

EX-POW BULLETIN

the official voice of the
American Ex-Prisoners of War

501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization

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January-February-March 2021



We exist to help those who cannot help themselves



Andersonville National Historic Site Wreaths



Unbreakable American Spirit
Artist: Chris Nogues

January-March 2021

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Deadline for the April-June 2021
Bulletin is March 1, 2021
Please send all materials to the
editor at the above address.

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 Jan. 30, 1945, United States Army Rangers, Alamo Scouts, and Filipino guerrillas liberated more than 500 from Cabanatuan.

On February 3, 1945, Santo Tomas Internment Camp was liberated.

On February 4, 1945, Bilibid Prison was liberated.

On February 12, 1973, a C-141A Starlifter transport jet with a distinctive red cross on its tail lifted off from Hanoi, North Vietnam, and the first flight of 40 U.S. prisoners of war began their journey home through Operation Homecoming.

On February 23, 1945, Los Banos was liberated.

On March 29, 1973 the last US troops left Vietnam.

FRONT COVER: This year, AXPOW partnered with Wreaths Across America to place wreaths at the gravesites at Andersonville National Historic Site.

INSIDE FRONT COVER: Talented artist Chris Nogue's acrylic of the "Unbreakable Spirit" of America.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Throwback to WWII Victory Posters - this one for War Bonds.

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2020 is gone.
Welcome 2021

With January 1, 2021 one calendar year succeeded to another; and with this new year, we have another opportunity to review our past, say farewell to our troubles, learn from our mistakes, and renew our commitments to build a better future. The year we just completed was marked by "Grand Canyon" lows and alpine highs. The lows have included a global pandemic that claimed over a quarter-million American lives, the troubling economy, lost jobs, reduced income, deaths both natural and from COVID-19 and no ability to attend memorials and funerals. There have been days when the isolation, deprivation of social contacts, and

restriction of movement may have resulted in intrusive thoughts of our imprisonment by the enemy. This time, the enemy was an unseen virus with no effective prevention and only marginally effective treatment. As the year ended, cases began to surge again, but we also had better understanding, improved treatment, and the hope of more than one effective vaccine on the horizon.

The USA has also struggled with internal strife, a very contentious national election, and the rise of a caustic social media. Our two political parties have catered to the extremes of our society, eschewed compromise as a way to accomplish the "greatest good for the greatest number" and blamed each other for every evil that has beset us.

Even so, 2020 saw at least one "high" - the repeal of the "widow's tax" and other pieces of good news, many of which wound up buried well below the front-page headlines. While the calendar year ahead remains a bit foggy, my hope is that we will see a graceful and peaceful transfer of power as President Trump stands to witness the inauguration of President Biden, an effective vaccine, a recovery

of jobs across the country, and a return to something approaching normal.

In the meantime, we must all remain diligent and careful in our efforts to maintain health and vitality. It is better to restrain ourselves now in order to greet with joy the reunions that are bound to come before too much longer. We have all lived through dark days in prison with no clear idea of when we might taste freedom again - until that great day actually arrived. Because of that shared experience, we can have confidence in the future. We may not be able to accurately predict the day, but we can hold onto the hope of new life as we did back then.

As we make our usual resolutions for the new year, let us resolve to be particularly sensitive to and careful of our members who have had the most difficult times as a result of the pandemic, the economy and the isolation. Until we see them again, reach out via letter, phone, email, text, social media, Zoom, or any other means at your disposal.

We survived in the past through unit cohesiveness; and we will survive into the future in the same way.

Fighting The Flu Together!

Flu shots for enrolled Veterans

Choose from more than 60,000 community locations to get your **no-cost** flu shot.

Visit www.va.gov/communitycare/flushot.asp to find a current in-network location near you. Thousands of new sites available this year!

Veterans, present your government-issued ID to receive a no-cost flu shot at an in-network location.

#FIGHTFLU

Veterans, the location where you receive your no-cost flu shot may change this year!





from the CEO

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Happy New Year!

I am sure most of you are very glad to see the back side of 2020! I join you in bidding farewell to a long, frustrating, complicated, uncertain, frightening year. When we began 2020, I looked forward to my Washington, DC visits, our Congressional testimony, a beautiful Cape Cod summer with family and friends, and a joyous holiday season to round out the year.

Well, I got to Washington. Commander Certain gave our annual testimony to a mostly uninterested Congress. Then everything shut down. As I write to you, it is December. The governor has placed stronger restrictions on travel and getting together with family. Like most of you, I haven't seen my children or grandchildren. Phone calls are not a good substitute and I can't master FaceTime with any sort of competence.

But we are all still healthy. I give thanks for that every day.

There is a light at the end of this. There are currently two companies who have developed promising vaccines for this "novel" pandemic. Both Pfizer and Moderna have applied for emergency authorization for distribution. The Veterans Administration announced in mid-November that it is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other federal partners to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine plan to ensure VA safely and equitably distributes vaccines once authorized. As members of our most vulnerable population, senior veterans and senior citizens will be among early recipients, following our health care workers and first responders.

So what's next after we return to "normal"? There are still huge issues facing our members. Seeing a physician on a timely basis...getting prescriptions without the difficulty of having to get to a VA or drug store or relying on the sometimes uncertain mail system...navigating the government bureaucracies when you need help.

My personal focus remains on our widows....a large, vulnerable part of our membership. Last spring, I wrote on, and Commander Certain gave in our testimony, about Theresa Hoffmann, POW widow who had spent her savings and her family's when she was in nursing home care. Her daughter Mary wrote about the fear of not having enough money to bury her mother with her father after her death.

There has not been an increase in DIC for more than a decade and \$1340 a month cannot be considered a "living stipend" anywhere. Commander Certain asked the Committees if they could imagine THEIR mothers living on that. There was no answer.

Theresa Hoffmann passed away November 9th. And there has been no movement in Congress to increase DIC.

With a new Congress coming in January, we will be reaching out to you yet again to vocally support an increase in DIC. Our nearly 2,200 surviving spouses, as well as all veteran surviving spouses deserve no less than that.

Have a blessed season of hope and joy

Fondly

Cheryl

PS. As I wrote in the last issue, AXPOW has partnered with Wreaths Across America to bring wreaths to the cemetery at Andersonville. We also are sponsors for their Holiday Greetings To and From Our Troops promotion. If you receive this issue before Dec. 31, you can participate, too. Just copy and paste the link below to sponsor a wreath at Andersonville, or send a message to our troops:

<https://wreathscrossamerica.org/pages/165786/News/518/?relatedId=14802>



AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR
MEMBERSHIP TOTALS
11/13/2020

AK	4	NC	187
AL	140	ND	26
AR	82	NE	55
AZ	179	NH	38
CA	637	NJ	220
CO	97	NM	98
CT	61	NV	49
DC	5	NY	373
DE	18	OH	435
FL	626	OK	153
GA	173	OR	100
GU	2	PA	341
HI	22	PR	6
IA	113	RI	29
ID	37	SC	166
IL	212	SD	23
IN	168	TN	183
KS	114	TX	628
KY	86	UT	28
LA	102	VA	198
MA	220	VI	1
MD	127	VT	30
ME	45	WA	233
MI	188	WI	257
MN	138	WV	47
MO	186	WY	3
MS	148		
MT	22		

TOTAL: 7859

THEATER OF OPERATION

ETO	2668
PACIFIC	382
KOREA	321
VIETNAM	75
USS PUEBLO	17
FARS	2
IRAN	2
IRAQ	5
SOMALIA	1
CIVILIAN	111
SURVIVING SPOUSE	2184
NEXT OF KIN	484
SPOUSE	1607

Prepared by Clydie Morgan, COO



Irritable Bowel Syndrome

The Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes a number of Gastrointestinal Disabilities as presumptives for former prisoners of war.

Three of those listed by the VA are:

Peptic Ulcer Disease— ulcerations of the digestive tract;

Irritable Bowel Syndrome – symptoms can include pain and constipation, chronic diarrhea, or both;

Chronic Dysentery – frequent, watery stools with rectal/abdominal pain, fever and dehydration.

The most common of these is Irritable Bowel Syndrome or IBS.

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a disorder that interferes with the normal functions of the large intestine (colon). It is characterized by a group of symptoms—crampy abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, and diarrhea.

IBS causes a great deal of discomfort and distress, but it does not permanently harm the intestines and does not lead to intestinal bleeding or to any serious

disease such as cancer. Most people can control their symptoms with diet, stress management, and medications prescribed by their physician. But for some people, IBS can be disabling. They may be unable to work, go to social events, or travel even short distances.

In the past, doctors called IBS colitis, mucous colitis, spastic colon, nervous colon, and spastic bowel.

Different types of IBS

Three types of IBS are based on different patterns of changes in your bowel movements or abnormal bowel movements. Sometimes, it is important for your doctor to know which type of IBS you have. Some medicines work only for some types of IBS or make other types worse. Your doctor might diagnose IBS even if your bowel movement pattern does not fit one particular type.

Many people with IBS have normal bowel movements on some days and abnormal bowel movements on other days.

IBS with constipation (IBS-C)

With IBS-C, on days when you have at least one abnormal bowel movement

- more than a quarter of your stools are hard or lumpy and
- less than a quarter of your stools are loose or watery

IBS with diarrhea (IBS-D)

In IBS-D, on days when you have at least one abnormal bowel movement

- more than a quarter of your stools are loose or watery and
- less than a quarter of your stools are hard or lumpy

IBS with mixed bowel habits (IBS-M)

In IBS-M, on days when you have at least one abnormal bowel movement

- more than a quarter of your stools are hard or lumpy and
- more than a quarter of your stools are loose or watery

How common is IBS?

Studies suggest that about 12 percent of people in the United States have IBS.

What are the symptoms of IBS?

Abdominal pain or discomfort in association with bowel dysfunction

medsearch, cont'd...

is the main symptom. Symptoms may vary from person to person. Some people have constipation (hard, difficult-to-pass, or infrequent bowel movements); others have diarrhea (frequent loose stools, often with an urgent need to move the bowels); and still others experience alternating constipation and diarrhea. Some people experience bloating, which is gas building up in the intestines and causing the feeling of pressure inside the abdomen.

IBS affects the motility or movement of stool and gas through the colon and how fluids are absorbed. When stool remains in the colon for a long time, too much water is absorbed from it. Then it becomes hard and difficult to pass. Or spasms push the stool through the colon too fast for the fluid to be absorbed, resulting in diarrhea. In addition, with spasms, gas may get trapped in one area or stool may collect in one place, temporarily unable to move forward.

Sometimes people with IBS have a crampy urge to move their bowels but cannot do so or pass mucus with their bowel movements.

Bleeding, fever, weight loss, and persistent severe pain are not symptoms of IBS and may indicate other problems such as inflammation or rarely cancer.

How is IBS diagnosed?

If you think you have IBS, seeing your doctor is the first step. IBS is generally diagnosed on the basis of a complete medical history that includes a careful description of symptoms and a physical exam.

No particular test is specific for IBS. However, diagnostic tests may be performed to rule out other

diseases. These tests may include stool or blood tests, x rays, or endoscopy (viewing the colon through a flexible tube inserted through the anus). If these tests are all negative, the doctor may diagnose IBS based on your symptoms: that is, how often you have had abdominal pain or discomfort during the past year, when the pain starts and stops in relation to bowel function, and how your bowel frequency and stool consistency are altered.

What is the treatment for IBS?

No cure has been found for IBS, but many options are available to treat the symptoms. Your doctor will give you the best treatments available for your particular symptoms and encourage you to manage stress and make changes to your diet.

Medications are an important part of relieving symptoms. Your doctor may suggest fiber supplements or occasional laxatives for constipation, as well as medicines to decrease diarrhea, tranquilizers to calm you, or drugs that control colon muscle spasms to reduce abdominal pain. Antidepressants may also relieve some symptoms.

With any medication, even over-the-counter medications such as laxatives and fiber supplements, it is important to follow your doctor's instructions. Laxatives can be habit forming if they are not used carefully or are used too frequently.

It is also important to note that medications affect people differently and that no one medication or combination of medications will work for everyone with IBS. You need to work with your doctor to find the best combination of medicine, diet, counseling, and support to control your symptoms.

How does stress affect IBS?

Stress—feeling mentally or emotionally tense, troubled, angry, or overwhelmed—stimulates colon spasms in people with IBS. The colon has a vast supply of nerves that connect it to the brain. These nerves control the normal rhythmic contractions of the colon and cause abdominal discomfort at stressful times. People often experience cramps or “butterflies” when they are nervous or upset. But with IBS, the colon can be overly responsive to even slight conflict or stress. Stress also makes the mind more tuned to the sensations that arise in the colon and makes the stressed person perceive these sensations as unpleasant.

Some evidence suggests that IBS is affected by the immune system, which fights infection in the body. The immune system is also affected by stress. For all these reasons, stress management is an important part of treatment for IBS. Stress management comprises: stress reduction (relaxation) training and relaxation therapies, such as meditation; counseling and support; regular exercise such as walking or yoga; changes to the stressful situations in your life; adequate sleep.

Can changes in diet help IBS?

For many people, careful eating reduces IBS symptoms. Before changing your diet, keep a journal noting the foods that seem to cause distress. Then discuss your findings with your doctor. You may also want to consult a registered dietitian, who can help you make changes to your diet. For instance, if dairy products cause your symptoms to flare up, you can try

medsearch, cont'd...

eating less of those foods. You might be able to tolerate yogurt better than other dairy products because it contains bacteria that supply the enzyme needed to digest lactose, the sugar found in milk products. Dairy products are an important source of calcium and other nutrients. If you need to avoid dairy products, be sure to get adequate nutrients in the foods you substitute or take supplements.

In many cases, dietary fiber may lessen IBS symptoms, particularly constipation. However, it may not help pain or diarrhea. Whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, and vegetables are good sources of fiber. High-fiber diets keep the colon mildly distended, which may help prevent spasms. Some forms of fiber also keep water in the stool, thereby preventing hard stools that are difficult to pass. Doctors usually recommend a diet with enough fiber to produce soft, painless bowel movements. High-fiber diets may cause gas and bloating, but these symptoms often go away within a few weeks as your body adjusts. Drinking six to eight glasses of plain water a day is important, especially if you have diarrhea. But drinking carbonated beverages, such as sodas, may result in gas and cause discomfort. Chewing gum and eating too quickly can lead to swallowing air, which again leads to gas.

Also, large meals can cause cramping and diarrhea, so eating smaller meals more often or eating smaller portions should help IBS symptoms. It may also help if your meals are low in fat and high in carbohydrates, such as pasta, rice, whole-grain breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables.

Is IBS linked to other diseases?

IBS itself is not a disease. As its name indicates, it is a syndrome—a combination of signs and symptoms. But IBS has not been shown to lead to any serious, organic diseases, including cancer. Through the years, IBS has been called by many names, among them colitis, mucous colitis, spastic colon, or spastic bowel. However, no link has been established between IBS and inflammatory bowel diseases such as Crohn's disease or ulcerative colitis.

10 Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Going to the doctor can be intimidating. You might feel rushed and forget to ask questions that are important. It's always a good idea to know what to ask beforehand and to take notes when with the doctor. Some of the questions below may be worth asking. Print out this page and take it with you to your next appointment.

1. Could some other condition be causing my IBS symptoms?
2. If I keep a diary of my IBS symptoms, what should I write down?
3. Should I take laxatives or other over-the-counter medications? If so, what type, and how often is it safe to take them?
4. Would it help my IBS symptoms to add more fiber to my diet? If so, how much and what kind?
5. Are there other dietary changes you would recommend for IBS?
6. Could relaxation therapy or counseling help my IBS?
7. What about exercise?
8. Should I take prescription medications for my IBS symptoms? If so, what side effects should I expect?
9. Are there any tests you would recommend now or in the future?
10. Are there any other approaches or treatments I should know about?

Hope Through Research

The NIDDK conducts and supports research into many kinds of digestive disorders, including IBS. Researchers are studying gastrointestinal motility and sensitivity to find possible treatments for IBS. These studies include the structure and contraction of gastrointestinal muscles as well as the mechanics of fluid movement through the intestines. Understanding the influence of the nerves, hormones, and inflammation in IBS may lead to new treatments to better control the symptoms.

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The National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse (NDDIC) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). The NIDDK is part of the National Institutes of Health under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Established in 1980, the Clearinghouse provides information about digestive diseases to people with digestive disorders and to their families, health care professionals, and the public.

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



Legislative officer Charles A Susino

This legislative article finds the country in an unprecedented time. We have an outgoing administration that is trying to disprove the election results and a new administration that is working towards a smooth transition of power despite the current administration lack of cooperation. This dysfunction is coupled with a pandemic that is increasing throughout the world and especially here in the United States. With that as a backdrop, I hope this bulletin finds you and your family safe for this Holiday season.

Although the pandemic and the economy are front and center, Congress has found limited time to work on veteran related issues. We support laws that address the earned benefits of the veterans and their families, their financial and healthcare needs as part of and following their military service, and laws that provide a broader acknowledgement, education, and public awareness. The following reports on the status of the proposed bills whose fate is even more unpredictable given the political climate.

Recently passed Bill S 327 has a low cost to the government yet a lifetime of benefit of those veterans who have obtained disabilities as part of their military service.

Wounded Veterans Recreation Act allows all veterans with a service connected disability free access to National Parks. While the annual membership to the parks is a modest \$80 per year, the veteran providing their military credentials to the parks department reminds all of their sacrifices during their military service.

The Proposed National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (NDAA) has the House and Senate differing with a distinction that affects our Veterans. The Senate NDAA contains a provision to add bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism to the list of presumptive conditions associated with exposure to Agent Orange. The House-passed version of the NDAA, H.R. 6395, does not contain this provision. There is a joint committee established to reconcile the differences between the two versions. We support the Senate version because of its impacts to our Veterans. It is wrong that after 45+ years since the Vietnam War, Congress has not fully addressed the impacts of exposure to Agent Orange. Proposed Survivors' Benefits Bill, HR 8559 was introduced in House of Representatives by Rep. Jahana Hayes (D-CT) which provides enhanced DIC for recipients whose veteran was totally disabled and changing the criteria covering the spouse remarrying after the age of 55. This Bill is a companion Bill to HR 6933, Caring for Survivors Act of 2020, which would expand the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefit for surviving spouses under paragraph 1 of Section 1311(a) of title 38, United States Code, is amended in paragraph (1), by striking of \$1,154 and inserting equal to 55 percent of the rate of monthly compensation in effect under section 1114(j) of this title. The third companion Bill is S 4594, Caring for the Survivors and Families of Veterans Act of 2020 is

similar in content to HR 8559. All three of these Bills are in the early stages of the legislative process so there is still a lower probability of passage. AXPOW has included enhancements to DIC in its legislative agenda to Congress for many years and will continue to advocate for this agenda. Contacting your representatives in Congress will improve chances of passage.

Proposed Bill H.R. 7105 would provide VA flexibility while caring for homeless veterans during a covered public health emergency and carry out retraining of unemployed veterans. We have supported initiatives for many years addressing the plight of homeless veterans and realize despite the administration's focus on this National embarrassment, more work needs to be done.

The Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee advanced S. 4393, the Toxic Exposure in the American Military (TEAM) Act of 2020. Exposure to toxic and hazardous substances on the health of the veterans, both short term and long has been an issue for many decades. This Bill would provide direction to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on an ongoing basis for studying and treating affected veterans.

Bill S. 4511, provides additional support to families who have lost a veteran. While the family receives some compensation to offset burial and transportation costs, this Bill will enhance those benefits and alters the ability of the family to include inscriptions for spouses and children on certain headstones.. The current death benefit covers only a modest portion of the expenses.

National Museum of the United States Army opened on Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2020. The National Museum of the United States Army is located at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, approximately ½ hour south of

Washington DC so its location is convenient for anyone in the DC area. Because of the COVID pandemic, the museum has enhanced health and safety measures for visitors. Free, timed-entry tickets are required and there will be no walk-up tickets available. This is the first national museum to capture over 245 years of Army history. Its objectives are to honor America's soldiers, preserve Army history, and educate the public about the Army's role in American history.

andersonville

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(229) 924-0343
Gia Wagner
Superintendent



Veterans Affairs Committees

You can direct calls and correspondence to the following addresses:

For Correspondence to U.S. Senators
Office of Senator (Name)
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
202-224-3121

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Majority Staff (202) 224-9126;
Minority Staff (202) 224-2074

For Correspondence to U.S. Representatives
Office of Representative (Name)
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
202-224-3121

House Veterans Affairs Committee
B234 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
202-225-9756

Hello from Andersonville National Historic Site. My name is Gia Wagner and I became the new Superintendent at Andersonville back in August. I have been with the National Park Service since 1993 serving in a variety of positions. Most recently, I worked at Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. It is wonderful to be here at Andersonville, I am so very impressed with the commemorative and respectful atmosphere here and I know that is due to the professionalism and care of the employees and all our supporters. I anticipate continuing a strong and fruitful relationship with the American Ex-Prisoners of War and our other partners to advance our joint mission of preserving and sharing the stories of Andersonville and of all American prisoners of war.



The park has been adapting to the pandemic by offering outdoor programs for the public, having our interpretive staff out on the park grounds to provide brochures and information to visitors, and posting interpretive and educational information on our social media platforms. We are also working with Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB) to develop a virtual, interactive, and educational tour of the National Prisoner of War Museum that will be available on the GPB website. This online educational resource will be accessible to anyone, so students can learn about the sacrifices of American POWs from anywhere in the world. We are grateful to AXPOW for their support of our museum and education program and to the Friends of Andersonville for providing the funds for this worthwhile effort.

We are looking forward to Wreaths Across America this year although the event will be modified for safety. The event will take place on Saturday, December 19. Despite the impacts of the coronavirus, thousands of wreaths were sponsored as a way to pay special tribute to those buried in our national cemetery. This year, rather than having hundreds of volunteers in the cemetery at once, we will be asking volunteers to sign up for designated times to place wreaths

andersonville, cont'd...

throughout the day. No public ceremony will be held, but a non-public ceremony will be recorded and posted on the park's Facebook page. We are so grateful to the Friends of Andersonville National Historic Site, Bennett Trucking and the Taylor Foundation for organizing and promoting sponsorship of wreaths through Wreaths Across America.



The Victory From Within traveling exhibit spent the summer and fall on display at Georgia Southwestern State University in nearby Americus and is back at the park. Park staff are taking the opportunity to make repairs to the exhibit crates and replace missing or damaged materials. Many museums are closed this Fall or operating with limited staff and hours, and so are not hosting any exhibits. We are searching for venues for this unique and important exhibit. If you have a suggestion, please contact Charles Barr at charles_barr@nps.gov or 229-924-0343 ext. 112.

In the face of a pandemic that has changed daily life for us all, we remain dedicated to our mission of preserving and sharing the stories of those who have given so much for our country. With the invaluable support of partners like AXPOW, we will adapt to these rapidly changing conditions and find new ways to preserve that legacy and share those stories with current and future generations.

POW-MIA "Honor Chair" Dedicated



In recognition of National Veterans and Military Families Month, Citizens Bank dedicated a National POW-MIA "Honor Chair" at their new Westwood building (200 Station Dr. , Westwood, MA).

A longstanding military tradition, the empty chair recognizes absent comrades for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the country. This particular chair places a focus on the more than 80,000 service members unaccounted for since World War II. The stadium seat has been placed on a concrete pad within the patio area of the building, with a memorial plaque placed to its right.

Citizens is the first corporation to install an Honor Chair. Other details: Members of the Jamaican Plain VFW Color Guard performed the Presentation of Colors.

John Rosenfeld, Chair of the Veterans Business Resilience Group (BRG) at Citizens, welcomed those in attendance and kicked off the ceremony.

Bruce Van Saun, Chairman and CEO of Citizens gave the opening remarks.

Members of the Rolling Thunder MA, Steve Sarro (President) Brian LeBlanc (Vice President) and Debbi Shields (Secretary), offered their remarks.

John Rosenfeld gave his closing remarks and offered a moment of silence to reflect upon the sacrifices of veterans.

Those in attendance at Monday's ceremony including Citizens CEO and Chairman Bruce Van Saun, were Citizens Head of Consumer Lending Brendan Coughlin, Citizens Chief Experience Officer (CXO) Beth Johnson along with selected colleagues and members of Citizens Veterans Business Resilience Group.



PHOTOS: Bruce Van Saun, Chairman and CEO of Citizens and John Rosenfeld, Chair of the Veterans Business Resilience Group (BRG) at Citizens, welcomed those in attendance and kicked off the dedication of a new National POW-MIA "Honor Chair" at their new building in Westwood. This particular chair places a focus on the more than 80,000 service members unaccounted for since World War II.

namPOW news



NAM-POWs, formed in 1973 for the Vietnam era POWs.

Richard A.
Stratton

Atlantic
Beach FL



You Can't Go Home Again

The Vietnamese Communist Party Politburo specifically set the policy regarding the treatment of Prisoners of war. This policy was carried out via the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) by the Enemy Proselyting Department section of the General Political Directorate until 1972. I spent very little time in the hands of Vietnamese warriors or under their direct control. I was held by the communist party political cadre to be used and exploited as served their propaganda objectives. From 1967 to 1970, I was starved, beaten, tortured and exploited by them as a matter of daily routine in compliance with directives from the highest authorities.



1/5/1967 Captured NVN



*July 1967
Hanoi NVN
East German
Propaganda
Film Crew*

For six years of imprisonment as a "Yankee Air Pirate and Blackest of Criminals in the DRV" in the Hanoi prison system I was informed at the beginning and the end of each interrogation as well as each proselyting session: "STRATTON, YOU WILL NEVER GO HOME AGAIN!" I still hear the words of this simple declarative sentence rattling around my head on sleepless nights and as the capstone of unwelcome dreams.

In my intellect was confident, that although it was going to be a long war, I would be going home. I was confident that the citizens of my country and my shipmates would never permit a foreign power to retain us in a captive status. I knew when Richard Nixon had the courage to bomb Hanoi that some of us would be going home. I saw that Mr. Kissinger had succeeded when we were handed in writing copies of the part of the Paris Peace Agreements that applied to POWs. I knew that I was free when the C-141 that was taking me from Gia Lam Airfield to Clark AFB had gone "Feet Wet" and was out of the range of the Russian SAM missiles.

In jail, we had superb leadership on the part of CDR James Bond "CAG" Stockdale and LtCol Robinson "Robbie" Risner. They maintained the good order and discipline of the Fourth Allied POW Wing with the mission of denying the enemy everything and anything they, the enemy, wanted. CAG and Robbie set out our goal quite simply: "Return with Honor".

So in effect we were still on duty. Granted it was boring, repetitive marginally successful. But after all, it was Shore Duty. In the first couple of years my feelings were those of fear in the face of torture and exploitation. In later years my feelings were those of a typical long deployment schedule: hours and hours of boredom interspersed by shear stark terror. I felt good about myself and I missed my family.

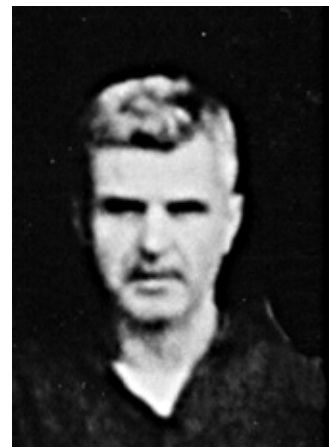
nampow news, cont'd...



1967 Hanoi, NVN LtCol
Robbie Risner



1973 Hanoi, NVN Risner and
Stockdale



1973 Cdr. James
"CAG" Stockdale

With the December bombing of Hanoi in 1972 the explosions actually twanged the steel rafters like banjo strings. We cheered; the guards cowered with their families under our walls knowing that the POW prisons were the safest places in town. We were never so well treated by the guards as when the bombs were falling. And when it went on for days we knew we were on our way out of there.

In January, when the Cadre stuffed the treaty sections through the Judas holes in the doors, we felt reassured that Mr. Kissinger was wise enough that the enemy would lie to us and try to exploit us right to the last. (This had happened at the end of the Korean War.) I remember feeling frustrated and thinking: "Nice going, but what the hell took you so long?"

The overwhelming feeling in my cell at that point was one of ultimate distrust of the enemy. We knew they would try to screw the release up and exploit us in some way to suit their advantage. (In fact they did violate the treaty's order of release to slip in a special flight of sick, wounded and some very healthy specimens for propaganda purposes.) So our "joy" was somewhat subdued.

At the airport on the day of release, our leaders knew that the thing that would frustrate our enemy the most would be to assume a military posture. Our leaders formed us up in formation and marched us (in step no less) to the demarcation line where we crossed over to USAF custody. We were feeling great because it was our last chance to stick it to the political cadre before leaving.

As I stepped over the line I was filled with anger and frustration. The Vietnamese reading our names over a megaphone was "The Rabbit" Nguyen Min Y, a rabid political cadre that caused us all kinds of grief over the years. I was crushing Colonel James Dennett's hand all the while telling him to get an ID on the speaker because he was a rat and the Col trying to interrupt and say they already had a fix on him. He finally told me to get out of there as I was screwing up the release. So I marched off Vietnamese soil on to the C-141 in a mighty huff

The interim stop at Clark AFB PI for medical check, de-worming, uniform issue and family sit-reps was pretty much of a blur for me. The first phone call home was frustrating on both ends with so much to say and no privacy to day it. The frustrations of being Enroute are best illustrated by the actions of my youngest son, Charlie. He was one the day I left only to return 7 years latter. His mother said to him when the phone rang, "It's your dad!" Charlie ran into his room and hid under the bed. One smart kid. [What do you do in school when under nuclear attack? You crawl under your desk, grab your ankles and kiss your butt goodbye.]

In transiting 10,000 miles to prove that you can, and that you will go home again you have 10,000 feelings and emotions. You have been gone for 7 years – a long cruise. 2,251 days of that cruise you were in jail – a

nampow news, cont'd...

tour of shore duty according to my detailer. The overall feelings of confusion mixed in with gratitude to many, love of country and comfort of rejoining the family.



1973 Stratton; Col James Dennett



1973 Oakland: Alice, Patrick, Michael, Charles, Dick

On arriving at Clark I reveled in a reunion with two aviator friends of long standing. On leaving Clark I had the opportunity to hold a newborn baby. While refueling In Honolulu I spent some time with a service couple I had known for 20 years. On my arrival at Travis AFB in California I was greeted by another twenty year friend and Ev Alvarez the first aviator captured in North Vietnam – both members of the first release flight. By design, I rejoined my family at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. This gradual restoration to the bosom of my own personal world, although by quirk of fate, was serendipity for the adjustment from being a jailbird to being a free man. And I wallowed in it.

The first day that I was truly home was when I was placed in an outpatient status on 17 March under my own roof with my own family and no one else. And glory be, it was St Patrick's Day. The family remembered we always celebrated with an open house for our friends and family on St Pat's day. It was a South Boston tradition. In this case, there were so many we set up kegs on the front lawn. Thank God we lived on an eyebrow and not a thoroughfare. As it was it seemed like half the town came to drink and talk and smooze. So there now, interrogator Nguyễn van Blow, writer Tom Wolfe and journalist Ella Winter – you can go home again.

A POW wise man and gulag philosopher, Commander Paul Galanti summed it up best:
"There is no such thing as a bad day when you have a doorknob on the inside of a door."

This aphorism expresses up full range of reactions and feelings I experienced from the time of the B-52 bombing of Hanoi until I woke up the first morning in freedom within the walls of the Naval Hospital – there was a doorknob on the inside of that door.

[Thomas Wolf (1900-1938) took the title of his 1940 posthumously published "You Can't Go Home Again" from a conversation with Australian-British journalist Ella Winter who remarked to Wolfe: "Don't you know you can't go home again?" Wolfe was so taken with the expression that he asked Winter for emission to use the phrase as the title of his book. So I guess, as I say my nightly prayers, I have to look to the heavens and ask for Winter and Wolfe for permission to use this title.]

Rebecca
Clark
Stratton 3
weeks old



pow/mia

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

The New Reality

In late October, President Trump saw another successful homecoming for an individual taken hostage in Nigeria.

"The elite commandos parachuted out of a U.S. Air Force transport plane a few miles from the target. Without suffering any casualties, the SEALs rescued Philip Walton, 27, after killing a number of his captors. Walton had been taken hostage by armed men last week..."

The Trump Administration had brought home thirty-nine Americans held captive abroad.... "The President has had unparalleled success in bringing Americans home without paying concessions, without prisoner exchanges," Robert O'Brien said, "but through force of will and the good will that he's generated around the world." (New Yorker, 02/02/2020)

Work continued at one could call a "subdued" level at DPAA, with limited travel, and virtual family meetings and webinars. Lab work so far this year have resulted in remains identifications from losses in:

Berlin Germany, 1
Burma, 1
Cabanatuan, Philippines, 1
Changnyeong, South Korea, 1
Choch'iwan, South Korea, 1
Hürtgen Forest, Germany, 8
North Korea, 28
Papua New Guinea, 3
Pearl Harbor, 41
Philippines, 1

Romania, 1
Saipan, 3
Laos, 1
S China Sea/South Vietnam, 1
South Korea 4
Tarawa, 22

DPAA reports there were several virtual presentations that included: Dr. Franklin Damann, DPAA's Deputy Laboratory Director, gives a presentation on DPAA's scientific capabilities during the virtual Little Rock, Arkansas, Family Member Update (FMU) Nov. 7.

Dan Baughman, chief of the Northeast Asia Branch of the DPAA Indo-Pacific Directorate's Research Support Division, conducts a virtual 1-on-1 briefing with the Army Casualty Office and the family of a service member missing from the Korean War

This was DPAA's first-ever virtual FMU, held so DPAA could continue to inform families about what they do and their efforts to locate our missing despite COVID-19. In addition to livestreamed presentations, DPAA historians, research analysts, and members of the Service Casualty Offices met with families online for the same 1-on-1 briefings they would have received if everyone had been physically in Little Rock.

Dr. Gregory Kuspky, a historian with DPAA's Indo-Pacific Directorate, gives a livestreamed briefing on the Enoura Maru and other Hellships from World War II during the DPAA virtual Little Rock, Arkansas, Family Member Update Nov. 7... Families seeking more information on the Enoura Maru should contact their respective Service Casualty Office at the numbers below.

U.S. Army: 1-800-892-2490
U.S. Navy: 1-800-443-9298
U.S. Marine Corps: 1-800-847-1597

Changes continue to the availability of information avail to families and the public thru DPAA's new web areas.

The "FamWeb" is an online space for sharing general information with families of missing personnel, such as case synopses and battlefield summaries. As always, family members of missing personnel should stay in touch with their designated casualty officer to get specific details on their missing loved ones and the government's efforts to account for them. If you do not know your casualty office, the following link provides a list of e a c h one: <http://www.dpaa.mil/Families/Contact-Information>.

Some of the highlights of the new content and features you will find on FamWeb are:

- Operations and battle narratives that provide a summary of some large military battles and operations for each conflict. With the Vietnam War content complete, and the Korean War and World War II narratives in-progress, this new information offers a view of an individual's loss circumstances in the larger context of operations taking place at the time of the loss incident.
- FamWeb links information from the Service Member Profiles Project with the relevant operations and battle narratives to provide more context and history for each loss incident. We strive to publish new loss profile narratives every day, so through these updates the history behind brave Americans who dutifully served and sacrificed for this great nation is better available....

Private research continues across the globe. On October 17, The

Asahi Shimbun published details about "Group compiling encyclopedia on POW camps, captives in Japan", By SHUICHI YUTAKA.

"... The organization has been surveying the former POW camps since 2002. Its members have visited the National Diet Library for documents from the General Headquarters of the Allied Powers (GHQ).

Toru Fukubayashi, for example, had found a list of dead POWs from among the GHQ documents....

According to the results of their research, 140,000 officers and soldiers were taken prisoner in the Asia-Pacific region by the imperial Japanese military during the Pacific War. The POWs came from Britain, the United States, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India and various other nations.

Much has been written about internment facilities set up in Japanese overseas territories, where the POWs often endured brutal conditions and were forced to build railways, roads and airfields for use by the imperial military.

More than 35,000 prisoners were sent to Japan to alleviate labor shortages in shipbuilding yards, factories and mines. An estimated 3,500 of the servicemen died of illness, hunger, violence and other reasons.

.... editors are currently holding meetings with publishing firm Suiensha and plan to put the 800-plus page encyclopedia on sale next year.

An Unprecedented Rescue

By Angus Lorenzen

In a dramatic and unprecedented rescue during WWII, the 1st Cavalry raced 100 miles through enemy territory after landing on the island of Luzon in the Philippines to enter the city of Manila and rescue almost 3,800 Allied civilians held prisoner by the Japanese in the infamous Santo Tomas Internment Camp on February 3, 1945. Surviving prisoners vividly remember the day tanks crashed through the gates and engaged the guards in a fierce firefight almost 75 years ago. These survivors will be celebrating the Diamond Jubilees of liberation in February 2020.

In early 1944 the Japanese Military Police took control of the internment camp from the Japanese civilian prisoner administration, imposing stricter security, reducing quality and quantity of food, and increasing harsh treatment. The internees adapted as they grew thinner and unhealthier, frustrating the Japanese by staying upbeat and failing to break down.

In September of 1944, internee morale got a huge boost when U.S. Navy dive bombers started attacking Manila. Another boost came in October when they learned of the American landings on Leyte, another of the Philippine islands. Then in December the large Army Air Corps B-24 bombers started raiding the city, indicating American forces were moving closer, and in January 1945 Army P-51 fighters started harassing the Japanese with bombing and strafing runs in the City, sometimes just outside the walls of Santo Tomas.

By the end of January 1945, starvation was rampant with 2 or 3 people dying every day, and the Japanese executed four of the camp leaders for lack of cooperation. Conditions were grim, but news of nearby American landings gave hope that rescue would come before death.

General MacArthur's 6th Army landed on January 9, 1945 at Lingayen Gulf on the island of Luzon and started the 130-mile advance to Manila. Japanese commanding general Yamashita had assembled 250,000 troops to resist, but his strategy was to delay American troops, dragging the battle out to provide the Japanese Home Islands more time to prepare for the inevitable Allied invasion.

The Army moved rapidly south led by the 37th Infantry Division, advancing almost half way to Manila, where it was delayed after encountering a concentration of Japanese troops. General MacArthur was anxious to reach the POW and civilian internment camps further south because an intercepted message from Tokyo ordered local commanders to kill all prisoners before they could be liberated. He first assigned the 6th Ranger Battalion to join with guerillas to liberate the POW camp at Cabanatuan not far from the front line.

civilian, cont'd...

The 1st Cavalry had just arrived in Luzon on January 27 after 72 days of fighting on Leyte, and was due for R&R; but on January 30 MacArthur ordered its commander, General Mudge, *"Go to Manila, go around the Nips, bounce off the Nips, but go to Manila. Rescue the prisoners at Santo Tomas and liberate the Malacañang Palace"*.



Mudge organized an 800-man Flying Column to move as rapidly as possible to Manila without trying to hold any territory along the way, with the rest of the division following. The Flying Column was divided into three serials that would leapfrog each other. As the leading serial captured a strategic point, the other two serials would pass through, then it would break off to follow. Each serial was spearheaded by a platoon of Sherman tanks from the 44th Tank Battalion.

At one minute after midnight on February 1, the Flying Column launched its race from Guimba, passing through the returning Rangers and the rescued POWs from the highly successful raid at Cabanatuan where more than 500 POWs had been liberated.

That first day was spent in heavy fighting south of Cabanatuan, but the column was finally able to break through the Japanese resistance and the second day moved rapidly south, sometimes going 50 MPH on the national highway. It did not

stop to fight an entrenched enemy position but went around it and kept moving. At all times, at least 9 Marine Corps dive-bombers were overhead to provide reconnaissance and to attack enemy positions. That day, the column moved so rapidly that it ran out of fuel, and by evening had to bivouac and drain the fuel from other vehicles to provide fuel for the tanks in the perimeter guard.

Early on the third day, the fuel convoy caught up, and the column moved out again, reaching Novaliches near the outskirts of Manila in the afternoon. Here they were faced with crossing a river gorge, but the Japanese had set demolition charges on the bridge and had lit the fuses. Under intense sniper fire, a Navy demolition expert raced onto the bridge, cut the fuses, and threw the charges into the river. The bridge was theirs' and the way was open to Manila.

It was Saturday, February 3, and for the internees in Santo Tomas, another miserable day of hunger and torpor; but the routine was broken late in the morning when a single Marine dive-bomber approached the camp from the north at tree-top level and flew directly over the Main Building. It wasn't long before the camp was agog with the news that a note had been dropped into the courtyard that said, *"Roll out the barrel, Santa Claus is coming Sunday or Monday"*. Now there was hope that they'd be freed in a day or two

The earlier excitement was mitigated at the end of the day when evening rollcall was routine with no appearance of concern on the part of the Japanese. In the last hour of daylight, internees gathered outside the buildings in the balmy rosy glow of sunset. But it was by no means routine as the thunder of demolition had been heard all day and smoke was rising

from points around the city. There was a feeling of tension acerbated by an unusual low-pitched rumble that could be felt rather than heard. As it became dark, flares started to light the sky when the excited internees returned to their dormitories at curfew.

The first serial of the Flying Column entered Manila at 6:35 PM and headed straight for the Malacañang Palace, the seat of the peacetime Philippine government. Encountering only sniper fire, they secured it with the help of Filipino guerillas. The second serial entered Manila later and was met by a band of guerillas who led it through back streets to the main gate of Santo Tomas, arriving about 8:30. A brief firefight with guards resulted in the Colonel commanding the serial being wounded and the guerilla leader being mortally wounded. While they were being tended, the tank Battlin' Basic crashed through the iron gate of the camp. The other tanks and vehicles, accompanied by the troopers on foot, followed into the camp.

The first internees to notice the intrusion were in the upper floors of the Main Building. When they saw the bright search lights on the tanks and the troopers accompanying them, they started screaming, racing down the stairways and out into the plaza to greet their liberators. But all was not secure as about 70 Japanese guards had retreated to the Education Building with 228 internee hostages. When they started firing at the celebrating mob, the troopers quickly herded the people back into the Main Building. A firefight broke out between the Japanese and the tanks and troopers, but soon tapered off as the Japanese dispersed among the hostages.

The third serial arrived at Santo Tomas after midnight, bolstering

civilian, cont'd...

the defenses within the 65-acre walled compound, and the situation became more secure as additional units of 1st Cavalry started to arrive the next day. Soon the campus became a huge military encampment. The euphoria continued as troopers shared candy bars and K-rations with people who hadn't had anything sweet or solid for a long time.



The morning after liberation, negotiations were initiated to allow the Japanese holding hostages to leave, and on the morning of February 5, they marched out of the camp between rows of troopers to a sector designated as their desired release point. A guerilla band operating in that sector soon engaged them, killing all except a small handful. Almost 3,800 prisoners were now finally free, but not yet out of danger as the military situation was tenuous at best.

General Yamashita had ordered his 10,000 army troops in the city to destroy strategic installations when the Americans arrived, then to exit the city. Admiral Iwabushi, with 16,000 naval troops, was under Yamashita's command; but ignoring his orders, commandeered the army troops, and prepared to defend Manila to the death, resulting in the horrific Battle of Manila, the biggest urban battle of the war, which resulted in many American casualties.

General MacArthur visited Santo Tomas on February 7. Shortly after he left, the Japanese started an artillery attack on the camp, and in the course of 3 days, killed 23 civilians and wounded 100 more. The cavalry departed, removing Santo Tomas as a legitimate military target, and moved to attack the Japanese defenses in Manila from the east, while the 37th Infantry crossed the Pasig River and attacked from the west, and the 11th Airborne Division attacked from the south. From February 3 to March 3 the Battle of Manila raged, taking the lives of 100,000

civilians, most of whom were deliberately murdered by the Japanese.

Peace finally came to Santo Tomas and the internees started to be repatriated to America, but they will never forget those troopers who not only saved their lives but sat with them and related what was happening at "home" while plying them with treats. It was the start of reintroduction into a more normal life. Ex-internees now meet frequently in reunions where they remember and talk about those heady days when the tanks rolled into camp and these giants dismounted and shared hugs, kisses and remembrances with the long-deprived men, women, and children.

PHOTOS:

1st Cavalry troopers in the Flying column frequently were met by Japanese and had to fight their way resistance through strong points. U.S. Army Signal Corps photograph

Battlin' Basic plays host to curious internees after liberation. U.S. Army Signal Corps Photograph

CPOW

Civilian Ex-Prisoners of War.

www.cpow.org

Sally Meadows, Commander

sally.meadows.massey@gmail.com

Membership is open to all former prisoners of the Japanese, their families, and friends. There is an active descendents group.



April 10-12, 2021. The American Ex-Prisoners of War National Board Meeting will be held at the Arlington (TX) Hilton. All are welcome. For more information, please email: HQ@axpow.org.

Sept. 16-18, 2021. The RIDE HOME, in support of the National POW/MIA Recognition Day events, will be held in WarnerRobins, Georgia. More information will be in the April-June issue of the EX-POW Bulletin.

Sept. 20-23, 2021. USS Yellowstone AD 27 Association reunion will be held at the Westgate Branson Woods Resort. For more information, contact Karen Bowen, 603-948-2821; pkbowen@atlanticbb.net.

News & Information

NPRC Operations on Hold

The federal government's primary repository for military personnel records, the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC), has been closed to the public since March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, due to numerous and increasing COVID-19 exposures at the facility, NPRC recently informed Veterans Affairs (VA), they have shut down most of their remaining operations for the foreseeable future.

Once NPRC can resume normal operations, NCA will then request records for cremated interments. (NCA can establish eligibility for burial without NPRC coordination in the great majority of cases - approximately 13.5% of burial requests required documents from NPRC in FY2020.)

VA has asked stakeholders, including funeral home directors, to inform family members of this issue and ask them to search for any additional military documents which may be in their possession.

VA, federal partners plan for COVID-19 vaccination distribution

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to develop a comprehensive

COVID-19 vaccine plan to ensure VA safely and equitably distributes vaccines once authorized.

The plan will be a phased approach based on scientific and historical evidence, lessons learned from past pandemic vaccine plans and input from scientific experts both within and outside VA.

"In October, staff at VA medical facilities conducted important planning exercises in preparation for the vaccine," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "These exercises help us to address vaccine distribution, allocation, safety monitoring and supply tracking."

COVID-19 vaccine implementation will include an initial limited-supply phase followed by a general implementation phase, when large supplies of the vaccine will be available to Veterans who want to receive one.

VA experts in ethics, health equity, infectious disease, logistics, pandemic planning, pharmacy and public health — as well as those in the areas of change management, clinicians from various disciplines, data, education, IT, safety and training, along with government partners, were sought for input to help develop the plan. VA also conducted Veteran listening sessions for valuable feedback in the planning process.

VA recognized for impact on lives of Blue Water Navy Veterans

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals has awarded the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Blue Water Navy (BWN) communications and outreach campaign with a 2020 MarCom Platinum Award.

The campaign increased awareness about the BWN Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 which extended the presumption of

news, cont'd...

exposure to herbicides such as Agent Orange to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War.

"VA supports BWN Veterans, their families and survivors around the country," said VA Secretary Robert Wilke. "Ensuring Veterans and their families are aware of the benefits available to them is a priority and this campaign demonstrates our commitment to serving our Vietnam era Veterans."

In fiscal year 2020, VBA's BWN campaign included a national public service announcement (PSA) that aired more than 20,000 times with an estimated advertisement equivalency of \$1.9 million, more than 30,000 landing page views and over 300,000 PSA views on YouTube. Additionally, the digital advertising portion of the campaign reached 328,000-plus Facebook users and 2.3 million YouTube users.

As of Oct. 31, VA processed 36,820 of 72,969 claims received, of which 25,918 were granted — awarding more than \$696 million in retroactive benefits to eligible Veterans and their families. The most common claims granted included conditions such as type 2 diabetes, malignant growth of the lung, coronary bypass surgery, malignant growths of genitourinary system and coronary artery disease.

Veterans Day on Cape Cod

Our State Representative Tim Whelan writes:

Thank you to AMVETS Post 333 for organizing this morning's socially



distant/safe Veterans Day observance. We were blessed to have so many veterans with us, including Russell Smith who laid a memorial wreath. He served with General Patton across North Africa and in Europe. This soldier also participated in the liberation of four concentration camps. Every veteran has a unique story of service and we are blessed by their selflessness.

I finished off Veterans Day by visiting the Field of Honor that AMVETS Post 333 hosts every year at Johnny Kelley Park. Brian Hawkesworth and his team display 400+ flags, which are sponsored in the names of Veterans past and present. This includes the flag I sponsor every year in the name of my uncle and godfather, Russell Clifford. Wishing all who served, and the families who support them, a sincere thank you. Happy Veterans Day.

Disability Pay Rates for 2021

In September 2020, the Senate passed a cost-of-living increase for veterans benefits in 2021. Similar to the Veterans' COLA Act of 2019, this bill directs VA to increase, as of December 1, 2020, the rates of VA disability, additional compensation for dependents, clothing allowance (if applicable), and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for surviving spouses and dependents.

Although Social Security benefits are automatically adjusted as a result of COLA, Congress must pass legislation every year to provide COLA for veterans surviving family members receiving VA disability compensation.

The 2021 Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) increase for the 70 million Americans who rely on Social Security, VA disability, military retirement and other government benefits will be 1.3%.

Veteran Burials

Many veterans don't realize that their military service entitles them to be interred in a national cemetery at no cost. Even if a veteran never received disability or any other benefit from the VA, if they served on active duty and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable, they are eligible. If they served in the Reserve Component and were mobilized or served long enough to earn a retirement, they are eligible. Yet only 20% of all eligible veterans living in the United States take advantage of this benefit which would save their families thousands of dollars. The best, most effective way to ensure veterans get the burial or memorial benefits they and their spouse have earned through military service is through a VA program called Pre-Need Eligibility, or Pre-Need. Pre-Need establishes eligibility for VA burial and memorial benefits before death, so the family doesn't have to go searching for documentation after the veteran's death. Simply fill out a VA form 40-10007 and mail it in to the St. Louis office indicated on the top of the form. Veterans can print out a form or fill it out online. The form and more information is available at <https://www.cem.va.gov/pre-need>.

Veterans gather for annual gala

Story and Pictures By Cliff Sain
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200 Industrial Park Drive Hollister, MO

The P.O.W. Network held its 24th Annual Military Gala & Banquet on Sunday at the Chateau on the Lake in Branson.



*Marvin Mills (MSGT/RET) and
Lance Cpl. Alex Ables*

This year's gala saluted submariners. This year's program contained detailed information about Henry Breault, a World War I veteran who is the only enlisted submariner to receive the Medal of Honor; about the USS Barb, a submarine that "sank a train" in the Pacific Theater during World War II, and about the USS Argonaut, which sank during World War II, taking the lives of 102 individuals, whose names were listed in the program.

The evening consisted of a celebration of the 245th birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps, including the cutting of a cake by retired Sgt. Marvin Mills, of Du Quoin, Illinois, who was the oldest Marine at the event, and Lance Cpl. Alex Ables, of Bridgeton, who was the youngest.

The evening also included a POW/MIA candlelight service, dinner, a fireworks display, and entertainment from Bob Hope tribute artist Bill Johnson.

This year, the recipients of the Avis Gutz Memorial Award of Excellence went to two volunteers, Jeanne Cooper and Kristine Gilbert.

Sami Johnson, who currently sings with the Blackwoods at Branson's Americana Theatre, sang the national anthem and then closed the program with a rendition of "God Bless America."

Next year, the POW Network will celebrate the 25th Annual Military Gala on Nov. 9, 2021 at the Chateau on the Lake. For tickets, call 417-336-4232.



The Avis Gutz Memorial Award of Excellence was presented to Jeanne Cooper, left, and Kristine Gilbert, center. They are pictured with The P.O.W. Network Chairman Mary Schantag.

VIETNAM REMEMBERED When Mary Ann Reed found her Vietnam POW/MIA bracelet from the '70s in a box of childhood mementos, she was able to get in touch with the family of the man named on it.



Full Circle

Bracelets to remember our soldiers

BY CHERYL URSIN,

<https://thebuzzmagazines.com/articles/2020/10/full-circle>

The bracelets are cuff-style. They come in a number of colors and can be made of a number of materials: silver, stainless steel, aluminum, copper. They are engraved and go by many names, depending on their exact reason for being: memorial bracelets, KIA bracelets, POW/MIA bracelets, hero bracelets.

They have been used to commemorate police officers killed in the line of duty, victims of terrorist attacks, victims of domestic violence. But most of all, they are used to commemorate members of the military: those killed (KIA stands for "killed in action"), captured as prisoners of war (POW) or missing in action (MIA).

They all started 50 years ago this Veterans Day, on Nov. 11, 1970. That's the day the first Vietnam-era POW/MIA bracelets, made by a group of California college students to raise awareness of the missing soldiers' plight, went on sale, for \$2.50 each. When the college students' group, Voices in Vital America (VIVA), stopped making them six years later, there were almost 5 million bracelets for the Vietnam POWs and MIAs in circulation.

(In 1973, 591 of the POWs were brought home in Operation Homecoming. According to the National League of POW/MIA Families, 1,586 American soldiers are still considered missing in action and unaccounted for from the Vietnam War; 99 of those are from Texas.)

When Senator John McCain, who was held as a POW in Vietnam for 5½ years, died in 2018, people filled social media with photos of their bracelets with his name on them. One of the people who wore a John McCain POW/MIA bracelet was Bob Dole, the senator and decorated World War II veteran.

When McCain became a senator in 1983, Dole pulled him aside to show him his bracelet, a moment both men later described as emotional. In turn, McCain also wore such a bracelet, in memory of Matthew Stanley, who was killed in action in Iraq in 2006.

Bellaire resident Mary Ann Reed had one when she was 12 years old in the 1970s. "It had a huge impact on me at the time," she says, "that the man whose name was on my 12-year-old wrist was suffering from horrible torture."

She was recently reminded when, looking for things to do during the pandemic, she went through a box of childhood mementos her mother had sent her four years earlier. Among the many items in the box, including caps she had worn on teeth she had chipped as a child, was the bracelet for Lieutenant Carroll Beeler, who had survived.

"The internet is fabulous," says Reed, who googled his name and came up with his complete biography. Beeler, who became a captain while in the military, did come home, but died in 2003, at the age of 59, when the jet he was test-piloting crashed. Reed, again through the wonders of the internet, was able to track down his daughter and give her a call. "She was kind and polite and said I was more than welcome to send the bracelet back to her," says Reed, "but honestly, it probably freaked her out a bit that I could find her."

The idea behind these original POW/MIA bracelets was that people would wear them until "their soldier" came home, and many people then sent theirs to their soldiers or to their families, when their remains were found. Capt. Beeler received many, and his father, before his death, answered each sender personally. Another Vietnam POW, from Houston, Colonel Thomas "Jerry" Curtis wrote personal letters to over 500 people who had sent him his bracelets after his return, according to his biography, *Under the Cover of Light* by Carole Engle Avriett.

full circle, cont'd...



Tim Ayres, who retired from the Air Force Reserves as a lieutenant colonel in 1995, still gets bracelets sent to him. An alum of Bellaire High School and the Air Force Academy, Ayres was shot down in Vietnam May 3, 1972, at the age of 27, and held prisoner for 11 months.

Ayres refers to himself as "a short-timer" because some of the POWs spent almost nine years in captivity. For that 11 months, he was listed as missing in action, "which is the worst for the families," he says. "They knew I had been alive on the ground but didn't know what had happened to me after that."

He had not known about the bracelets, until, upon his return, hundreds of people sent their bracelets to him. To this day, he still receives four or five of them a year. The latest one arrived just last week.

"I give people an option," he explains, "because sometimes they've grown attached to the bracelet. I tell them that, if they would like to keep it, they can, or I would gratefully accept it."



Early on, the Air Force or the Department of Defense would send him the contact information of people inquiring about him, and he would contact them. These days, with the internet, he gets emails, letters and the occasional phone call. His latest bracelet came from a daughter, who, cleaning out her mother's house, found it in a drawer. "Her mother had bought all her children bracelets at the time," says Ayres.

If your soldier is still missing, "keep it – and wear it – if they are not home yet," says Karoni Forrester of the National League of POW/MIA Families. Forrester's father, Capt. Ronald W. Forrester, was declared missing in action in 1972, when she was 2, and remains missing.

The P.O.W. Network maintains one of several databases of biographies of those missing. The organization will not give out contact information for the soldiers or their families but will forward bracelets on to them, says chair Mary Schantag. She points out that many of the surviving Vietnam POWs are now in their 80s and 90s and so may not be up to responding.

The P.O.W. Network does keep a "Love Letters" page on its website for people who want to reach out. The Virtual Wall, virtualwall.org, an online representation of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., which includes those missing in action, can also accept messages and even photos. "Every once in a while, I do look," says Forrester of her father's page on the virtual wall. "You may not get an immediate response or even a response at all, but it is a way to reach out to the families."

Maddi Armstrong, who just retired from being a second-grade teacher at Mark Twain Elementary, did wear a Vietnam-era bracelet. But she now wears another one "every

full circle, cont'd...

minute of every day," which she will never take off, for her son, Sgt. Graham Woody, who died in a training accident at Fort Bliss in 2013. He was 26 years old.



Graham, who was in the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University, where he earned his degree in engineering, could have joined the Army as an officer but decided to enlist instead. "He wanted to start at the bottom and work his way up," Armstrong says. "He thought it would make him a better officer." Just four days before he died, he had been promoted to sergeant. "And he had won numerous awards, too," said his mom. "I didn't know about any of that until after."

His friends from the Army, who call themselves his brothers, had bracelets made and sent her some. They wear them as well. "It fills my heart with love that people are wearing his bracelet," Armstrong says. "As a mom, I worried that people would forget him. His friends are now in their 30s and are getting married." She likes that they can look down at their wrists, see his name and think of him. "Every once in a while, I will get a

message from one of them that they were just thinking about Graham."

Just recently, Armstrong's daughter and Graham's sister, Heather, was stopped by a man who had seen her bracelet. It turned out that the man, who had been stationed at Fort Bliss while in the military, had met Graham and knew about his death.

Like Graham's friends, people in the military do often wear bracelets for their fallen friends. One former member of the military said any jewelry store near a military base has the materials and can make them. They are also available from online companies, such as Memorial Bracelets, which started by making bracelets commemorating the victims of 9/11, Steel Hearts, for service-academy graduates, and The Battle Zone. Many of these companies donate part of every sale to help

Rangers, will all wear these bracelets.

There is no hard-and-fast rule about the colors of the bracelets, although black is usually reserved for those who were killed. Forrester of the National League of POW/MIA Families says silver or green may signify "missing in action" because green is the color of hope. Mary Schantag of the P.O.W. Network says red usually means the Vietnam War, blue the Korean War, green World War II and gold the Gulf War.

Mary wears eight bracelets. "I have a nice little rainbow on one arm," she says, "and people often stop me to ask about them."

That may be the most important point. Forrester always asks for the story when she sees someone wearing one. These bracelets are a reminder of what the military does and the sacrifices its members and their families make.



veteran and survivor groups. Sometimes, entire groups, including the graduating class of a military academy or certain types of military personnel, such as Army

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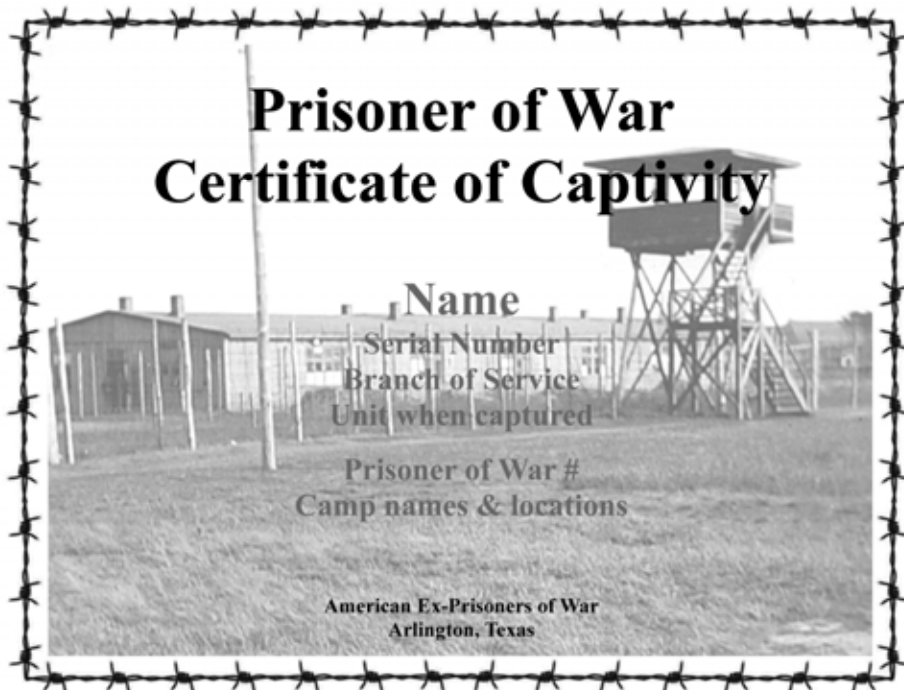
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The Meaningful Gift

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:

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Your generous support of our programs over the years has made a tremendous difference to ex-POWs and their families. Please take a few minutes of your time to help ensure our future. And feel free to contact CFO Marsha Coke at axpow76010@yahoo.com, or CEO Cheryl Cerbone at axpowceo@comcast.net. Phone #817-649-2979.

Thank You!



taps



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

BROCKMEIER, BETTY M. of Belton MO passed away September 24, 2020 at the age of 96. She is the widow of Elmer M. Brockmeier who served 9 months in German camps. He was a Bombardier in the 451st BG, 726TH BS. He served 9 months in German POW camps. Survivors are 1 daughter, 2 sons, 5 grandchildren, 6 great-grandchildren, and 4 great-great-grandchildren. Her family and friends will miss her greatly.

BRYNER, JOHN H. JR., of Ames, IA passed away September 7, 2020 at the age of 95. John served in the Army Air Corps, 2nd BG, 20th BS. He was shot down, captured and held in Luft 1, Barth, Germany until liberation. John was a life member of AXPOW. He is survived by his wife, 2 sons, 1 daughter, 4 grandchildren, 4 great-grandchildren and a large extended family.

BURKE, GEORGE W. JR. of Port Orange, FL passed away March 3, 2019. He was captured in Korea while serving in the Army - 38th Reg., 2nd Div. - and held in Camp 1 for more than 2 years. George was a life member of AXPOW. He leaves his wife Ellie (Selby) of 64 years, 1 daughter, 4 sons, 9 grandchildren, 2 great-granddaughters, 2 brothers and 1 sister and their families.

DUNHAM, WALLACE L., of Port Charlotte, FL died Dec. 18, 2019. He was 90. During the Korean War, he served with the 1st Cavalry, 7th Reg. in Korea. He was captured and held in Camp 5 until Aug 1953.

EDWARDS, RANDALL STOKES, 103, of Lakeland, FL passed away Oct. 6, 2020. During WWII, he was serving in the Navy when he was captured. He spent 2 ½ years in a Japanese slave labor camp in China and 1 additional year in a POW camp in Mukden, Manchuria. He retired from the Navy in 1955 and began his second career with the Atomic Energy Commission in Oak Ridge, TN. His third career began when he started advocating for veterans, working with ADBC and AXPOW. His legacy is the thousands he helped. His first wife, Mary, predeceased him; he is survived by his wife, Rose Mary, 1 son, 3 step-daughters, 4 grandchildren, 3 great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews and a host of extended family and friends.

HALSTEAD, HAROLD H. age 96, of Bismarck, ND died Sept. 10, 2020. During WWII, he served with the AAC, flying the B-17 "The Full House". He was shot down, captured and held in Stalag Luft 3 and 7A until liberation. Harold was an active member of the Seattle and Prairie West

Chapters, AXPOW. Survivors include his wife, Marie, 1 son, 1 daughter, 3 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

HANMORE, SAIDA, of St. Pete Beach, FL died August 22, 2020. She was 85 years old and the only daughter of the Salahutdin family, one of 81 civilians who were with the Tiger Survivors in captivity in Korea. The family was living in Seoul, South Korea when they were arrested on July 28th, 1950 when the North Koreans overran South Korea. She came to America after her release by the North Koreans on March 1, 1954, long after military POWs were released. Her brother, Sagid, made a deal with Russian Intel to cause that group to be released to South Korea. Those of you with us in captivity will remember the 81 civilians who were with us.

HEROLD, JOANNE, of Sylacauga, AL passed away July 11, 2020. She was 92 and the widow of Ex-POW C. William Herold (WWII PAC POW). Both Joanne and Bill were life members of AXPOW. She leaves 3 daughters, 1 son, 8 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, 2 sisters and faithful dog, Dixie.

HOFFMANN, THERESA C. of Scottsdale, AZ and Omaha, NE, died Nov. 9, 2020. She was the

taps, cont'd...

widow of EX-POW Edward (WWII PAC POW). Theresa was an active member of AXPOW and an always-friendly face at National Conventions. She held the positions of adjutant, vice commander and commander of the Omaha, NE chapter. Her daughter, Mary, brought the inadequacies of DIC to us and Theresa's story became a part of our testimony before Congress last March. Theresa leaves 2 daughters, 1 son, 5 grandchildren, 9 great-grandchildren and a large, loving extended family. She will be missed.

JELLEN, ROBERT F., 98 of Merritt Island, FL passed away Oct. 22, 2020. While serving with the 48th Armored Inf. Btn, 7th Arm. Div, Bob was captured and held in Stalags VI-G and XI-B until liberation. After arriving home, he was assigned to a POW camp for Germans; he often spoke of the contrast between experiences. Survivors include 4 children, 5 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

MONTESA, John Phillip, 95 of El Cerrito, CA passed away on Sept. 24, 2020. John was born in San Diego, California and moved to the Philippines with his family when he was 8. At the start of WWII in the Pacific the Japanese invaded the Philippines in December 1941. One, year later, John, his mother and three brothers were interned in the Santa Tomas Internment Camp. Later due to overcrowding and lack of food, at age 17, he volunteered with 800 other men

to help build Los Banos Internment Camp. Shortly after returning to America, he joined the US NAVY serving 8 years, including service in the Korean War. He and his wife Joan have been life members of AXPOW. They were also active members of BACEPOW now called CPOW (Civilian Ex-POWs. Joan, his wife for 57 years, survives him, along with 2 sons, 2 grandchildren and many extended family members.

ODELL, DONALD "DIGGER", of Mt. Clemens, MI died October 22, 2020. He joined the Air Force in 1952 and served at the Yuma Air Force Base in Arizona. He flew in locations across the world, from Germany to Kansas to Thailand. "Digger" was shot down in his 17th mission over North Vietnam in October 1967 and was held in the prison nicknamed the Hanoi Hilton for almost 5½ years. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, five children and their families.

PERKINS, LEO IRA, 102, of Lampasas, TX died September 21, 2020, two months before his 103rd birthday. During WWII, Leo served with the AAC, 381st BG, was shot down, captured and held over 20 months in Stalag 17B in Krems, Austria. He was a long-time member of the Cen-Tex Chapter, AXPOW. Leo is survived by his wife of almost 75 years, Lillian, 2 daughters, 1 son, 4 grandchildren, 2 great-grandsons and 2 sisters. He will be missed.

PRUSA, JAMES LEONARD, of Rocky River, OH died Aug. 31, 2020. He was 97. He was captured while serving with the 447th BG and held in Stalag 17B. James was an active member of

the Ohio Barbed Wire Chapter. He is missed by his 2 sons, 2 daughters, 16 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

ROSA, JOHN W., of Jacksonville, FL passed away Oct. 2, 2020 at the age of 98 ½ . He was captured while serving in the Navy and released at the end of the war. John was a life member of AXPOW. His wife of 72 years, Mary (Liz) survives him; he also leaves 4 children, 7 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

WELLS, JAMES E., 96, passed away September 23, 2020 at his home in Tacoma, WA. He enlisted in the USAAF in November, 1942. Following his training, he was assigned as an engineer/turret gunner on a B-17 with the 401st BG, 513th BS flying out of Deenethorpe, England. On May 28, 1944, his 6th mission, he was shot down over Dessau, Germany becoming a POW in Stalag Luft IV in Poland. The camp was evacuated on February 6, 1945 and they were force marched for 87 days until being liberated by the British at Luttow, Germany on May 2, 1945. He was an active member of the Tacoma AXPOW chapter. He is survived by 3 children, 6 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.



Chaplain



Keith Lewis
2205 Overbrook Drive
Jasper, AL 35504
(205)275-9035
zpadre@icloud.com

I'm writing this at Thanksgiving time thinking about the things for which I am thankful. There are many things,

in spite of this past year with the virus hanging over our heads. I'm thankful for FREEDOM, FAMILY, FRIENDS, our COUNTRY plus (you add yours to the list!!!)

We are in trying times and need to keep a positive attitude which has served so well over the years, especially in prison camp. We had to look for a new normal when we were repatriated. Coming home was a time of jubilation, renewal, thanksgiving and hope.

At this time, I'm looking forward to the vaccines that are on the near horizon and hope we can get back to a new normal with ease. We can use our experience in establishing a new normal for each of us, while knowing that we have overcome a much greater difficulty.

I often remember the quotation by John Stuart Mill

(1850) titled "War Is An Ugly Thing."

"War is an ugly thing, But not the ugliest thing; the delayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing is worth a war is worse. A man who has nothing which he cares more about than his personal safety is a miserable creature who has no chance of living free, unless made and kept so by better men than himself."

Remember this and be PROUD that you have made the world a better place and contributed to the freedom for our country and millions of people.

I hope you had a great Thanksgiving and a Blessed Holiday Season.

Keith



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JEFFERSON BARRACKS POW-MIA MUSEUM

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