajectory right now. Our education committee has projects to bring your experience to classrooms around the country. We are working with our National POW Museum at Andersonville National Historic Site to ensure your story is never forgotten. And helping to fund the Traveling Museum "Victory from Within" gives the POW reality a strong, powerful voice.



My dad (front row, far right) and his crew

My personal project this year is directed to the largest single segment of our membership – Surviving Spouses. To make sure they don't fall through the cracks after the death of their ex-POW husbands. To make sure they can financially survive on the compensation they receive after the death of their ex-POW husbands. A way to alleviate the second part of this project is to increase the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation they are entitled to. Congress has stalled on this for many years now. Current 2020 DIC figures are \$1,340 a month...putting the recipients smack in the middle of the federal poverty level. This is unacceptable and we will – again – be reminding Congress at our March testimony that the most vulnerable of our members deserve better.

The first part of this year's project is easier. If you know of a widow – a friend, neighbor – reach out to her. Companionship is so important to both health and wellness. When I was younger, I marveled at the number of AXPOW members who married each other after their spouses passed away. But then I realized that the bonds of friendship and shared experiences that held ex-POWs together also holds their family members together. And who knows the POW experience better?

For the possibilities that 2020 holds, I wish you the best. And give you my best.

Cheryl

NOTICE: AXPOW ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE ARLINGTON, TEXAS HILTON.
APRIL 25, 2020. ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND.

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis Overview

Osteoporosis, or porous bone, is a disease characterized by low bone mass and structural deterioration of bone tissue, leading to bone fragility and an increased susceptibility to fractures of the hip, spine, and wrist. Men as well as women suffer from osteoporosis, a disease that can be prevented and treated.

Facts and Figures

Osteoporosis is a major public health threat for 44 million Americans.

In the U.S. today, 10 million individuals already have osteoporosis and 34 million more have low bone mass, placing them at increased risk for this disease.

One out of every two women and one in four men over 50 will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in their lifetime.

More than 2 million American men suffer from osteoporosis, and millions more are at risk. Each year, 80,000 men suffer a hip fracture and one-third of these men die within a year. Osteoporosis has studied as a long-term effect of the prisoner of war experience.

Osteoporosis can strike any age.

Osteoporosis is responsible for more than 1.5 million fractures

annually, including 300,000 hip fractures, and approximately 700,000 vertebral fractures, 250,000 wrist fractures, and more than 300,000 fractures at other sites.

Estimated national direct expenditures (hospitals and nursing homes) for osteoporosis and related fractures is \$14 billion each year.

What is Bone?

Bone is living, growing tissue. It is made mostly of collagen, a protein that provides a soft framework, and calcium phosphate, a mineral that adds strength and hardens the framework. This combination of collagen and calcium makes bone strong yet flexible to withstand stress. More than 99% of the body's calcium is contained in the bones and teeth. The remaining 1% is found in the blood.

Throughout your lifetime, old bone is removed (resorption) and new bone is added to the skeleton (formation). During childhood and teenage years, new bone is added faster than old bone is removed. As a result, bones become larger, heavier, and denser.

Bone formation continues at a pace faster than resorption until peak bone mass (maximum bone density and strength) is reached around age 30. After age 30, bone resorption slowly begins to exceed

bone formation. Bone loss is most rapid in the first few years after menopause but persists into the postmenopausal years. Osteoporosis develops when bone resorption occurs too quickly or if replacement occurs too slowly. Osteoporosis is more likely to develop if you did not reach optimal bone mass during your bone building years.

Risk Factors

Certain factors are linked to the development of osteoporosis or contribute to an individual's likelihood of developing the disease. These are called "risk factors." Many people with osteoporosis have several of these risk factors, but others who develop osteoporosis have no identified risk factors. There are some risk factors that you cannot change, and others that you can.

Risk factors you can't change:

Gender - Your chances of developing osteoporosis are greater if you are a woman. Women have less bone tissue and lose bone more rapidly than men because of the changes involved in menopause.

Age - the older you are, the greater your risk of osteoporosis. Your bones become less dense and weaker as you age.

Body size - Small, thin-boned women are at greater risk.

medsearch, cont'd...

Ethnicity - Caucasian and Asian women are at highest risk. African-American and Latino women have a lower but significant risk.

Family history - Susceptibility to fracture may be, in part, hereditary. People whose parents have a history of fractures also seem to have reduced bone mass and may be at risk for fractures.

Risk factors you can change:

Sex hormones:

abnormal absence of menstrual periods (amenorrhea), low estrogen level (menopause), and low testosterone level in men.

Anorexia.

A lifetime diet low in calcium and vitamin D.

Use of certain medications.

An inactive lifestyle or extended bed rest.

Cigarette smoking.

Excessive use of alcohol.

Prevention

To reach optimal peak bone mass and continue building new bone tissue as you get older, there are several factors you should consider:

Calcium. An inadequate supply of calcium over the lifetime is thought to play a significant role in contributing to the development of osteoporosis. Many published studies show that low calcium intakes appear to be associated with low bone mass, rapid bone loss, and high fracture rates. National nutrition surveys have shown that many people consume less than half the amount of calcium recommended to build and maintain healthy bones. Depending upon how much calcium you get each day from food, you may need to take a calcium supplement.

Calcium needs change during one's lifetime. The body's demand for calcium is greater during childhood

and adolescence, when the skeleton is growing rapidly, and during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Postmenopausal women and older men also need to consume more calcium. This may be caused by inadequate amounts of vitamin D, which is necessary for intestinal absorption of calcium. Also, as you age, your body becomes less efficient at absorbing calcium and other nutrients. Older adults also are more likely to have chronic medical problems and to use medications that may impair calcium absorption. At age 70 or older, the recommended daily dosage of calcium is 1200 mg.

Vitamin D. Vitamin D plays an important role in calcium absorption and in bone health. It is synthesized in the skin through exposure to sunlight. While many people are able to obtain enough vitamin D naturally, studies show that vitamin D production decreases in the elderly, in people who are housebound, and during the winter. These individuals may require vitamin D supplementation to ensure a daily intake of between 400 to 800 IU of vitamin D. Massive doses are not recommended.

Exercise. Like muscle, bone is living tissue that responds to exercise by becoming stronger. The best exercise for your bones is weight-bearing exercise, that forces you to work against gravity. These exercises include walking, hiking, jogging, stair-climbing, weight training, tennis, and dancing.

Smoking. Smoking is bad for your bones as well as for your heart and lungs. Women who smoke have lower levels of estrogen compared to nonsmokers and frequently go through menopause earlier. Postmenopausal women who smoke may require higher doses of hormone replacement therapy and may have more side effects. Smokers also may absorb less calcium from their diets.

Alcohol. Regular consumption of 2 to 3 ounces a day of alcohol may be damaging to the skeleton, even in young women and men. Those who drink heavily are more prone to bone loss and fractures, both because of poor nutrition as well as increased risk of falling.

Medications that cause bone loss. The long-term use of glucocorticoids (medications prescribed for a wide range of diseases, including arthritis, asthma, Crohn's disease, lupus, and other diseases of the lungs, kidneys, and liver) can lead to a loss of bone density and fractures. Other forms of drug therapy that can cause bone loss include long-term treatment with certain antiseizure drugs, and barbiturates; gonadotropin releasing hormone (GnRH) analogs used to treat endometriosis; excessive use of aluminum-containing antacids; certain cancer treatments; and excessive thyroid hormone. It is important to discuss the use of these drugs with your physician, and not to stop or alter your medication dose on your own.

Prevention Medications. Various medications are available for the prevention, as well as treatment, of osteoporosis. See section entitled "Therapeutic Medications."

Symptoms

Osteoporosis is often called the "silent disease" because bone loss occurs without symptoms. People may not know that they have osteoporosis until their bones become so weak that a sudden strain, bump, or fall causes a hip fracture or a vertebra to collapse. Collapsed vertebra may initially be felt or seen in the form of severe back pain, loss of height, or spinal deformities such as kyphosis, or severely stooped posture.

Detection

Following a comprehensive medical assessment, your doctor may

medsearch, cont'd...

recommend that you have your bone mass measured. Bone mineral density (BMD) tests measure bone density in the spine, wrist, and/or hip (the most common sites of fractures due to osteoporosis), while others measure bone in the heel or hand. These tests are painless, noninvasive, and safe.

Bone density tests can:

Detect low bone density before a fracture occurs.

Confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis if you have already fractured.

Predict your chances of fracturing in the future.

Determine your rate of bone loss and/or monitor the effects of treatment if the test is conducted at intervals of a year or more.

Treatment

A comprehensive osteoporosis treatment program includes a focus on proper nutrition, exercise, and safety issues to prevent falls that may result in fractures. In addition, your physician may prescribe a medication to slow or stop bone loss, increase bone density, and reduce fracture risk.

Nutrition. The foods we eat contain a variety of vitamins, minerals, and other important nutrients that help keep our bodies healthy. All of these nutrients are needed in a balanced proportion. In particular, calcium and vitamin D are needed for strong bones as well as for your heart, muscles, and nerves to function properly. (See Prevention section for recommended amounts of calcium.)

Exercise. Exercise is an important component of an osteoporosis prevention and treatment program. Exercise not only improves your bone health, but it increases muscle strength, coordination, and balance and leads to better overall

health. While exercise is good for someone with osteoporosis, it should not put any sudden or excessive strain on your bones. As extra insurance against fractures, your doctor can recommend specific exercises to strengthen and support your back.

Therapeutic Medications. The goal of pharmacological therapy is to reduce the risk of fractures. Medications to treat osteoporosis are categorized as either antiresorptive or anabolic. Antiresorptive medications primarily decrease the rate of bone resorption while anabolic medications increase bone formation more than bone resorption. While several medications have overlapping indications, it is important to note that not all osteoporosis medications are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Fall Prevention

Fall Prevention is a special concern for men and women with osteoporosis. Falls can increase the likelihood of fracturing a bone in the hip, wrist, spine or other part of the skeleton. In addition to environmental factors, falls can also be caused by impaired vision and/or balance, chronic diseases that impair mental or physical functioning, and certain medications, such as sedatives and antidepressants.

Some tips to help eliminate the environmental factors that lead to falls include:

Outdoors. Use a cane or walker for added stability; wear rubber-soled shoes for traction; walk on grass when sidewalks are slippery; in winter, carry salt or kitty litter to sprinkle on slippery sidewalks; be careful on highly polished floors that become slick and dangerous

when wet. Use plastic or carpet runners when possible.

Indoors. Keep rooms free of clutter, especially on floors; keep floor surfaces smooth but not slippery; wear supportive, low-heeled shoes even at home; avoid walking in socks, stockings, or slippers; be sure carpets and area rugs have skid-proof backing or are tacked to the floor; be sure stairwells are well lit and that stairs have handrails on both sides; install grab bars on bathroom walls near tub, shower, and toilet; use a rubber bath mat in shower or tub; keep a flashlight with fresh batteries beside your bed; if using a step stool for hard to reach areas, use a sturdy one with a handrail and wide steps; add ceiling fixtures to rooms lit by lamps.

Consider purchasing a cordless phone so that you don't have to rush to answer the phone when it rings or you can call for help if you do fall.

The NIH Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases ~ National Resource Center is supported by the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases with contributions from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, NIH Office of Research on Women's Health, DHHS Office on Women's Health, and National Institute on Aging.

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PRESUMPTIVE SERVICE CONNECTED DISABILITIES

Public Law 97-37

by William Paul Skelton, III, MD F.A.C.P.

All ex-POWs should keep these. Whenever you open your claim, take them with you and make sure the adjudication officer sees them and have him read them! Make sure he knows all about them. Tell him your own story as it relates to your problem.....

1. ARTHRITIS, TRAUMATIC

Also known as articular trauma.

2. AVITAMINOSIS

The total lack of vitamins in the diet.

3. BERIBERI

Caused by a severe lack of vitamin B1 (thiamine) in the diet.

4. DYSENTERY, CHRONIC

A disease characterized by frequent and watery stools, usually with blood and mucus, and accompanied by rectal and abdominal pain, fever, and dehydration.

5. FROSTBITE

The actual freezing of tissue.

6. HELMINTHIASIS

Infection with any type of worms that parasitize the human.

7. MALNUTRITION

Merely means bad nutrition.

8. PELLAGRA

It is caused by a virtual lack of vitamin B3 (niacin) in the diet.

9. ANY OTHER NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCY

The lack of protein and calories in the diet generally produces no lasting side effects.

10. PSYCHOSIS

A generic term for any of the insanities.

11. PANIC DISORDER

Characterized by discrete periods of apprehension or fear.

12. GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

13. OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER

This may be either obsessions or compulsions.

14. POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

The re-experiencing of a trauma of a past recognized stress or that can produce symptoms of distress.

15. ATYPICAL ANXIETY DISORDER

This is a category that is used for diagnosis when the affected individual appears to have an anxiety disorder that does not meet the criteria for entry into any of the other known anxiety disorders.

16. DEPRESSIVE NEUROSIS/DYSTHYMIC DISORDER

Characterized by depressive periods in which the patient feels sad and/or down and has a loss of interest in the usual activities that cause pleasure or involvement in usual pastimes.

17. PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

Literally Greek for the suffering of nerves outside of the brain and spinal cord.

18. IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a common disorder of the intestines that leads to crampy pain, gas, bloating, and changes in bowel habits.

19. PEPTIC ULCER DISEASE

A peptic ulcer is a sore or hole in the lining of the stomach or duodenum (the first part of the small intestine).

20. CIRRHOSIS

Scar tissue replaces normal, healthy tissue, blocking the flow of blood through the organ and preventing it from working as it should.

21. STROKE & COMPLICATIONS

A stroke occurs when the blood supply to part of the brain is suddenly interrupted or when a blood vessel in the brain bursts, spilling blood into the spaces surrounding brain cells.

22. HEART & COMPLICATIONS

Heart disease includes atherosclerotic heart disease, and hypertensive vascular disease (including hypertensive heart disease, and hypertension).

23. OSTEOPOROSIS

Osteoporosis is a disease in which bones become fragile and more likely to break.

Disability compensation is a monetary benefit paid to Veterans who are determined by VA to be disabled by an injury or illness that was incurred or aggravated during active military service. These disabilities are considered to be service connected. To be eligible for compensation, the Veteran must have been separated or discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Monthly disability compensation varies with the degree of disability and the number of eligible dependents. Veterans with certain severe disabilities may be eligible for additional special monthly compensation (SMC). Disability compensation benefits are not subject to federal or state income tax.

Legislative



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There is never lack of excitement in Washington. While based on the high level news, the public is left with the impression that nothing is happening in Washington except impeachment hearings, but that is not the case. This legislative bulletin gives us some hope that Washington has not totally forgotten the needs of our men and women who have served our country.

Flying the American flag means so much to all Americans, especially those who have been in the military. On November 7th, it was a proud day when the President signed the Bill which orders the daily display of the POW/MIA flag at all prominent federal buildings, cemeteries, military installations, medical facilities, and US post offices. The country must not forget the 10's of thousands of men and women who've served our nation in uniform are unaccounted for or listed as POW/MIA and this action raises public awareness.

Congressman Lynch for introducing H.R. 4879, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency Support Act, which would ensure the Defense

POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) to continue its important work despite periodic government shutdowns. This agency is responsible for locating and identifying the remains of service men and women of the armed forces lost in action during war times. Their work is so critically important for families to find closure of a lost loved one. While this Bill is in its beginning stages, it is one that is dear to our hearts since most of our POWs first were identified as MIAs.

The VA has maintained a long standing focus on reducing veterans' suicide. While there have been many reports with staggering numbers of daily suicides, progress has been slower than hoped. Bill H.R. 3495, Improve Well-Being for Veterans Act, also known as the Improve Act has been introduced to help those veterans who have not reached out to the VA for help. This proposed community based program is hoping to supplement the VA's efforts.

Each conflict has exposed our men and women of the military service to health dangers. Sadly, the government has been slow, often decades, to recognize and acknowledge the various exposures. Agent Orange is a great example which was highlighted following the Vietnam War and continues to be reported on. Senate Bill 2950, the Veterans Burn Pit Exposure Recognition Act of 2019, was introduced to recognize that veterans who served in Iraq, Afghanistan, Djibouti, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates were exposed to more than 45 toxins, chemicals, and airborne hazards. It is disappointing this bill would not grant a presumption of service connection; however it would help veterans prove that any disability or illness resulting from exposure

to these environmental hazards occurred during military service.

We have encouraged our AXPOW members for decades to preserve their experience as a POW through the National Archives and other means. We encourage our members to get behind Bill HR 2385, recently passed in the House, which would permit VA to establish a grant program to conduct national veterans' cemetery research and produce educational materials for the Veterans Legacy Program (VLP). It expands on the current program, which focuses only on large educational institutions to include smaller groups that wish to engage with VA in memorializing veterans.

On the first Congressional day following Veterans' Day, the House passed the following Bills and sent to the Senate for action. Of course, with the House passage, the probability of passage of these Bills is much higher than other proposed Bills so contacting your Senator is very helpful to the cause.

- H.R. 3224: The Deborah Sampson Act
- H.R. 4162: GI Bill Planning Act of 2019
- H.R. 3996: VA Design-Build Construction Enhancement Act of 2019
- H.R. 4625: Protect the GI Bill Act
- H.R. 1424: Fallen Warrior Battlefield Cross Memorial Act
- H.R. 4477: Reducing High Risk to Veterans and Veterans Services Act
- H.R. 4771: VA Tele-Hearing Modernization Act
- H.R. 4360: VA Overpayment Accountability Act
- H.R. 4356: Protecting Families of Fallen Service members Act

Debra and I wish you all a healthy and happy 2020.

Andersonville



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Greetings to the members of the American Ex-Prisoners of War! Please allow me to introduce myself. I am Barbara Hatcher, currently the Acting Superintendent at Andersonville National Historic Site (NHS). Charles Sellars, who served as Superintendent since 2014, has accepted another position at a national park in Kentucky. Until his now vacant position is filled, one or more

individuals will temporarily serve as Acting Superintendent to ensure the continuation of park operations. I have the honor of serving in this position until mid-February.

Since my arrival in October, I have been struck by the many powerful stories of prisoners of war (POWs) that are preserved through the National Prisoner of War Museum. In exploring the museum, and watching POWs share what they and their families went through on behalf of our country, visitors better understand the sacrifices made for the freedoms we enjoy today. The historic grounds where 13,000 POWs perished brings the power of place to the visitor's experience and amplifies that understanding, as does Andersonville National Cemetery, where veterans of every American conflict save the War of 1812 rest in eternal honor. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve at such an extraordinary site.

My background as a Civil Engineer, working for the National Park Service regional office and stationed at Great Smoky Mountains National Park, will enable me to contribute to several major ongoing projects at Andersonville NHS. One of the most important upcoming projects focuses on Andersonville National Cemetery, which provides an important service to veterans and their families. At our annual burial rate, it should be 20-30 years from now before the cemetery is filled. But large sections of the cemetery are currently not usable due to steep slopes, drainage issues, and other factors. As a result we are at risk of running out of usable grave space in the near future. To address this, we are planning a project to regrade a large open section of the cemetery so we can continue to provide burial services to veterans and their families. We



are hopeful that this project will be implemented in the next 1-2 years. We are also developing management strategies for the historic trees in the cemetery, many of which are reaching the end of their life span, to ensure we maximize grave space while still maintaining the cultural landscape and scenic dignity of the site.

This year, the park will recognize its 50th anniversary. When Congress acted to establish the site on October 16, 1970, they tasked the park with a mission "to provide an understanding of the overall prisoner-of-war story of the Civil War; to interpret the role of prisoner-of-war camps in history; to commemorate the sacrifice of Americans who lost their lives in such camps, and to preserve the monuments located therein". Our 2014 Foundation document stated the park's purpose is "to preserve the resources and stories that illustrate the experiences of American prisoners of war throughout U.S. history and to educate the public about the deadliest ground of the Civil War." Andersonville NHS is the only national park established as a memorial to all American POWs and has the only national museum solely dedicated to interpreting the American POW experience. It also includes the only still active national cemetery managed by the National Park Service. It is a unique and powerful place, forever set aside for the benefit of all

andersonville, cont'd...

Americans. We will recognize the 50-year anniversary of the park with special events and programs on the first Saturday of each month, including a "Civilian Staff Ride", museum tours, cemetery tours, former POW guest speakers, and more. If you are interested in coming to speak at the park and share your POW experience, please contact Jennifer Hopkins at 229-924-0343 ext. 201 or jennifer_hopkins@nps.gov.



In partnership with Wreaths Across America, the Civil Air Patrol, Bennett Trucking, and the Taylor Foundation, the park will honor those buried in Andersonville

National Cemetery with wreaths on Saturday, December 14th. Last year, the park received over 15,000 wreaths, enough to cover about 75% of graves in the cemetery. This year, we hope to receive at least 10,000 wreaths. The serene beauty and honor of thousands of wreaths placed on the graves of those who sacrificed for their country is a heartfelt and moving display, and we invite anyone in the area to come and participate in this special tribute to our fallen military. Contact Charles Barr at 229-924-0343 ext. 112 or charles_barr@nps.gov for more information.

The Victory from Within Traveling Exhibit has been on display at the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge, Louisiana since September. In January 2020, the exhibit is scheduled to move to Georgia Southwestern University in Americus, Georgia, where it will be displayed in the library through March. Park staff continue to search for venues for April to September 2020. Due to the exhibit's large size (1200 square feet) and inclusion of artifacts that require very specific temperature and humidity conditions, many interested venues

are not able to host the exhibit. To facilitate displaying the exhibit at additional venues and thus sharing the American POW experience with a much greater audience, the park is planning a project to modify the traveling exhibit by replacing the artifacts with replicas and/or reducing the size of the exhibit. If you know of any potential venue for this traveling version of the National POW Museum, which includes artifacts, former POW oral history interviews and other displays, please contact Charles Barr at 229-924-0343 ext. 112 or charles_barr@nps.gov.

If I can be of any assistance in my role as Acting Superintendent, please feel free to contact me at 229-924-0343 ext. 105 or barbara_hatcher@nps.gov. I look forward to working with the American Ex-Prisoners of War as we enter a new year full of events and activities to honor and remember American POWs at Andersonville NHS.

PHOTO CREDITS: NPS and NPS (Jody Mays)

VIRTUAL REALITY LETS USERS EXPERIENCE CIVIL WAR COMBAT LIKE NEVER BEFORE

American Battlefield Trust's new series, Civil War 1864: A Virtual Reality Experience, uses immersive storytelling and multisensory techniques to bring the past to life

Experience Civil War combat like never before with the American Battlefield Trust's new four-part series *Civil War 1864: A Virtual Reality Experience*. This immersive storytelling approach will put you back in time as you navigate in 360 degrees how it may have looked, felt and sounded to be a Civil War soldier. Viewable in a variety of formats — from desktop computer to mobile device to virtual reality headset — these short films take you inside a Confederate sniper's lair, into a Union defensive position, along on a reconnaissance patrol and inside a Union field hospital. "We constantly strive to bring people closer to historical events in hopes that they can better understand or even feel them" said Garry Adelman, the Trust's chief historian. "The immersive nature of virtual reality can help us approximate the personal experience of Civil War soldiers like nothing else has before."

The American Battlefield Trust, decided to pursue a VR experience because of its unprecedented ability to put the viewer into a scenario. In each video, the action takes place in 360° surrounding the viewer with action, along with sound alerts to indicate where significant action occurs, or pop-up facts appear. Those using a virtual reality headset or cardboard viewer can take best advantage of its directional sound, while mobile devices enable users to pinch-and-zoom for closer look at specific details. Learn more about *Civil War 1864: A Virtual Reality Experience* at www.battlefields.org/virtualreality

namPOW news



Mac's Facts by Captain J.M. McGrath, USN (Ret)

The Vietnam Conflict is officially recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense as occurring from July 8, 1959 to May 15, 1975 (the SS Mayaguez incident in Kampuchea, Cambodia).

POWs in China: The first two civilian POWs of the post-Korea cold war era were John T. Downey and Richard Fecteau, captured by the Chinese 11-29-1952. Downey was released with the majority of the POWs during Operation Homecoming, 3-12-73 after more than 20 years in prison. Fecteau was released after 19 years in solitary on 12-13-71. They were flying an infiltrator recovery mission (C-47) when shot down. They are now retired from the CIA and have been highly decorated. Col. Phil Smith, USAF, (then a Captain) flying a F104C, joined the China crowd 9-20-65 to 3-15-73. Cdr. Bob Flynn, USN (then a Lt.) flying an A6A, wasn't going to be left out of the fun in China. He was

a POW in China from 8-21-67 to 3-15-73. Three other A6A pilots on that same mission became the first Vietnam era U.S. military to die in China. They were: Lcdr. Jim Buckley, Lt. (j.g.) Dain Scott and Lt. (j.g.) J.F. Trembley. One foreign national, Mr. George Watt, was released from China during operation homecoming. The circumstances of his capture are unknown. A total of five captives were released from China at the end of the Cold War.

The first military POW of the Vietnam Conflict was then Major Larry Bailey, USA. He was shot down while a passenger in a C47 flying in Laos March 23, 1961. He was released 8-15-62. So, he's the first U.S. military POW for Laos and Southeast Asia. Bailey was lucky. The other 7 U.S. servicemen aboard his C47 all perished. Larry was the only one wearing a parachute. He jumped clear. Those seven; one Army Warrant Officer, three USAF Lts, three USAF enlisted are listed as the first to die in the Vietnam War. The first POW for South Vietnam was Army Sgt. (E4) George Fryett. He was captured 12-24-1961. He was released 6-24-62.

The first pilot captured in North Vietnam, Aug 5, 1964 during the first raids of the Gulf of Tonkin Incident was Lt. (j.g.) Everett Alvarez. Ev was released Feb 12, 1973 after eight and a half years in captivity. He retired as a Navy commander and served in the Reagan administration as Deputy Director of the Peace Corps and Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration. The first to be killed in NVN was Navy Lt. (j.g.) Richard Sather, flying an A1H Skyraider, shot down 8-5-64. Other early 1965 captured pilots in NVN (in order of shoot down) were: Lcdr. Bob Shumaker, 2-11-65; Capt. Hayden Lockhart, 3-2-65; Capt. Scotty Morgan, 4-3-65; Lcdr.

Ray Vohden, 4-3-65; Capt. "Smitty" Harris, 4-4-65; Lt. Phil Butler, 4-20-65; Capt. Bob Peel, 5-31-65; Lt. J.B. McKamey, 6-2-65; Maj. Larry Guarino; Capt. Paul Kari, 6-20-65; and Cdr. Jeremiah Denton, 7-18-65 along with his Radar Intercept Officer, Lt. (j.g.) William Tschudy.

The first POW to escape was Army Captain Isaac Camacho, (Ret) (then an E7). He was held from 11-24-63 to 7-13-65. Camacho was the first American POW to get the word out to military intelligence about early Cuban involvement in the war. Isaac was brutally interrogated by the Cubans. Isaac knew the Cubans planned to kill him. He was lucky to escape before they could accomplish their plan. Army Col. Nick Rowe, (then a 1st Lt.) was captured the month before (October 29, 1963) but didn't make good his escape until five years later on 12/31/1968. Nick is deceased. He was killed on 4-21-89 in a Communist insurgency ambush in the Philippines. A total of 32 military POWs escaped during the war: 19 Army, 1 USAF, 10 Marines, and 2 Navy. 30 men escaped from SVN. Two Navy pilots (Lieutenant Charles Klusmann and Lt. (j.g.) Dieter Dengler) were the only military men to escape from Laos. There were no successful escapes from Cambodia, North Vietnam or China despite many unsuccessful attempts.

The longest held POW in South Vietnam was Army Col. Floyd Thompson (then a Capt.). Floyd was a POW from 3-26-64 to 3-16-73, 10 days short of nine years as a POW. Capt. Thompson is the longest held POW in American history. Lt (j.g.) Everett Alvarez was the longest held in NVN. The first Cambodia POWs were: Army E-4 Ronald J. Lehman and Army E-3 Jerry A. Tester. They were captured while crewing a Navy

nampows, cont'd...

riverine boat. They were held from May 20, 1968 to June 10, 1968 and released to the Australian consulate in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

The last military shoot down/capture was Navy Lcdr. Alfred Agnew, shot down while flying a reconnaissance flight in a Navy RA5C Vigilante over NVN on December 28, 1972. His back seater, Lt. Michael Haifley was killed.

From the time of Lcdr. Agnew's capture, until 5-15-75, forty more American servicemen died (7 in SVN, 2 NVN, 23 in Cambodia, and 8 in Laos), but none were known captured alive. Two of the last to be killed in NVN were Navy pilots Lt. Jim Duensing and Lt. (j.g.) Roy Haviland, 1-30-73. Two of the last four military men to die in SVN were Air Force Captain George William Morris, Jr. and 1Lt Mark Allen Peterson, 1-27-73. Marines 1st Lt. Michael John Shea and Capt William Nystul were killed in their CH46D on 4-29-75. That incident was during the Saigon evacuation, April 29/30, 1975. The last to die in Laos were eight USAF crew members of an EC47Q aircraft February 5, 1973. During the Mayaguez rescue attempt in Cambodia, on 5-15-75, the last day of the Vietnam Conflict, 18 U.S. servicemen were killed. One Air Force officer, one USAF enlisted, two Navy enlisted, and 14 enlisted Marines. There were no known POWs.

A total of 591 POWs (566 military & 25 civilians) were released February 12th-April 1st 1973 in Operation Homecoming. Including 32 military men who escaped, a total of 662 military POWs got out of the South East Asia prisons alive. 141 civilians and foreign nationals were also released. Of the 662 who survived, 231 have died since

repatriation in 1973. 431 military NAM-POWs are alive as of today, 11/27/2019. Almost 500 pilots/aircrew were captured. 73 military POWs died in captivity. 58,213 U.S. Military died in the Vietnam Conflict. Approximately 1,587 (as of 11/22/2019) military casualties are still unaccounted for from the Vietnam War.

The last military man to be released was Maj. Bob White, USA (then a Capt.). He was captured in SVN 11-15-69, released 4-1-73. He was released two days late in violation of the peace agreements. Captain White was the only American POW still held in South Vietnam as of February 11, 1973, the day before the POW exchange was to begin. All POWs, both military and civilians, with the exception of Captain White, had been moved either to Hanoi or to Cambodia. Also, by then, nine of the 15 military POWs captured in Laos had been moved to Hanoi for incarceration and eventual release during Operation Homecoming. Six military POWs captured in Laos had been released earlier.

7,605 are still MIA from the Korean Conflict (1950-53). The capture of the USS Pueblo and her crew on January 23, 1968 by the North Koreans is a full story in itself. The Pueblo incident is not considered part of the Vietnam Conflict. Also, August 17, 1969, a helicopter was shot down in the Korean DMZ and three crewmen were captured and held for 180 days.

Total MIAs: WWII, 72,638; Korea, 7,605; Cold war, 126; Vietnam War, 1,587; Gulf wars, 5; and Libya, 1.

NAM-POWs Corporation is a tax-exempt Section 501 (c) (19) Arizona Corporation. All statistical data comes from the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, <https://www.dpaa.mil>. NAM-

POWs, Inc. is not associated with nor does it represent any office of the Secretary of Defense. Contact: mmcgrath2@comcast.net or see our web page at: www.nampows.org.

Note: There were five early Vietnam captives, before it was known as the Vietnam Conflict: "On 14 June 1954, U.S. Army Pvts. Doyle Morgan and Leonard Sroveck and Air Force Airmen Ciro Salas, Giacomo Appice, and Jerry Schuller became the first American military men captured in Vietnam. They were released 30 August 1954." The men were part of a U.S. maintenance crew supporting French supply units. DOD MIA/POW statistics started in 1961. These men are not recorded in the PMSEA reference document. Source: Stolen Valor by B.G. Burkett, pages 25-26.

Note: Fecteau, Downey and Watt were the only China survivors out of "389 missing Americans whose fate remained uncertain 65 years after the Korean armistice." The Chinese never cooperated in resolving the other 386 cases. Source: Stolen Valor, page 22.

Note: The brutality of the Vietnamese toward prisoners has been well documented. According to Bernard Fall, who accompanied French combat troops in both Vietnam and Laos, of an estimated 37,000 French and French Union soldiers reported missing in Indochina, most of whom were assumed to be PWs, only 11,000 were known to have survived. Stolen Valor, pg. 22.

Note: Many of the official number of 591 American POWs who were released in Operation Homecoming (566 military, 25 civilians), Feb-April 1973, were captured in one country but detained or released in another. "92 VS/VN," for example,

nampows, cont'd...

means 92 were captured in SVN and held and released in NVN. Here are the rest: 2 VS/VS, 22 VS/CB (Cambodia), 11 LA/VN, 3 CH/CH (China), 457 VN/VN and 5 CB/CB. 19 POWs held in CB were returned to SVN for the Operation Homecoming release on the morning of February 12th, the start of prisoner exchanges. They were: 1 Air Force pilot, 1 Marine and 17 Army. Here is the number of POWs who were released early, usually for propaganda purposes: 12 VN, 113 VS, 16 LA, 25 CB, and 2 CH. Total: 168 out of 801 were released early (64 military, 104 civilians/foreign nationals). 32 military & 8 civilians/foreign nationals escaped in the same country in which captured (China and NVN: None; SVN: 6 civilians, 30 military; Laos: 2 military, 1 fornat; Cambodia: one fornat). Only one woman POW survived (Monika Schwinn, a German nurse, captured in SVN, released in NVN). There were no known U.S. military women POWs.

Mike is married to the former Marlene Hanuschak of Youngstown, Ohio. They live in Monument, Colorado. Mike recently retired from United Airlines. Golf, fly fishing and six grandchildren keep the McGraths active as they enjoy life in the Colorado Rockies.

Source:
NAM-POWs Corporation, an Arizona non-profit 501(c) (19) corporation formed in 1973 for the Vietnam era POWs.



pow/mia

Mary Schantag, Chairman
P.O.W. Network
info@pownetwork.org

'This is a moral obligation'

During the House Oversight and Reform Committee's subpanel on national security hearing held Nov 19th, Stars and Stripes reported that The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Agency, (DPAA) director, Kelly McKeague, called his mission "daunting" but critical to American values.

"DPAA will not waiver," McKeague said. "This is a moral obligation [to recover fallen troops]. They must never be forgotten."

Those testifying repeatedly noted the need to increase funds, at a time the Pentagon proposed cutting funding to DPAA to \$145 million, down from 2019's \$160 million dollar budget.

Additional funding would allow DPAA to expand the number of scientists working on DNA identification and expand private –public partnerships.

One partner, History Flight, discovered seventy-nine sets of remains during the 2019 fiscal year, according to Mark Noah, the chief executive officer's testimony.

In History Flight's experience, more than 50% of those recovered had living brothers, sisters, and children at their funerals, Noah told lawmakers this week.

"The recovery of America's missing servicemen is a vital endeavor for their families and for our country. What we are accomplishing in recovering the missing is putting a little bit of America back into America," Noah said in a Business Insider US interview.

History Flight's recoveries are 20% of the DoD's annual identifications, but Noah told lawmakers that members of his organization had raised and contributed more than \$3.5 million to fund recovery efforts, which have not been reimbursed by the Defense Department.

Noah also testified that his organization has recovered 309 service members from Tarawa, where time is running out to complete the mission, and 429 killed there, have yet to be accounted for.

Kiribirti's president, Anote Tong, stated that his country is facing annihilation – and may be unlivable in a few decades due to climate change. It is one of the most remote and isolated countries in the world.

Rising sea levels and high tides force workers to pump water out of working sites each day to excavate each site.

The clock is ticking on getting the Marines and Sailors home from Betio and Tarawa.

Vietnam remains recoveries face similar time-crunch urgency, with acidic soil causing problems.

DPAA's year in review shows that "In Fiscal Year (FY) 2019, bolstered by the strengthening and expansion of partnerships, the Defense POW/MIA

pow/mia, continued...

Accounting Agency (DPAA) accounted for 218 formerly missing persons from past conflicts, the highest yearly total reached by the agency or its predecessor organizations. Of the 218 newly accounted for, 140 were from World War II, 73 from the Korean War, and five from the Vietnam War, including two civilians who flew for Air America."

Negotiations and active recoveries from North Korea, stalemated, and planned operations with the regime, never occurred. Despite that setback, 41 service members from the original "55 cases" have been identified, with the potential for up to 150 more being identified.

In November of 2018, Judicial Watch filed a lawsuit against the Defense Department, seeking release of lists of POWs and MIAs provided to North Vietnam, as well as materials used to brief President Nixon in 1973 about those who could be remaining in that nation.

The organization is also seeking reports of "live sightings" of U.S. soldiers from Jan. 27, 1973, to the present, along with data collected from the classified program known as "PAVE SPIKE," plus electronic messages containing individual code numbers issued to U.S. airmen transmitted from the ground in Vietnam and/or Laos from Jan. 27, 1973 to the present according to the lawsuit, which is still ongoing.

On November 6, 2019, Senate Bill 2994 (S-2794) was introduced. The bill, cited as the "Bring Our Heroes Home Act", once again, is "To provide for the creation of the Missing Armed Forces Personnel Records Collection at the National Archives, to require the expeditious public transmission to the Archivist and public disclosure of Missing Armed Forces Personnel records, and for other purposes."

Within the "findings" introducing the bill are several points of note:

(1) A vast number of records relating to Missing Armed Forces Personnel have not been identified, located, or transferred to the National Archives following review and declassification. Only in the rarest cases is there any legitimate need for continued protection of records pertaining to Missing Armed Forces Personnel who have been missing for decades.

(2) There has been insufficient priority placed on identifying, locating, reviewing, or declassifying records relating to Missing Armed Forces Personnel and then transferring the records to the National Archives for public access.

(3) Mandates for declassification set forth in multiple Executive orders have been broadly written, loosely interpreted, and often ignored by Federal agencies in possession and control of records related to Missing Armed Forces Personnel.

On Nov 7, 2019 a bill to change when the POW/MIA flag flies, became law. The bill changed the days on which the POW/MIA flag is required to be displayed at specified locations to all days on which the U.S. flag is displayed.

From National Director Moe Moyer:

BRING OUR HEROES HOME Act, S-2794

We know that you are all aware of the many 'stumbling blocks' associated with the POW/MIA Accounting issues. but as a reminder, the number one 'Stumbling block' has been '*Declassification*'.

We are not referring to just the Vietnam War files/documents, we are speaking of files from World War II through Gulf Wars (1941 -today). At the conclusion of the Senate Select Committee, in 1992, the Senate passed a resolution, *unanimously*, ordering the declassification of all files related to POW/MIA accounting. The sitting President then issued an Executive order and at least two additional Presidents, since then, have also issued Executive Orders relating to Declassifying Records that relate to POWs & MIAs.

I am sure that there are many reasons why multiple Government agencies and organizations have failed to execute orders issued by Congress or the Commander-in-Chief to declassify or turn over their information on those who are still on the Missing in Action/Unaccounted for List published by DoD/DPAA. Perhaps because it is a 'chain of command' issue versus a 'legal' issue, that they have little or no fear of punishment if they refuse to abide by the Order.

That said, follow this link - <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2794> and you'll find a copy of S-2794, *Bring Our Heroes Home Act*, that was reintroduced on the Floor of the Senate in November 2019. This is the Answer! This is Ground Breaking work and if this legislation passes, the Bring Our Heroes Home Act will be the first *comprehensive legislation* that will mandate widespread declassification of POW/MIA documents (subject to certain exceptions) and provide independent oversight of the process.

civilian

Myths of Santo Tomas

Over time, there have been several myths that have grown up around the Santo Tomas internment experience. Somewhere along the line, a certain event has crept into a book written about Santo Tomas, probably based on, "A friend of my aunt told this story". It was then picked up by another author and so the tale became a myth as it was perpetuated. Sascha Jansen was scrupulous about knocking down false stories. It was her goal, and that of BACEPOW, to keep the history of Santo Tomas accurate and to weed out errors, falsehoods, and fiction.

There is now a body of work that is admittedly fiction about the internment experience. Why is fiction necessary? There are so many good personal stories that are entirely accurate so there is no need for fiction. Perhaps it is that authors think that all of the "good" stories have been written and therefore resort to fiction. I expect that at any time a book will be written about the zombies that roamed the campus at night to latch onto the interests of millennials – it's what sells books!

It is easy to have a falsehood creep into an otherwise accurate account. It is usually a mistake and I am guilty of this in my own book, *A Lovely Little War*, where I describe the four engine bombers that raided Manila starting in December 1944 as the new B-29s when actually they were B-24s. These kinds of mistakes don't expand into myths as most authors are too savvy to perpetuate the errors. But there are some myths that do get perpetuated and taint the history of Santo Tomas, such as the following.

WEAPONS STORED IN SANTO TOMAS Before the war, the cadet corps at the university would drill with rifles and other weapons. It is rumored that these weapons were hidden away when the Japanese occupied Manila. The leaders were planning to distribute these weapons to internees in the event that the Japanese started preparations to execute the people in the camp. *Whether this plan could have worked is questionable, but there was no opportunity to test it since the Japanese removed the weapons shortly after converting the university to an internment camp.*

LIBERATION MESSAGE On the Saturday that liberation occurred when the 1st Cavalry Flying Column entered Santo Tomas in late evening, there had been several flyovers by American SBD dive bombers. It has become a myth that during a flyover in the late afternoon one of the pilots had dropped a message that could be interpreted as liberation would be occurring soon. There are several versions of the message rumored, but the one I like is, "Roll out the barrel. Santa Clause is coming Sunday or Monday." The afternoon flyover included 2 aircraft, or 4, or 6, or 9 depending on who is telling the story. It is fact that the Marines were flying the SBDs providing close air support for the Flying Column and had at least 9 aircraft over the column during all daylight hours of the 3-day race to Manila. I was a witness to what really happened, as were others who were on the north side of the Main Building on that epic day. *At approximately 11:00 AM a single SBD flew from the north at slow speed and just above treetop level. As it passed over the Annex, both canopies were open and the pilot and gunner waved to internees on the ground. It flew over the Main Building and the gunner dropped his goggles with the message. His brother was an internee in the*

camp. By shortly after noon, the message was being repeated all over the camp. The afternoon flyover by multiple aircraft came later and no additional messages were dropped.

OSS VISIT TO SANTO TOMAS At the 50th anniversary of liberation reunion, BACEPOW members were surprised when Reginal Spears made a presentation announcing that he had clandestinely visited Santo Tomas in December 1944 to discuss with members of the Executive Committee the Japanese plans for disposing of internees before Allied troops could liberate them. He claimed to be an OSS officer selected by President Roosevelt for this special mission, and was infiltrated by submarine, posed as a Canadian working for the Japanese, and had forged Japanese documents that allowed him to visit Santo Tomas. *Spears story was considered highly suspect by most of the people at the reunion. Since early in 1944 the Japanese had put all Allied civilians in the internment camps no matter what their status, so it is unlikely that Spears was allowed to roam unescorted by the Japanese. He was not questioned at the gate before entering Santo Tomas. As indicated in the previous myth, there were no weapons hidden at the camp. There is no information in the camp records that this visit ever occurred. And finally, does anyone really believe that President Roosevelt chose Spears for the mission and personally briefed him beforehand?*

KILLING OF LT. ABIKO Abiko was second in command of the Japanese garrison at Santo Tomas, and the most hated because of his imperious attitude and demands that internees show proper respect by bowing to all of guards and for punishing people who did not do so to his specifications. There are at least 8 different stories about how

he died on the evening of liberation, and at least a dozen people who claim to be the one who shot him. One story has him wounded, treated in the aid station, and put into a bed in a nearby women internees' dormitory. When the owner of the bed returned and found him in it, she threw him out. *The most plausible story is that he was meeting with a group of American officers in the Plaza between the Main Building and the Education Building discussing the hostages, when he reached across his body to a pocket where Japanese often kept a grenade in case they were captured. When he did so, he was shot by a 1st Cavalry trooper or a guerilla standing nearby. His body was then dragged into the lobby of the Main Building where it was seen approximately half an hour after the Flying Column entered the campus. Not enough time had elapsed for him*

to be taken to the aid station, treated, then transferred to the women's dormitory.

EXPLOSIVES IN MAIN BUILDING

After liberation, it was rumored that the Japanese had hidden explosives under the front staircase in the Main Building in order to kill as many internees as possible should American forces attempt to capture the camp. *This did not happen, but the myth may have originated when it became known that a secret message had been intercepted by U.S. Intelligence from Tokyo to local commanders ordering that all Allied prisoners were to be executed before they could be liberated. There also were other similar myths about how the execution of Santo Tomas prisoners was to be accomplished.*

From time-to-time, these myths or similar ones make their way into

newly published books, so it is important to know that they don't represent an accurate history of the Santo Tomas internment history.

BACEPOW

Bay Area Civilian
Ex-Prisoners of War.

Membership is open to all former prisoners of the Japanese, their families, and friends.

There is an active descendents group.

www.bacepow.net

Cmdr, Angus Lorenzen

Seventy-five Years Ago...

Camp Administration Office
Santo Tomas Camp
Manila, Philippines

March 12, 1945

Commanding Officer
44th Tank Battalion

Sir:

On behalf of the 3, 768 American and Allied civilians interned at Santo Tomas, we express to you, your officers and men, our sincerest appreciation for the gallant and heroic entry into the City of Manila and the dramatic liberation of our Camp on the glorious night of Feb. 3, 1945.

Mere words cannot adequately express our deepest feelings, but we assure you that the night of our liberation shall be an undying memory for all of us.

Sincerely yours,
Earl Carroll, Chairman
S. L. Lloyd, Vice-Chairman

Editor's Note: Earl Carroll was the Camp Administrator for Santo Thomas Prison Camp in the Philippines during WWII.

Diamond Jubilee of Liberation

75 Years of Freedom from Japan's Domination

BACEPOW is Planning a Gala Celebration
We encourage you to join us for this very special reunion

Embassy Suites by Hilton Sacramento Riverfront Promenade
Thursday February 6 to Sunday February 9, 2020

Preliminary Program

Thursday

Reunion Registration 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM Embassy Suites main lobby

Friday

Reunion Registration 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM Embassy Suites main lobby

Morning session 9:00 AM — 12:15 PM

Lunch break 12:15 PM — 1:30 PM

Afternoon session 1:30 PM — 4:30 PM

Saturday

Reunion Registration 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM Embassy Suites main lobby

Morning session 9:00 AM — 12:00 N Panel discussion of liberation at each camp and the impact of the Battle of Manila

Jim Zobel of the MacArthur Memorial and Jim Scott author of Rampage about the Battle of Manila will participate with ex-prisoners from the internment camps, and audience participation will be encouraged.

Lunch break 12:00 N — 1:30 PM

Afternoon session to include tours to various historical museums and for descendants there will be a special meeting for planning the future of BACEPOW and how the descendants will take a leadership role.

Sunday

Authors' book discussions 8:00 AM to 11:30 AM Main Lobby

Board of Directors' meeting – 9:00 AM

Authors' work in progress meeting chaired by MaryBeth Klee – 10:30 AM

Banquet – 12:00 N

Keynote speaker — William Paris—1st Cavalry

Adjourn – 3PM

Reservations at the Embassy Suites Riverfront Sacramento Hotel should be made early to obtain the special BACEPOW rate of \$189. Reservations can be made on the Internet at www.sacramento.embassysuites.com using our group code **BCE**. Or call (916) 326-5000 or toll-free 1-800-EMBASSY and ask for the Bay Area Civilian Ex-POW's code **BCE** rate. Your reservation includes a complimentary hot cooked breakfast and the managers cocktail party. Valet parking is available at a discount rate of \$25 or use self-parking nearby. Free airport pickup call (916) 326-5000. The deadline for reservations is January 16, 2020.



News & Information

March 6-7, 2020. USS HOUSTON CA-30 SURVIVORS' ASSOCIATION & NEXT GENERATIONS 77th Anniversary USS Houston CA-30 Day of Remembrance will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel & Suites Houston by the Galleria 5353 Westheimer Road, Houston, TX 77056; 713-961-9000.

April 25, 2020. AXPOW National Board Meeting will be held in Arlington Texas at the Arlington Hilton, 2401 E Lamar Blvd, Arlington, TX 76006; 855-213-0582. For more information, contact Clydie Morgan Chief Operating Officer; HQ@axpow.org.

June 22-27, 2020. Madison Wisconsin. The National Veterans Golden Age Games is the premier senior adaptive rehabilitation program in the United States, and the only national multi-event sports and recreational seniors' competition program designed to improve the quality of life for all older Veterans, including those with a wide range of abilities and disabilities. The VA Challenges and encourages senior Veterans to be proactive in embracing a healthier lifestyle, thus achieving the NVGAG "Fitness for Life" motto. The Games are open to Veterans, ages 55 or older, who receive health care from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.



On Sunday, November 10, 2019, a group of Vietnam veterans were together for the first time since they shared a tragic night together in 1972 in the Gulf of Tonkin.

For decades, they weren't allowed to talk about the incident – not even to each other.

And because of the secrecy of their mission, they went decades without being recognized for contributions in the Vietnam War.

During the 23rd Annual Military Gala & Banquet at the Chateau on the Lake Resort in Branson, hosted by the P.O.W. Network, these men had the chance to visit with each other and receive a long-overdue, warm greeting from a roomful of appreciative veterans and family members.

"To be involved in something that important, but was never spoken of again, just to make sure this group got recognition is what is important," said Richard Hetzell during an interview before the banquet. He was one of 14 Navy SEALs assigned to take part in a

News, continued...

secret mission to aid POWs in their escape from the infamous Hoa Lo prison, more commonly known by its nickname, the "Hanoi Hilton."

The mission was known as Operation Thunderhead. Along with the 14 Navy SEALs from Alpha Platoon, were seven members of an Underwater Demolition Team (UDT) who were to deliver SEALs in underwater Swimmer Delivery Vehicles (basically a tiny submarine, but filled with water) to a spot at the mouth of the Red River where they were to look for the escaping prisoners and help them to safety.

At the time, the SEALs were not aware they were waiting to assist POWs. According to Hetzell, all they were told was that they were waiting for "very important indigenous people."

Unfortunately, the mission did not go smoothly.

On June 3, 1972, the first team, made of two SEALs and two UDT individuals, endured strong currents and, after running out of battery power in their Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV), were unable to reach an island where they were to watch for the POWs. They had to scuttle the Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV) and swim out to sea where they were later picked up. The four were to be delivered back to the USS Grayback, a submarine from which the mission was launched.

When it was believed the Grayback had been spotted, the four-member crew jumped from the helicopter. Darkness and high waves made it hard to judge the helicopter's height, and a strong tail wind added to the helicopter's speed. The result was a jump higher and faster than was safe. The leader of the crew, Lt. Melvin Spencer Dry,

was killed immediately when he hit the water. Another member, Seaman Thomas Edwards, was severely injured.

Edwards, who was in Branson Sunday, said he suffered several injuries, including broken ribs. It turned out, his injuries were worse than he – or anyone – thought. He said he had an aneurysm that wasn't discovered for several years and he finally had surgery on the aneurysm in 1987.

"It showed up during a physical," he said.

In the meantime, a second SDV team had been deployed from the Grayback. They also encountered trouble, and their vehicle sank in 60 feet of water. They managed to meet up with the survivors of the other SDV team and were picked up the next morning.

The mission continued until the end of June, but no escaping POWs were ever located.

That's because there never were any escaped POWs to be found.

Unknown to the Navy SEAL teams, the North Vietnamese had relocated the prisoners temporarily, causing the escape plan to be canceled.

The one casualty from the mission, Dry, ended up being the last Navy SEAL to be killed during the Vietnam War. However, it was years before his sacrifice was properly recognized. Because the mission was classified, the military created a cover story in which Dry was killed during a training exercise. Because of that, Dry's family did not know the true circumstances of his death for years, and Dry's name was not included at the Naval Academy's Memorial Hall. Today, however, his name is included.

And as of December 2018, those members of Alpha Platoon, SEAL Team ONE, now qualify for the Vietnam Service Medal for the Vietnam Ceasefire Campaign.

The P.O.W. Network awarded plaques to all the men involved in Operation Thunderhead, including those who have since passed away or who could not attend Sunday's banquet.

The men of Operation Thunderhead are:

SEAL Team One, Alpha Platoon

LTJG Robert W. Conger Jr.
EO1 Samuel E. Birkey
RM3 Richard C. Hetzell
ETR3 John M. Davis
Lt. Melvin S. "Spence" Dry
CWO2 Philip "Moki" L. Martin
PH3 Tim R. Reeves
RM3 Michael J. Shortell
RM3 Barry S. Steele
ADJAN Robert M. Hooke
HM2 William B. Wheeler
RM3 Frank H. Sayle
RM3 Dave R. Hankins
Yn3 Eric A. Knudson

UTD-11 SDV Platoon

LTJG John C. Lutz
FN Thomas F. Edwards
SN Stephen J. McConnell
SN John N. Fraser
Lt Thomas McGrath
GMG2 Douglas Herzik

AAW - HC-7 Det 110

LCDR Edwin Towers



CREDIT: Branson Tri-Lakes News.

News, continued...

POW PRIORITY CARE ACT OF 2019

Over the summer, U.S. Representatives Tim Walberg (MI-07), Raja Krishnamoorthi (IL-08), Brett Guthrie (KY-02), and Bobby Rush (IL-01) introduced H.R. 3527, the *POW Priority Care Act*. It was referred to the House Committee on Veterans Affairs. This bipartisan legislation would elevate former Prisoners of War (POW) to Priority Group 1 in the scale used by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to determine eligibility for health care benefits and services. Currently, POWs are allocated to Priority Group 3.

"We owe every veteran who wears the uniform our steadfast gratitude and commitment to delivering timely, high quality care," said Rep. Walberg. "Prisoners of War not only answered the call of duty, but they endured unthinkable hardship and made unquestioned sacrifice in service to our country. We will never forget those who did not return home. For those who did, after facing such adversity, one way we can recognize their valor is to ensure former POWs are moved to the highest priority slot when it comes to their care at the VA."

BLUE WATER NAVY VIETNAM VETERANS ACT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) begins deciding Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 claims, Jan. 1, 2020, extending the presumption of herbicide exposure that include toxins such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

Prior to the measure, only Vietnam War Veterans who served on the ground in Vietnam or within Vietnam's inland waterways were eligible to receive disability compensation and other benefits based on a presumption of herbicide exposure.

Signed into law June 25, the law specifically affects Blue Water Navy (BWN) Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles offshore of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 6, 1962 and May 7, 1975, as well as Veterans who served in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between Jan. 1, 1967 and Aug. 31, 1971. These Veterans can apply for disability compensation and other benefits if they have since developed one of 14 conditions that are presumed to be related to exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange. Veterans do not need to prove that they were exposed to herbicides. The specific conditions can be found by searching Agent Orange on www.va.gov.

Survivors can file claims for benefits based on the Veteran's service if the Veteran died from at least one of the 114 presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange. The law also provides benefits for children born with spina bifida if their parent is or was a Veteran with certain verified service in Thailand during a specific period. The Blue Water Navy Act also includes provisions affecting the VA Home Loan Program. The law creates more access for Veterans to obtain no-down payment home loans, regardless of loan amount, and the home loan funding fee is reduced for eligible Reservists and National Guard borrowers who use their home loan benefits for the first time. Certain Purple Heart recipients do not pay

a funding fee at all. VA's website describes these and other benefits. Veterans who want to file an initial claim for an herbicide-related disability can use VA Form 21-526EZ, Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits or work with a VA-recognized VSO to assist with the application process. Additionally, veterans may contact their state Veterans Affairs Office.

BWN Veterans who previously filed a claim seeking service connection for one of the 14 presumptive conditions that was denied by VA may provide or identify any new and relevant information regarding their claim when reapplying. To re-apply, Veterans may use VA Form 20-0995, Decision Review Request: Supplemental Claim. As a result of the new law, VA will automatically review claims that are currently in the VA review process or under appeal.

MY HEALTHEVET

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) accomplished a record landmark Oct. 15, when the agency registered more than 5 million users on My HealthVet, which encourages Veterans to take control of their health.

The web-based portal provides online tools that enable Veterans to proactively engage with their health care team and make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

"My HealthVet is a shining example of how Veterans can play a more active role in their health care journey," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA is committed to providing the necessary technologies to ensure that Veterans receive care when and where they need it."



What is the Million Veteran Program?



With more than 775,000 Veteran partners as of August 2019, the Million Veteran Program is the world's largest genomic database linked to a health care system.

The goal of the Million Veteran Program (MVP) is to learn more about how genes affect health, in order to improve health for Veterans, and ultimately, everyone. MVP uses genetic, military exposure, lifestyle, and health information from MVP Veteran partners to better understand the role of genes and health. With more than 775,000 partners as of August 2019, MVP is the largest database of its kind in the world—an integrated health and genomic database tied to a health care system. It is also the world's largest genomic cohort of Veterans with the largest representation of minorities in the U.S.

MVP research is already leading to new ways of preventing and treating illnesses in Veterans and others. Questions that may be answered from MVP findings include "Why does a treatment work well for some people but not for others?"; "Why are some people at greater risk for developing certain diseases?"; and "How can we prevent certain illnesses in the first place?"

Why is it important to study genes?

Genes carry instructions for building and maintaining our bodies. They determine the color of our eyes and hair, our height, and other personal features. Small differences in our genes may also explain why some people get diseases and others do not. In addition, genes interact with our lifestyle factors and environment to influence our risk for common illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Genes may also affect how people respond to certain medications and treatments. Having a better understanding of how genes work may help to prevent and improve treatment of disease.

How does this research help Veterans?

Veterans—and in fact everyone—stand to benefit greatly as MVP researchers learn more about the effects of genes on health. Screening, diagnosis, and treatment for some illnesses—such as some forms of cancer—have already been improved through knowledge about the effects of certain genes. MVP is helping lead to new knowledge about which genes put people at risk for certain diseases, and which ones affect how people respond to treatment. This knowledge may eventually lead to better treatments and preventive measures for many common diseases. Projects using MVP data are also looking at illnesses especially common among combat Veterans, such as PTSD and TBI.

For more information or to join online, visit mvp.va.gov
 Call the MVP Info Center toll-free at: 866-441-6075 with any questions or to schedule an MVP visit.





FROM A BOY TO A MAN

Three Years in the Life of
Nicholas A. Orlando
(1943 -1945)

By Richard Orlando
ablemabel1944@gmail.com

My dad, Nicholas A. Orlando, was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1922 but spent most of his childhood and adult life, except for his military service, in the "Five Towns" area of Nassau County, Long Island. He was a child of the Depression Era who experienced hard times at an early age, working odd jobs and caring for his ailing mother. He never went on a vacation and the only trip he ever embarked on was one by auto to Washington, D.C. when he was a teenager. Up until World War II (WWII), he never flew on an airplane or sailed on a ship at sea and was never out of the United States.

In 1943 however, his life would change forever. Dad, like most of his boyhood buddies, was ordered to report for induction into the U.S. Army. Dad didn't have to go to war because he was employed by the Republic Aviation Corporation in Farmingdale assembling P-47 aircraft for the war effort. But, he felt that he needed a change and decided to serve his country in a very different way. The Infantry did not appeal to him so he decided to volunteer for the Army Air Force (AAF). He could have never imagined what was to become his destiny - a Ball Turret Gunner on a B-17 "Flying Fortress" and a prisoner of war (POW) at the infamous Stalag XVIIIB in Austria.

"From a Boy to a Man" is my attempt at telling Dad's story by providing the details of his life from late 1942 through the fall of 1945 using his diary, journal, letters, documents and photographs, as well as my own research. Once commenting about his military service in a local newspaper interview Dad stated, "I went in as a boy and came back as a man". It was just one simple observation that summarized how he felt about the overall experience. But, it certainly didn't reflect the magnitude of what he endured during those war years and how it impacted the rest of his life.

I never viewed my dad as being a hero or out of the ordinary. Like my uncles, other relatives and fathers of my friends, Dad was just another soldier in WWII who served his country well and returned home, by the grace of God, to work and raise a family. I would become an adult and father myself before finally realizing how special Dad was and truly understanding the sacrifices he made for us and for his country.

Dad was always proud of his military service but never bragged or talked too much about it. It would occasionally come up in conversation but he kept the gory details to himself. Once I graduated from college and enlisted in the National Guard, we

became much closer and Dad slowly started to come out of his shell, telling me more stories and sharing his experiences, both the good and bad. In early 1970, Dad finally finished renovating the basement and selected one corner of it for himself. It was turned into a museum of sorts, with some of his WWII memorabilia, books, photos and personal documents on display. On these walls was his story - actual telegrams, newspaper articles, photographs and medals in frames for all to see. It was here that I would later discover his diary, journal and letters, which provided me with the necessary details and inspiration to compile a personal history of Dad's life from 1942 to 1945.

But it wasn't until the spring of 1992 when I took more of an interest in what Dad experienced and realized that he was truly a survivor and hero with a story to tell. He was being honored as "Legionnaire of the Year" by his American Legion Post 339, and I was requested by the Commander to help compile a book for a "This Is Your Life" type presentation at the actual ceremony. I couldn't ask Dad for assistance because it was a surprise. This is when I started to research Dad's personal affects and discovered that I really wanted to know much more. I was able to obtain declassified documents from the National Archives and even

from a boy, cont'd...

contacted former crew members and fellow POWs. It was an emotional experience for all involved.

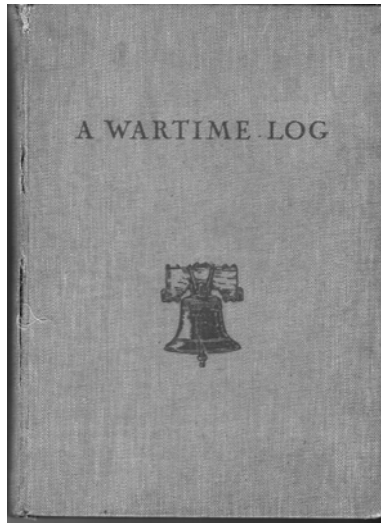
After reading other similar accounts of WWII experiences in books and on the internet, especially after discovering that there were websites for the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, the 306th Bomb Group and Stalag 17B, I decided it was time to find a permanent home for Dad's story. My first attempt was "A Fateful Farewell for Able Mabel", a story about Dad's plane and crew and their final mission on March 22, 1944.

With Dad's assistance, it was distributed to friends and family in January 2010, just one month before he died. Dad did get a chance to help me decipher his diary and journal, some portions of which were almost impossible to read after much abuse and deterioration. It was a difficult process however, and he had a tough time remembering the details, some of which rekindled bad memories. Unfortunately, Dad passed away before I had a chance to finish the project but now it's complete and ready to be shared with his family and friends, as well as the rest of the world.

Diary & Journal

Dad's actual diary and journal were documented in four different sources:

(1) Pre-printed numbered pages torn from a Wartime Log book. This source was printed not written, very legible and in very good condition considering its age and miles traveled. These pages contain what Dad described as "Dates to Remember" (March 22, 1944 through March 30, 1945).



Unfortunately, there were a few major gaps in the diary (i.e., Apr 15 - May 29, Jun 6 - 28, Jul 7 - Aug 2, 1944, and Jan 12 - 29, Feb 8 - 21, 1945) and many other individual days that had no entries at all. The majority of the date entries included were one-liners or a few sentences with little detail or explanation. However, it was enough for me to build upon. And, with my own research using the many references available, I was able to uncover an abundance of valuable information which enabled me to enhance Dad's initial effort.

(2) 5½" x 8" lined pages which were probably once part of a bound composition book. This source was written not printed and, for the most part, in very poor condition due to exposure to the elements and abuse. The paper was faded and washed out, almost to the point which it appeared that nothing had ever been written. The writing bled through on several of the pages and some entries were impossible to decipher. These pages contain the details of the last week at Stalag 17B, the 18-day 281 mile "March Across Austria", and encampment in the forest where the POWs were liberated by the American forces (March 31st through May 3rd). It's a miracle that this part of the diary even survived the journey. (See Exhibit 29)

I read several other POW accounts of the march and compared them with Dad's in order to fill in some of the blanks. But, it was difficult to coincide the dates, the distances covered and cities along the route. It became evident that conflicting details were most likely the result of bad weather, terrible living conditions, and dangerous circumstances which added to the confusion as the massive human wave moved across the Austrian countryside.

(3) A few 3½" x 6" lined pages which were probably torn from a note pad. This source was written not printed, very legible and in good condition. These pages contain the details of the few days waiting at Ranshofen, Austria, the trip to Le Havre, France, and time spent at Camp Lucky Strike (May 5th through May 11th). (See Exhibit 30) Dad remained at Camp Lucky Strike until May 20th, but for some reason it appears that none of this time period was documented in any diary or journal. However, there is always the possibility that it was and the pages were either misplaced or destroyed.

(4) A 6½" x 8" hardcover journal with lined pages. This source was written not printed on one side of each page, very legible and in good condition. This was actually the first phase of the book my dad was planning to write about his time spent in the military. He started it during the first week of May 1945 but for some reason never finished telling his story. The last item noted was his arrival in England on November 20, 1943. This was the "book" my Aunt Clem referred to in her letter to my dad, dated August 17, 1945.

Sorry to say that Dad's goal to write and complete his book never came to fruition. It's hard to say why he never finished it, but getting married and providing for his family

from a boy, cont'd...

was definitely a distraction. I'm sure with a little literary assistance, he could have authored a book as several of his fellow Kriegies did. However, over the years many more stories and details of his wartime experiences were shared. And, that together with his diary, journal and letters enabled me to produce this document which will preserve his story for generations to come.



From Freedom to Captivity

"It was on March 22nd that we abandoned our bomber over Germany proper about one hundred miles west of Berlin. It was 2:15 p.m. when I bailed out and was captured shortly after hitting the ground. Thus, I joined the Caterpillar Club. Our plane was badly damaged and aside from my other four crew members, it still remains a mystery to me what happened to the other five members remaining and the plane itself.

"I was captured by civilians and a few young German Home Guard. We were then put aboard a train and arrived at Dulag Luft on March 23rd at 6:00 p.m. There I was assigned a room 6'x4'x8' and remained there in solitary confinement for thirteen days. Dulag Luft is in Frankfurt, Germany

and its there you are sent so they can third degree you for information. Frankfurt itself was in shambles and a mass of wreckage when I went through it. While I was there the American POW camp outside of Frankfurt was badly damaged and luckily only one American killed. My daily food ration was two slices of buttered bread and a bowl of soup a day. Some days I had nothing to eat to bear my mind that they were seeking information.

"I was interrogated three times and on April 5th at 6:30 p.m. I was released from solitary and taken to a barbed wire enclosure with other airmen to await transportation to prison camp. The food was the same with the exception that if you cared for seconds on lousy soup it was all yours. In addition to this improvement the Russian prisoners who were stationed there permanently, sent us two cigarettes per man a day. They were decidedly inferior to American butts but tasted good after being without them for so long a time.

"April 9th was eventful because about 4:00 p.m. 100 Americans and yours truly arrived at Stalag XVIIIB in Austria after leaving Dulag Luft on April 6th. The trip, three days and three nights, was in a cold box car. Besides the meager Gerry (slang for German soldier) rations, five men shared one 10 lb Red Cross food parcel. And I enjoyed my first American butt since March 22nd. At our permanent prison, we were deloused, had our hair cut off completely and finally given a royal reception by the old Kriegies as we had news from the outside world. All of this has truly been an experience, one which I shall never forget."

Camp Life

"This is the story of life in our prisoner of war camp here in Stalag XVIIIB at Krems, Austria. In my

little story I will try to explain, as simple as possible, our life here during the war. The camp here is located about 30 miles due west of Vienna. And situated in a valley with numerous mountains surrounding. The grounds are fairly well vegetated and there are quite a few rainfalls during the year.

"The American POWs total here is about 4,200 with an estimated 4,000 of other nationalities nearby. All the Americans are non-commissioned officers therefore it eliminates their working or going on Kommando for the Germans. That doesn't apply when at the point of a Gerry's bayonet which, incidentally, happens quite a few times.

"Now to get down to the actual camp life. We have eighteen barracks in all but only fourteen are inhabited. The barracks is divided into halves, A and B respectively. A total of 300 men is in a barracks, 150 in each half. There's a washroom in the middle of the barracks and two stoves furnish heat. We have one stove to cook on and by alternating, everyone manages to cook something daily. Lights and water are only on for short periods of time. Roll Call ranges anywhere from two to five a day and the first is seven a.m.

"Our camp is run by one of our own men who is elected into office. In our case, S.Sgt. Kenneth Kurtenbach has been camp leader since its first election. Other men get different positions by the same method. The five officers here, 1 major and 4 Captains, do not have very much to say in running the camp. Of the five, one is the chaplain and the other four medical men."

"The food given to us by the Germans isn't very good. The parcel we receive weekly from the Red Cross is really our well-being.

from a boy, cont'd...

Without it many of us would never have survived this far.

"Incidentally, two American men have been killed here up to now which isn't a bad omen. One was shot trying to escape and the other because he went crazy. Clothing is issued as much as possible but controlled by the Germans. They issue us each an equal amount and everyone is in good shape. The theater here is quite the thing. It has produced some good plays. Once in a great while we see an American movie.



"Luckily we have plentiful sports equipment. Every sport imaginable took place at one time or another here in camp. Baseball, football, basketball and boxing were the most popular respectively."

The Reality of the POW Condition

Dad was too kind with depiction of life at Stalag 17B. Conditions were deplorable, and the Kriegies faced many hardships and health hazards:

(The camp cookhouse supplied only one cooked ration a day. The food provided was primarily barley, rutabaga or potato soup that had the consistency of glue (more often fish heads or other assorted discards), with little white cabbage worms floating in it and moldy black hardtack bread, so-called "goon bread", that was full of black insects

and rumored to contain sawdust. Spuds, salmon, corned beef, horsemeat, cooked barley, prunes and raisins were served a few times a month. The Germans also dispersed uncooked rations for the Kriegies to prepare in their makeshift kitchens: worm-infested potatoes, margarine that looked like axle grease, and blutwurst, a sausage made from onions and congealed animal blood. However, Kriegie ingenuity produced a daily diet that barely sustained life. Hot water was provided on a regular basis, to be used for making coffee and soup as well as shaving. Needless to say, the food was substandard and rations were skimpy - malnutrition and near starvation would better describe the situation.

Dysentery and diarrhea were commonplace. All of the Kriegies suffered from the infestation of lice and fleas and rats ran rampant around the compound. The barracks were cold, dark and damp with no heat. There was a single stove and scant fuel – only 54 lbs. of coal per week for the entire barracks. Most of the Kriegies developed chilblains due to the constant cold, causing their feet to swell and crack. At night, the fleas and lice would feed in these cracks. Kriegies shared straw-filled flea-ridden mattresses in triple-decked bunks. They also shared washbasins into which cold water ran only a few hours each day and a single indoor latrine for use after dark. The large daytime pit latrines, which were located between the barracks, overflowed regularly filling the air around the living areas with a deplorable stench. Hot water and showers were rare, contributing to poor hygiene making life at the camp precarious. Medical services were scandalous; the equipment was antiquated and the number of trained personnel inadequate.

Historians have made much of the Germans' general adherence to the Geneva codes and the low death

rate in the Stalags, approximately 5 deaths per 1,000 prisoners, but the Germans provided neither food nor clothing that met the standards of the Geneva agreements. Treatment was never considered good, and the guards were very hateful.

There were times when things even became brutal. Even the camp's officers showed very little consideration for the Kriegies well-being often ignoring the terms of the Geneva Convention).

For more about the book, please contact Richard Orlando; ablemabel1944@gmail.com



After all the prisoners had left Stalag XVII-B, the Russians occupied the area until mid-1946 with a force of nearly 10,000. After that, the area was handed back to the Austrians and work began to demolish the camp. Properties taken by the Germans were given back to their original owners and any building materials salvaged from the camp were used to rebuild the surrounding civilian homes and businesses damaged in the war. Today, nothing remains of Stalag XVII-B, only a monument stands in the general area to mark the place where thousands of men were imprisoned.

new members



National Headquarters
PO Box 3445
Arlington, TX 76007-3445
(817)-649-2979
axpow76010@yahoo.com

Request for membership application American Ex-Prisoners of War

Name:
Address:
City:
State/Zip:

Membership is open to US Military and Civilians captured because of their US citizenship and their families/descendents.

DO NOT send dues with this request for an application.

Mail to: American Ex-Prisoners of War PO Box 3445 Arlington, TX 76007-3445 (817) 649-2979 email: HQ@axpow.org

Rebecca A Gafford
Owasso OK
Daughter of Harlan Cook, ETO,
decd

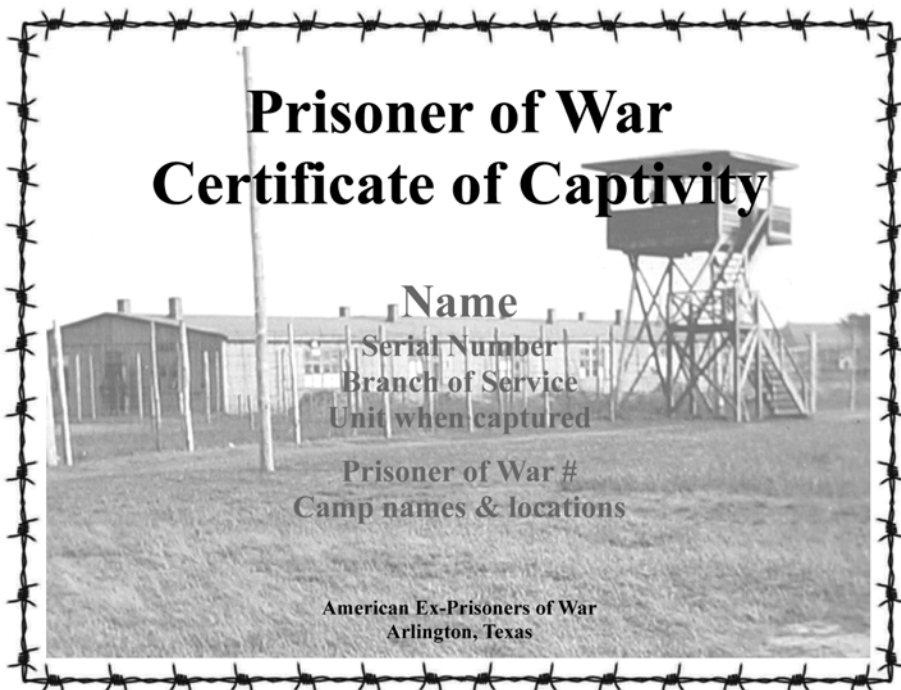


Certificate of Captivity

\$25.00

Suitable for framing, this certificate of captivity, printed on 8½ x 11" quality paper, proudly displays your history as a prisoner of war.

Each certificate background is personalized to the theatre of operation. We will need your name, service number, branch of service, unit when captured, POW number (if known), camp names and locations. You may also include a picture with your order. To receive this certificate from AXPOW, please order from National Headquarters by calling 817-649-2979 or email: axpow76010@yahoo.com.



Contributions



please send donations to:

National Headquarters, PO Box 3445, Arlington, TX 76007-3445. Checks must be made payable to AXPOW or American Ex-Prisoners of War.

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Bernard Rader, Freeport NY

In memory of Alice Golin, Commander, Dept of California

for her tireless work on the Civilian Dental Presumptive

and her kindness to us, by Maryjane Laznibat, BACEPOW

In memory of all deceased members, by Mid-Iowa Chapter

In memory of George Willoughby, by Shirley Willoughby

In memory of John Greenman, by Annis Dominey

In memory of Mary Jean Canale, by Lighten Up LLC

In memory of Maurice Sharp, by Bonnie Sharp

In memory of my husband, Irving, by Dorothy Bailey

In memory of Pierre JJ Kennedy, by Patricia Donovan

In memory of Ray Merritt, by Dorothy Merritt

In memory of Ray Merritt, by Stephen & Maryjane Laznibat

In memory of Roy Mitchell, by Associated Resources Mgt

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In memory of William J Russell, by Patricia Miller

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The Meaningful Gift

A number of years ago, one of our members made the decision to establish a bequest to the American Ex-Prisoners of War. He felt strongly that he truly cared about our future and wanted to leave a legacy to us. He and his wife are now gone, but their generous gift enabled them to demonstrate in a very meaningful way their commitment to AXPOW. More recently others have done the same. Support for our programs became the beneficiary of their generosity.

You, too can take action today to help ensure that the American Ex-Prisoners of War remains through your will or living trust. This gift can be funded with cash or securities, mutual funds or other investments that are not serving your current needs. This special gift will benefit future generations as well as we continue our transition to a true legacy organization.

It's very simple to make a bequest to the American Ex-Prisoners of War. Simply share this sentence with your attorney or financial planner and they can add the following to your will or living trust:

"I give, devise and bequeath to the American Ex-Prisoners of War, PO Box 3445, Arlington, TX 76007-3445, the sum of \$_____ or _____(named investment) or _____percent of the rest, residue and remainder of my estate."

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Thank You!



taps



Please submit taps notices to:
Cheryl Cerbone, 23 Cove View Drive, South Yarmouth, MA 02664

CHANDLER, SINA JORDAN, 91, of Woodville, TX passed away Nov. 14, 2018. Born July 24, 1927 in Spurger, Texas, she lived in Tyler County all of her life. A wonderful cook and pie maker, Sina loved to make quilts and give them to her family and friends. She loved to fish and play games and was known to her family as the "Spicy Red Wasp". She always had a smile on her face. Her husband (ex-POW Fukuoka Camp #1) predeceased her. She is survived by 1 son, 2 daughters, 1 brother, 13 grandchildren, 22 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren and a large and loving extended family. She will be missed not only by her family but her many friends as well.

DEVLIN, JOSEPH L. of Roselle, IL passed away Oct. 29, 2019. He was captured while serving with the AAC during WWII and held until liberation. He was predeceased by his wife, Barbara; survivors include 3 daughters, 7 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren and their families.

FALLON, WILLIAM F., of Arlington, MA died March 23, 2012. During WWII, he was captured while serving in the US Army. He was held in Stalag 11B Fallingbostal Prussia and work camps until liberation. Bill's wife, Josephine, predeceased him; survivors include 4 sons, 1 daughter, 2 brother, 7 grandchildren and 1 great-grandson.

FRANKLIN, DICK LEE, of Erwin, TN died July 25, 2019 at the age of 94. Captured when his B-17 was shot down over Munich, he was held in Luft IV, and then marched across

Germany. Dick was the last surviving member of the "Erwin Nine" – nine men from a very small town who were captured during WWII. He is survived by his loving wife of 69 years, Elizabeth, 1 daughter, 1 son and their families.

FREDERICKSON, JANE DONER, of Greensboro, NC passed away Oct. 12, 2019. She was 95. Born in Cebu, as a teenager she was captured when the Japanese occupied the Philippines in 1942. She was interned with her parents in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila for more than 3 years before liberation. Both Jane and her late husband, Bob, were active in civilian ex-POW affairs; they were both life members of AXPOW and active participants in both national and local AXPOW events. She leaves one son, one daughter, four grandchildren, one sister and several nieces and nephews.

FULLER, ROBERT BYRON, of Jacksonville Beach, FL died Oct. 4, 2019 at the age of 91. A Navy pilot during the Vietnam War, he was forced to eject from his A-4 Skyhawk over North Vietnam; he was injured, captured and endured nearly six years as a POW before being released in 1973. He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Mary Anne, four children, six grandchildren and a host of extended family and friends, including campmate and close friend Wayne Waddell.

GOLLIN, ALICE, 82, died, Oct. 2, 2019 on St. Simons Island, GA. Alice was the widow of Morton Gollin, a former POW in the ETO who served as a navigator in the

15th AF, 459th BG, 756th BS, flying out of Foggia, Italy. Both Alice and Mort were life members of AXPOW. Alice served as a National Director and Junior Vice Commander, AXPOW. She and Mort served as chapter commanders of the Coachella Valley Chapter, CA. Alice also served as the State Commander, Department of California. Alice had a large, caring heart and was an advocate for ex-POWs, civilian ex-internees, widows, and others. She helped ex-POWs and their widows with VA benefits and procedures. Alice is survived by 1 daughter, 2 sons and their families. Her legacy will be remembered in the hearts of those she passionately assisted.

JONES, LYNN T., 97, of Billings, MT passed away Aug. 19, 2019. He served as a ball turret gunner on a B-17 during WWII and while on a bombing run over Hamburg, he was shot down, captured, and then held in Stalag 17B for 22 months. Lynn was a life member of AXPOW. Survivors include 1 son, 6 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren and their families.

KOEHLER, FRANKLIN R. of Maywood, NJ passed away Dec. 1, 2019 at the age of 99. He was serving with the 106th Inf. Div. when he was captured in the Battle of the Bulge and held until liberation. Frank and his late wife, Mae, were active members of AXPOW in New Jersey and at the national level. Frank was Chapter Commander of the Ocean County Chapter, AXPOW for a number of years; he also served as National Director – Northeast Region. His wife, Mae, and his first wife, Madeline, predeceased him; he l

taps, continued...

eaves 2 sons and 2 daughters, 9 grandchildren, 8 great-grandchildren, 2 step-daughters, and their families.

KONECHNE, PHILLIP EDWARD, of Kimball, SD died Aug. 8, 2019. He was 87 and a life member of AXPOW. While serving his country during the Korean War in May of 1954, Phil was captured and held until the armistice was signed. Following his return, he married Maxine Mae; they were together more than 60 years until she passed away. He leaves 2 sons, 1 daughter, 6 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren, and an extended host of family and friends.

MEHLING, GEORGE D., 97, of Anderson, IN died Nov. 10, 2019. He was captured in the Battle of the Bulge while serving with the 440th

Troop Carrier, 95th Squadron. In 2012, George was able to go on an Honor Flight to Washington DC where he was honored to place the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns. His wife, Betty, predeceased him; he leaves 1 daughter, 1 grandson, 2 brothers, 4 sisters and several nieces and nephews.

PLUMLY, FRANCIS L., age 96, of Barnesville, Ohio, died Oct. 14, 2019. He served in WWII with the 106th Inf. Div., 422nd Reg., 2nd Bn, Co. F. Francis was captured in the Battle of the Bulge and was a German POW. He was a life member of AXPOW. Francis is survived by 2 daughters, 3 grandsons, 4 great-grandchildren and their families.

ROWEN, DALE ARNOLD, of St. Charles, IL passed away Nov. 16, 2019. He was 95. During WWII, he served with the AAC. His plane was shot down; he was captured and held in a POW camp in Germany.

His loving wife of 69 years, Peggy, survives him; he also leaves 2 sons, 4 grandchildren and their families.

SMITH, ARBREA FAE, 100, of Lubbock, TX died Sept. 9, 2019. She was the widow of Ex-POW Delvin and she took an active part in veterans' affairs, including volunteer work at the local VA. Arbrea is survived by 1 son, 1 daughter, 9 grandchildren and 9 great-grandchildren.

STERLER, GEORGE T. OF Hartley, IA died Aug. 17, 2019 at the age of 98. He served with the 96th BG, 338th BS, as part of the European Theatre of Operations. He was shot down over Germany, captured and held in Sagan, Nuremberg and Moosberg. George was a life member of AXPOW. His wife, Norma, predeceased him; he is survived by 1 son, 1 daughter, 1 sister and a large, extended family and friends.

"TAPS"

The origins of "Taps," the distinctive bugle melody played at U.S. military funerals and memorials and as a lights-out signal to soldiers at night, date back to the American Civil War. In July 1862, U.S. General Daniel Butterfield and his brigade were camped at Harrison's Landing, Virginia, recuperating after the Seven Days Battles near Richmond. Dissatisfied with the standard bugle call employed by the Army to indicate to troops it was time to go to sleep, and thinking the call should sound more melodious, Butterfield reworked an existing bugle call used to signal the end of the day. After he had his brigade bugler, Private Oliver Wilcox Norton, play it for the men, buglers from other units became interested in the 24-note tune and it quickly spread throughout the Army, and even caught on with the Confederates.

Not long after Butterfield created "Taps," it was played for the first time at a military funeral, for a Union cannoner killed in action. The man's commanding officer, Captain John Tidball, decided the bugle call would be safer than the traditional firing of three rifle volleys over the soldier's grave, a move which couldn't been confused by the nearby enemy as an attack. As for the name "Taps," the most likely explanation is that it comes from the fact that prior to Butterfield's bugle call, the lights-out call was followed by three drum beats, dubbed the "Drum Taps," as well as "The Taps" and then simply "Taps." When Butterfield's call replaced the drum beats, soldiers referred to it as "Taps," although this was an unofficial moniker, according to "Taps" historian and bugle expert Jari Villanueva. He notes that Butterfield's bugle call was officially known as "Extinguish Lights" in American military manuals until 1891. Since that time, "Taps" also has been a formally recognized part of U.S. military funerals.

chaplain



Benny
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As I write this we are in the midst of the Holiday Season. However, by the time you read this, we will be beyond Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukah and New Year's. It is possible, as you read this you will have forgotten your New Year's resolutions. (If you made any)

New Year's resolutions are usually efforts we make to better ourselves. While the Bible does not speak of New Year's resolutions it does speak

of starting over, literally, turning from wrong doing to God and right doing. II Chronicles 7:14 (If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.) although this verse was written for the Israelites, you don't have to be an Israelite to receive the promise of this verse because anyone who trusts God is a part of "my people".

Being a part of God's people means leaving behind our sinful ways and making a new resolution to trust God ("seek my face") and to live a better life ("turn from their wicked way"). This results in "hearing from heaven" In short God acts (or moves) to forgive those things we have done wrong, and "heals our land."

Americans have three favorite pastimes, complaining about our jobs, complaining about other people and complaining about our government. The solution to all three problems are simple. For jobs, seek

another, for people, tolerance and understanding are needed, for our government every citizen needs to trust God so He will "heal our land."

So the question can be logically asked, "Are you complaining or are you trusting?"

My closing scripture is I Timothy 2:1-3. Verse one plainly states "prayers ...for all men" and Verse two specifies our rulers "and for all that are in authority", in modern English, everyone in our government. Verse three states "good thing to do" and I would like to make this prayer for the New Year. Father in Heaven, Great God of Mercy, Forgive what we have done amiss and bless our efforts to do rightly and to better ourselves in this coming year. Bless our jobs, our fellow citizens, and our government. Amen

Happy New Year.

Benny



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