

EX-POW BULLETIN

the official voice of the
American Ex-Prisoners of War

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Gold
Transparency
2023

Candid.



We exist to help those who cannot help themselves



*Veterans Day 2023
Washington, DC*



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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. The PUEBLO is still illegally held by North Korea.

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During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key wrote the *Star-Spangled Banner*. Few of our citizens know all the verses, but those of us who fought the battles of our nation have lived the fourth verse:

O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their lov'd home and war's desolation!
Blessed with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto – "In God is our trust,"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

In the mid-19th century, the English economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill wrote, "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself."

The men and women of our armed forces who have fought in battles, campaigns, and wars have answered our nation's call to serve and to be willing to die in the defense of our nation and allies. Many of our fellows came home in flag-draped coffins, others are yet unaccounted for, some of us returned after months or years of imprisonment by our foes, and all of us have been forever changed by the experience of combat. We know first-hand about the ugliness of war, but we also know about the value of freedom. In John 15 of the Christian Scriptures, we read these words, "Greater love has no one than this, that a person will lay down his life for his friends."

As we all near the end of our earthly journey, we can stand proud of the our service in uniform and can be grateful for the long lives we have been given.

from the CEO



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I wish you and your family had a safe and healthy Holiday Season.

On Saturday, November 11th my wife Debra and I attended the Veterans Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Since joining AXPOW, I have attended most of Veterans Day celebrations. It continues to move me in the same way it did the very first time...with honor, pride, and patriotism. For me, its not about the speeches provided by the senior officials but rather about a day of reflection and thanks for all of those that have served while in this most sacred place. Last year, was a cold and rainy weekday. By contrast, this year was a bright sunny Saturday morning. As a result, attendance was higher and that has a way to increase the feeling of patriotism. I thank you for the honor in representing AXPOW at the event and the wreath laying ceremony.

On the legislative side of news to report, the political system has been even slower than normal with the temporary loss of the House Speaker, continued war in Ukraine, and the War in the Middle East, and the never ending need to raise the debt ceiling to fund

the government's spending. With that said, there are two proposed Bills which speak directly to the pillars of our legislative agenda for many years.

The Senate Bill S-141 and House Bill HR-542. It addresses further needs of the aging veteran population with the Home and Community-Based Services for Veterans and Caregivers Act of 2023. This bill addresses home care and caregiver programs provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and restrict the cost of providing noninstitutional alternatives to nursing home care not to exceed 100% (in general) of the cost that would have been incurred if a veteran had been furnished VA nursing home care. In addition, it provides for expanding access to home and community-based services, support and benefits to caregivers of disabled veterans, and other benefits.

The second proposed Bill is S. 414: Caring for Survivors Act of 2023. This bill increases the monthly rate of dependency and indemnity compensation payable to surviving spouses through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Dependency and indemnity compensation is a monthly payment made to eligible survivors (i.e., spouses, parent). Under this Bill, there are several criteria that provide step change increases to the surviving spouse and their family.

We rarely allocate any space in our Bulletin for issues not veteran related however we hear time and again a growing concern from the military and veteran community related to our nations southern border. Our military serve to protect our country and our freedoms, yet there are policies

and actions by our political leaders that contradict those same principles. We send our military to help and assist our allies in their time of need to protect their freedoms and borders yet, we have open unprotected borders in our own country! This has created a crisis at many levels. In the last 3 years, our country has accepted many millions of undocumented and unvetted immigrants. The results are our states and cities are overwhelmed. Our major cities have received 100,00's of immigrants with no means to provide for them. The negative impacts to our nation's economy, social programs, deficit spending, and infrastructure are immeasurable. One small example is from New York City where it has reported it costs \$340/ day /immigrant to provide basic services. The City's Mayor states it will cost NYC billions in the coming years to house the massive number of immigrants. We pause in pain....the thought of the benefit to our homeless veterans with those same funds directed to their needs. How sad.

This ongoing policy is unsustainable and largely irreversible. National policies must be established that work from a humanitarian standpoint yet not at the expense of our economic viability, quality of life, and national security.

We challenge our leaders.

Stay safe

Charles A Susino

andersonville



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Greetings from Andersonville,

Fall has been very exciting here at Andersonville. On October 19, a new plaque was dedicated to the Irish who perished at Andersonville during the Civil War. The new plaque is located in the parking plaque area. Research funded in part by the Friends of Andersonville, has located the records of over 900 Irish immigrants who are interred in the national cemetery here at Andersonville. Members of the Irish Government, staff from the University of Georgia, the Mayor of Americus, and the main researcher, Dr. Damien Shiels travelled to the park and provided a wonderful tribute to these young men. The research continues and is available online at [Andersonville Irish Project – Irish in the American Civil War \(irishamericancivilwar.com\)](http://Andersonville Irish Project – Irish in the American Civil War (irishamericancivilwar.com)). Dr.

Shiels has provided numerous talks and cemetery tours. The stories he tells about the lives of the Irish American Union soldiers who died here have provided us with so much new context about how and why they come to America and the lives they left behind in Ireland. We are very grateful for the new information we can share with our visitors.



This season has been shrouded by the loss of our former first lady and neighbor, Rosalynn Carter. The Carter's have supported Andersonville in many ways over the years, not least of which is to facilitate the development and installation of the Georgia Monument. We are saddened by her loss but celebrate her many achievements and a life well lived in service to others.

Quite a few new staff have joined our team recently. Grace Surber is our new part-time Visual Information Specialist; Grace is a college student now but has volunteered with us for several years. Funding for this position came from the Inflation Reduction Act. Patrick Miles is our newest Arborist courtesy of National Park

Service national cemetery funding. Our national cemetery crew is now complete with 4 newer staff who we hope to fund for the next 3 or more years.

An exhibit about Korean War POWs is on display in the temporary exhibit hall through December. We added display case in the lobby. It will be used to highlight upcoming events or holidays. December's display will be about the holidays and what POWs received (or did not receive) for Christmas.

We are looking forward to Wreaths Across America which will take place on December 16 this year. Please plan to arrive early if you are coming, we expect large crowds again this year.

As always, we are grateful for your partnership. From all of us at the National Park Service, Happy Holidays and we wish you a happy and healthy 2024.

Annual Events

Each year the park hosts a series of recurring events at the National Prisoner of War Museum, the historic prison site, or the Andersonville National Cemetery.

April: Avenue of Flags, National Former POW Recognition Day

May: Memorial Day, Avenue of Flags

July: Avenue of Flags

September: Avenue of Flags, National POW/MIA Recognition Day

November: Avenue of Flags, Living History Weekend

December: Avenue of Flags, Wreaths Across America

Friends of Andersonville

Fred Boyles, Chairman

Remembering Our Veterans During the Holidays

In mid-December 2008, I was told that a large package had been delivered at Andersonville with six Wreaths. I had no idea where they came from or for what purpose until a person from the Civil Air Patrol called and said that they had been asked to place the wreaths in the National Cemetery. The wreaths were from the organization, Wreaths Across America, in Maine that had placed Wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. On the Saturday before Christmas, about ten folks gathered in the Cemetery, said a prayer, and added some remarks then placed the wreaths. Each wreath represented each branch of military service and one for POW/MIA's.

That was the beginning of what has become a huge yearly event at Andersonville National Cemetery.

From six wreaths in 2008 to all 20,000 graves receiving a wreath in 2021 and 2022 did not happen by accident. Several factors came together over the years to make the event the success it has become. First, was the involvement of the Bennett Family of Companies and their charitable arm, the Taylor Family Foundation. This trucking company based in McDonough, Georgia, reached out to Wreaths Across America and asked how they could help, who linked them up with Andersonville. I can't overstate how enthusiastically the fine folks at Bennett got behind Andersonville and the opportunity to honor veterans and their families buried there. They drove trucks up to Maine to pick up the wreaths. But more importantly, they raised funds at \$15 each to purchase wreaths for the 20,000 graves at Andersonville. Do the math, that's a lot of money. Bennett was able to convince Truist Bank to join them in 2022 which resulted in one half of the cost of the wreaths paid for. This was an astounding feat. The leadership at Bennett had the wisdom to assign Lee Gentry, Executive Vice President of the company as the lead for the project. Lee's leadership brought both the resources and energy necessary to make the event the success that it has become.

Another leader in this initiative has been Jim Covington. Jim served as the Chairman of the Board of the Friends of Andersonville for over ten years. Jim believed in the event. Not only did he believe that the event was important to honor our veterans and their families during the Christmas season, but he saw that it would involve the local community in support of Andersonville. And through Jim's efforts the community has rallied around the event. Jim worked through the Rotary Club and other civic and veterans' groups to raise funds and volunteers to place the wreaths. Both in 2021 and 2022 over 1,000 volunteers turned out to place the wreaths at the graves.



Jim Covington was presented the Patriot Award for his efforts in support of the 2021 Wreaths Across America event at Andersonville National Cemetery by Lee Gentry, Executive Vice President, Bennett Family of Companies.

This event is all about logistics. Moving the wreaths from Maine to Georgia. Unloading all the boxes off the trucks that are made possible with help from South Georgia Technical College with forklifts and operators. Volunteers must be recruited and trained to be respectful of the somber process of placing the wreaths. And the often-forgotten task of gathering and disposing of the wreaths later in January.

Again, in 2023 Wreaths Across America came together on December 16th. Five tractor trailer trucks were escorted by law enforcement from McDonough, Georgia to Andersonville. Hundreds of volunteers came together to attend a short ceremony where they were instructed how to place each wreath so that each person say the name of the veteran at the grave as a part of the theme of the event to remember, honor and teach. At the ceremony, three recent burials were notably honored. They were Corporal Luther Story, Korean War Medal of Honor Recipient and MIA for 73 years,

friends, cont'd...

Captain Jerry Riddle US Army and Specialist Desmond Campbell US Army. All 20,100 graves had a wreath placed. And too, AXPOW contributed to that cause honoring those POWs buried in the cemetery.



It takes hundreds of volunteers to place the 20,000+ wreaths out during the holidays to commemorate the service and sacrifice of veterans and their families at Andersonville National Cemetery.

Jim and Lee would be the first to tell you that many dedicated people made this all possible, and that is certainly true. But Jim and Lee are champions of this effort that has done so much to bring support for the park, the National POW Museum and the cemetery. This is the spirit of love and devotion to Andersonville and all that it stands for that makes the site so special.

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Tips for Caregivers and Families of People With Dementia



A caregiver, sometimes referred to as a caretaker, refers to anyone who provides care for another person.

Millions of people living in the United States take care of a friend or family member with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia. Sometimes caregivers live with the person or nearby, other times they live far away. For many families, caring for a person with dementia isn't just one person's job, but the role of many people who share tasks and responsibilities. No matter what kind of caregiver you are, taking care of another person can be overwhelming at times. These tips and suggestions may help with everyday care and tasks.

Tips for Everyday Care for People With Dementia

Early on in Alzheimer's and related dementias, people experience changes in thinking, remembering, and reasoning in a way that affects daily life and activities. Eventually, people with these diseases will need more help with simple, everyday tasks. This may include bathing, grooming, and dressing. It may be upsetting to the person to need help with such personal activities. Here are a few tips to consider early on and as the disease progresses:

- Try to keep a routine, such as bathing, dressing, and eating at the same time each day.

- Help the person write down to-do lists, appointments, and events in a notebook or calendar.
- Plan activities that the person enjoys and try to do them at the same time each day.
- Consider a system or reminders for helping those who must take medications regularly.
- When dressing or bathing, allow the person to do as much as possible.
- Buy loose-fitting, comfortable, easy-to-use clothing, such as clothes with elastic waistbands, fabric fasteners, or large zipper pulls instead of shoelaces, buttons, or buckles.
- Use a sturdy shower chair to support a person who is unsteady and to prevent falls. You can buy shower chairs at drug stores and medical supply stores.

medsearch, cont'd...

- Be gentle and respectful. Tell the person what you are going to do, step by step while you help them bathe or get dressed.
- Serve meals in a consistent, familiar place and give the person enough time to eat.

Tips for Changes in Communication and Behavior for People With Dementia

Communication can be hard for people with Alzheimer's and related dementias because they have trouble remembering things. They also can become agitated and anxious, even angry. In some forms of dementia, language abilities are affected such that people have trouble finding the right words or have difficulty speaking. You may feel frustrated or impatient, but it is important to understand that the disease is causing the change in communication skills. To help make communication easier, you can:

- Reassure the person. Speak calmly. Listen to his or her concerns and frustrations. Try to show that you understand if the person is angry or fearful.
- Allow the person to keep as much control in his or her life as possible.
- Respect the person's personal space.
- Build quiet times into the day, along with activities.
- Keep well-loved objects and photographs around the house to help the person feel more secure.
- Remind the person who you are if he or she doesn't remember, but try not to say, "Don't you remember?"
- Encourage a two-way conversation for as long as possible.
- Try distracting the person with an activity, such as a familiar book or photo album, if you are having trouble communicating with words.

Tips for a Healthy and Active Lifestyle for People With Dementia

Eating healthy and staying active is good for everyone and is especially important for people with Alzheimer's and related dementias. As the

disease progresses, finding ways for the person to eat healthy foods and stay active may be increasingly challenging. Here are some tips that may help:

- Consider different activities the person can do to stay active, such as household chores, cooking and baking, exercise, and gardening. Match the activity to what the person can do.
- Help get an activity started or join in to make the activity more fun. People with dementia may lack interest or initiative and can have trouble starting activities. But, if others do the planning, they may join in.
- Add music to exercises or activities if it helps motivate the person. Dance to the music if possible.
- Be realistic about how much activity can be done at one time. Several short "mini-workouts" may be best.
- Take a walk together each day. Exercise is good for caregivers, too!
- Buy a variety of healthy foods, but consider food that is easy to prepare, such as premade salads and single portions.
- Give the person choices about what to eat, for example, "Would you like yogurt or cottage cheese?"

Tips for Home Safety for People With Dementia

As a caregiver or family member to a person with Alzheimer's or related dementias, you can take steps to make the home a safer place. Removing hazards and adding safety features around the home can help give the person more freedom to move around independently and safely. Try these tips:

- If you have stairs, make sure there is at least one handrail. Put carpet or safety grip strips on stairs, or mark the edges of steps with brightly colored tape so they are more visible.
- Insert safety plugs into unused electrical outlets and consider safety latches on cabinet doors.
- Clear away unused items and remove small rugs, electrical cords, and other items the person may trip over.
- Make sure all rooms and outdoor areas the person visits have good lighting.
- Remove curtains and rugs with busy patterns that may confuse the person.

medsearch, cont'd...

Remove or lock up cleaning and household products, such as paint thinner and matches.

Tips for Caregivers: Taking Care of Yourself

Being a caregiver can be extremely rewarding, but it can also be overwhelming. Caring for a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia takes time and effort. It can feel lonely and frustrating. You might even feel angry, which could be a sign you are trying to take on too much. It is important to find time to take care of yourself. Here are some tips that may offer some relief:

- Ask for help when you need it. This could mean asking family members and friends to help or reaching out to [local services](#) for additional care needs.
- Eat nutritious foods, which can help keep you healthy and active for longer.
- Join a caregiver's support group online or in person. Meeting other caregivers will give you a chance to share

stories and ideas and can help keep you from feeling isolated.

- Take breaks each day. Try making a cup of tea or calling a friend.
- Spend time with friends and keep up with hobbies.
- Get exercise as often as you can. Try doing yoga or going for a walk.
- Try practicing meditation. Research suggests that practicing meditation may reduce blood pressure, anxiety and depression, and insomnia.
- Consider [seeking help](#) from mental health professionals to help you cope with stress and anxiety. Talk with your doctor about finding treatment.

Planning for the Future: Tips for Caregivers

Making health care decisions for someone who is no longer able to do so can be overwhelming. That's why it is important to plan health care directives in advance. To help plan for the future, you can:

- Start discussions early with your loved one so they can be involved in the decision-making process.
- Get permission in advance to talk to the doctor or lawyer of the person you're caring for, as needed. There may be questions about care, a bill, or a health insurance claim. Without consent, you may not be able to get needed information.
- Consider legal and financial matters, options for in-home care, long-term care, and funeral and burial arrangements.

Learning about your loved one's disease will help you know what to expect as the dementia progresses and what you can do.

Learn how to respond to changes in communication and behavior, provide everyday care, and get help when needed.

National Centers, Local Resources

The National Institute on Aging funds Alzheimer's Disease Research Centers across the U.S. that offer support groups and programs for people with dementia and their families.

Find More Resources on Caregiving

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) VA Caregiver Support Programs

Find a support line, caregiver support coordinator, programs specific to caregivers of veterans, and other resources such as self-care activities and tips and tools

National Institute on Aging (NIA),
National Institutes of Health
9000 Rockville Pike
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Alzheimer's & related Dementias Education & Referral (ADEAR) Center is a service of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health. Call 800-438-4380 or email adear@nia.nih.gov to talk with an information specialist.

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.

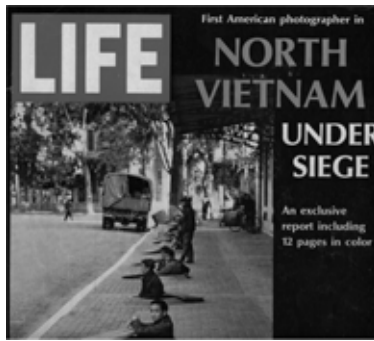
Monthly disability compensation varies with the degree of disability and the number of eligible dependents. Veterans with certain severe disabilities may be eligible for additional special monthly compensation (SMC). Disability compensation benefits are not subject to federal or state income tax.

namPOW news



Richard A Stratton
Atlantic Beach, Florida

TALES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA THE MAD BOMBER OF HANOI



This is a tale based on shipboard perceptions during a wartime deployment to Southeast Asia. The account claims no historical accuracy but reflects the mood and understanding of a ready room on a 27 Charlie carrier in late 1966 and early 1967. Perceptions become reality to those who hold them. Remember that the raconteur is an ex-convict who distinguished himself by shooting himself down in combat. Caveat emptor ("let the buyer beware").

In the late fall of 1966, when the USS *Ticonderoga* (not the one sailing around now, but the one you are shaving with - CVA-14) hit Yankee Station, the philosophy of escalated response dominated all military strategy and tactics. Robert S. McNamara and Lyndon B. Johnson were running the war from the basement of the White House. Rules of engagement were more protective of the enemy than of the American fighting man. Significant strategic areas such as major ports, the Chinese border, and the district of Hanoi were protected American-imposed restricted areas. These areas could only be targeted with permission from the White House.



mad bomber, cont'd...

The micro-managed, cost-effective, zero-defect war effort had resulted in a shortage of all kinds of equipment from flight suits to rockets and borings. Success was measured by sorties flown and tonnage dropped, the air war equivalent of body count on the ground in the South-measures of questionable utility and morality. Most of our time on station was spent chasing water buffaloes and bicycles up and down trails and planning for the three strategic targets allotted per month by the White House.



Rumors of an early end to the war abounded. The British Prime Minister was scheduled to make a swing through Southeast Asia, exploring the possibilities of peace. The word was going around that secret talks were about to be held between the United States and North Vietnam in our embassy in Warsaw. The bottom line was that the entire world diplomatic community was hyperactive in exploring peace initiatives. Meanwhile, a realistic assessment by military people on the ground in Vietnam gave a prediction of a twenty-year involvement at the current rate of commitment to attain an objective enabling the Republic of Vietnam to stand alone against the Northern invader.

All of this made little difference to deployed air wings who had learned to live from line period to line period, sortie to sortie, day to day. We were spending about forty days on the line, t1vin- about 2.5 sorties per pilot, per day, and alternating between day and night sorties with our sister carrier. The thrills were the occasional Alpha Strikes against targets of strategic importance.

Two years into the war, Mr. McNamara finally figured out that the uniservice, unisex pumpkin-orange flight suit was not contributing to the longevity of airmen on the ground, evading in the jungle. He finally authorized new flight gear, which, of course, was not in the supply system by the time the Tico deployed. Pilots were permitted to buy their own gear [at their own expense]; and I selected Marine fatigues as being my best shot at survival - I was to pay a price for this.

We were short of *Zuni* five-inch rockets and made up for the lack with Aero 7D rocket packs, many of which lacked effective speed brake, an advantage-e that a fully loaded A-4E does not really require. Additionally, the 2.75-inch FFAR was not noted in the fleet for its accuracy or reliability--I was to pay a price for this as well.

In December of 1966, we were assigned a target within the Hanoi restricted area, the Van Dien Truck Repair Facility, which was in the district of Hanoi but not the city of Hanoi. The Alpha Strike went off tolerably well. I missed the show because of a nose gear malfunction and had to go back to the ship. Diplomatically, the strike was a bomb. Ho Chi Minh, the President of NVN, accused us of bombing the sacred city of Hanoi and hitting civilian targets. Harrison H. Salisbury of the *New York Times* rushed to Hanoi at the invitation of NVN and dutifully reported damage to non-military targets (shades of Peter Arnett in Baghdad). LBJ countered by denying the accusation and stating that those defective Russian SAMs had obviously fallen back upon the city. Uncle Ho called LBJ a liar, not a very original accusation, and called off any and all peace initiatives, vowing to defend the motherland for ten, twenty, or forty years against the American imperialist aggressors. McNamara's response was to call another of the ubiquitous "bombing halts" for Ho to contemplate his navel or his sins. I never figured out which, and neither did Ho.

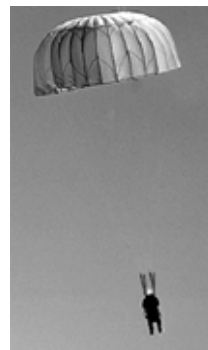
mad bomber, cont'd...

Tico finished up its line period and returned to Subic Bay for a stand-down. The Communists, of course, used the couple of weeks to resupply and rebuild their bridges. Our leaders flew up to Atsugi Base, conveniently near Tokyo, for a "planning conference," while we conducted FCLPs at Cubi Point for the replacement pilots. After the planning conference, XO couldn't get his bird started. So, with true entrepreneurial spirit, he scouted the flight line and stole the best-looking A4E from the Nippi Rework Facility flight line, a Marine Corps plane sans log books, and returned to the ship, now steaming back to Yankee Station. Our maintenance crew painted up the stolen steed just like a circus wagon with all the air wing colors, christened it "Double Nuts" (Modex 400) for the use of our CAG, and sent it into combat.

About the second day out, I got a call from my best friend Mike Estocin (later awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously) asking me to take his first hop of the morning since he had an Ops Officer meeting to attend with CAG. Not yet awake, I violated a cardinal rule of survival--don't volunteer for nothin'-and took his hop. It should have been a piece of cake as it was the weather hop. The only "weather" in the "weather hop" was that it didn't make any difference whether the weather was good or bad; we were going to fly anyway. The supposed minimums were five-thousand-and-five; the weather was below minimums that day, and they flew all day. The benefit to you, as the recruiters say, was that after checking the weather out at dawn, you could recce the coastline for any cargo-carrying junks that had not made it into a river mouth for daylight hours. McNamara had a rule of engagement that said you could only attack a junk traveling from North to South and then only after you had flown by to verify with your own eyeballs that it had deck cargo, obviously enhancing your element of surprise. Well, my wingman and I found some targets. I made a run on a junk, using my five-inch Zunis, and then a short distance away I found a bridge section tied up along the shoreline and unloaded my Aero 7D packs on that hummer. (No, it was not a second run on the same target; my learning curve is not that flat.) True to form, the rockets fired; the stabilizing fins did not extend, causing instability in the rockets; and the rockets collided.

The warheads did work (good); however, the debris from the explosions went into the intakes (bad). The J-52 engine does quite well on air but has a problem with scrap metal. I developed an instantaneous love affair with the surface navy and turned seaward. The engine gave up the ghost, taking off the tail in the process. The A-4E is a wonderful, ever-loving, and forgiving flying machine, and a stable weapons platform, but without a tail, it has all the aerodynamic characteristics of a free falling safe.

I was at a decision point. I had just broadcast my farewell address to the entire Seventh Fleet - "Oh S--t!" and was debating my next move. Why the debate? The A-4's ejection seat is powered by a rocket in front of a fuselage tank with 1,200 pounds of JP-5 in it, and I had just had an unfortunate experience with a rocket from the lowest bidder. I was moved to action by the echo of my wife's last words to me: "Don't you dare die and leave me with these three little bastards!" That's a commitment. I ejected. Did you ever have a bad day? I landed in the only tree behind the only house in five square miles and was a prisoner before I had my helmet off.



mad bomber, cont'd...

I was stripped to my skivvies and shown off at every crossroads, village, and hamlet within a four-hour walking distance. I was blindfolded, "executed" with a single rifle shot, and rolled into my grave for the afternoon. At dusk, I was on the road again by foot until about midnight and then transported on the back of a 2x8 to Hanoi, arriving at the Hoa Lo Prison (Hanoi Hilton) at daybreak. I foresaw no big problem, having been through SERE training twice in the Cleveland National Forest (sic!), assured that there was no such thing as torture, and convinced that I just had to tough it out for 48 hours to earn my way into the "bad guy's" camp. I would spend the rest of the war playing Hogan's Heroes until my great escape. Ha!!

Interrogation started off as a piece of cake. I was frightened, but playing the game of name, rank, serial number, and date of birth. As I was to find out later, the interrogation followed a set pattern of five stages: the history lesson of the enemy's cause in converting you (boring); the exploitation of your perceived weaknesses (race, religion, rank, homesickness, family, etc); the appeal to your military discipline (you obey orders in your army, and you are now in our army; therefore, you will obey our orders); the application of physical force (no big deal for street fighters or contact sports survivors); and the application of torture (controlled infliction of pain with the objective of gaining compliance with something you find to be morally reprehensible).



Picture yourself being tortured to admit, as a squid, that you are a Marine. Remember the Marine fatigues and the stolen A-4? (The parachute seat pan had a sergeant's signature on the packing slip.) I have nothing against the Corps. I admired my Preflight DIs (Sergeants Jones, Livermore, and Raphael - start NavCad Class 19-55; finish NavCad Class 32-55, learning curve on the obstacle course relatively flat). Two of my three sons and my daughter-in-law are Marines. But that was a bit much.

What were they after? A little bit of military information. What was the next target? I didn't know; that's why Mike had to go to CAG's meeting. What new weapons did the Taco have? The Aero 7D Rocket pack with 19 independently targeted warheads, the destination of which even I did not know. From what altitude did I drop my bombs? Beats the hell out of me. That's why I spent all that time on targets at NAS Fallon, developing my seaman's eye. Pick a number, any number, but whatever it is, stick to it.

It took me six months to figure out what it was they were after-propaganda. As the first bomber pilot to be shot down after the Christmas bombing halt and raid on the sacred city of Hanoi, I had been designated to be the "Mad Bomber of Hanoi." Of the guys captured in North Vietnam from 1965 - 1968, 95% were tortured; 95% were not given the option of death; and 95% gave more than name, serial number, and date of birth - not bragging, not complaining, just a factoid that underlines the skill of the torturers.

As they had me talking, hopefully a bunch of nonsense, they had a political cadre reviewing my production, adopting my "style" and, unbeknownst to me, writing my "confession." We named this guy the "Rabbit," in recognition of his distinctive ears and overbite. After two weeks of torture, beatings, and isolation, I was transferred to another prison--"the Zoo"--where I thought the worst

mad bomber, cont'd...



About a month later, during one of the routine interrogations, the Rabbit showed me a confession and asked for my opinion; it was difficult to keep from laughing. It had an A-4 leading a strike on downtown Hanoi, targeting pregnant women, children, dikes, dams, and pagodas. A single A-4 was loaded out with every weapon on the pilot's weapons weight card, which they had retrieved: napalm, mines, rockets, CBU's, and HE down to the Mk 76 practice bomb. It related incipient mutinies on board ship, anti-war pilots defecting, and pilots loading up on whiskey for liquid courage.

My laughter stopped when he informed me that it was my confession to be given in the Hanoi soccer stadium. His response to the observation that such an attack never took place and that I had never even pulled liberty in the town made a certain measure of sense: **"No matter; somebody did it. It might as well be you."**

Then followed the usual forms of coercion for naturally I would not cooperate with their farce. They realized that if they let me recite anything they could not control it. They settled on a tape recording to be played from behind a curtain like some form of a Vietnamese karaoke performance. I was pushed out before a grouping of the Hanoi diplomatic and Press Corps to make a polite bow. I played the Manchurian Candidate; they got the hook and hauled me back to jail none the wiser as to how they had been snookered. In fact it was six months before I received confirmation from the new shoot-downs that the pantomime had worked.

However, I was to have the last laugh. I was eventually going to the land of the big PX, and the Rabbit had to stay.

What are the lessons I learned? Don't volunteer for nothin'. Long deployments enhance marriages (thirty-two years) since they cut down the amount of time your wife has to smell your cigars. Never land in the same place you just got through bombing and strafing. If you cannot take a joke, you should not be wearing a set of wings. Jettison Aero 7D rocket pods without nose cones as soon as you get out of sight of the ship. Americans seeking publicity who appear in enemy capitals during a shooting war are giving aid and comfort to the enemy (treason), no matter what the press tells us.

Unattended Navy brats tend to go Marine Corps. The A-4 ejection system works at 2,000 feet, 220 knots, nose down, without a tail, and in a spin. Practice your final words, so that you do not embarrass yourself and your family in front of your shipmates when you buy the farm; you can do better than "Oh S__t!" You can tell folks you learned this from The Mad Bomber of Hanoi.

A-4s forever!

Drawings reprinted with permission of Naval Institute Press, book "Prisoner of War—Six Years in Hanoi" by John McGrath



pow/mia

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Aiding and Abetting

For over 25 years, we have been requesting military records under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. – 552) to prove or disprove military claims of captivity, awards, service, rank, or tall tales. NO veterans signature is required to do so, and it is a fully allowable, legal process as long as required identifiers are provided, and the law followed in the request.

Once Stolen Valor became commonplace (a daily occurrence now,) it was the only way to prove the lies, provide evidence on a case when referred to the FBI or VA IG's office, or expose the liar as the Supreme Court stated in their ruling.

In its Supreme Court Ruling overturning the Stolen Valor Act as it pertained to Alvarez (charged with falsely claiming to have been awarded the Medal of Honor), the justices stated, "...and it has not shown, and cannot show, why counterspeech, such as the ridicule respondent received online, and in the press, would not suffice to achieve its interest..."

As of Dec. 15, 2023, the number of Americans Missing and Unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War remains at 1,577 .

There are 81,611 still unaccounted for US Military personnel since 1941.

The "counterspeech" referenced in the Supreme Court ruling involves voluntary, unofficial, social efforts by citizens and veterans' organizations to focus the spotlight of public awareness on military imposters, to enlist the participation of the press in the effort, and to shame the fake warriors into ceasing their disgraceful charade.

COVID lockdowns and shutdowns created a backlog of record requests at NPRC that topped a million by the time the center re-opened after a two-year shutdown. During the lockdown, they responded only to emergency, hospital or funeral requests.

Our FOIA request log topped 800 open cases. Once NPRC went back to normal hours in March of 2022, staff was in short supply, experienced staff was gone, and replies came in more oft than not with blank pages, missing attachments, or simple sentences instead of allowable information.

The military service information provided in this reply has been extracted from military personnel records stored in electronic records and maintained by the military service department, paper records in the possession by NPRC, or both. Eligibility requires more than 180 days of active duty (not including training), or being discharged or released from active duty for a service-connected disability. We are releasing the veteran's active-duty dates to you below, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

_____ served in the U.S. Navy from 03/30/1981 to 05/26/1986.

If additional information is needed, the Privacy Act of 1974 requires written consent (signature) of the individual to whom the record pertains.

Per the NPRC website, "The public has access to certain military service information without the veteran's authorization or that of the next-of-kin (*the un-remarried widow or widower, son, daughter, father, mother, brother or sister*) of deceased veterans. Examples of information which may be available from Federal (non-archival) Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF) without an unwarranted invasion of privacy include: Name, Service Number, Dates of Service, Branch of Service, Final Duty Status, Final Rank, Assignments and Geographical Locations, Military Education Level, Awards and decorations (eligibility only, not actual medals), Photograph, Transcript of Courts-Martial Trials, Place of entrance and separation. If the veteran is deceased: Place of birth, Date and geographical location of death, Place of burial."

Additionally, "Military personnel records are open to the public 62 years after they leave the military. (To

pow/mia cont'd...

calculate this, take the current year and subtract 62.) Records of any veteran who separated from the military 62 (or more) years ago can be ordered by anyone."

It is especially difficult to get a signature (and NOT required) when a family member is asking for help on a record for an individual that passed decades ago!

Their errors required a call to the "hotline" and long wait times to get any answers, or refiling the requests with the long wait for a reply starting over.

The Navy seemed to go to extremes:

SUBJECT: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT

This letter responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request assigned Commander Naval Special Warfare Command (COMNAVSPECWARCOM)

Specifically, you are requesting the following information:

"FOIA FOR MILITARY RECORD: [name removed]" [verbatim]

This command can neither confirm nor deny the existence or nonexistence of records. Should such records exist, one or more of the following statutory exemptions would apply:

a.5 U.S.C. 552 § (b)(1) of the FOIA, to protect currently and properly classified information,

b. 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(3) of the FOIA, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 130b, for personally identifying information of personnel assigned

to overseas, sensitive, or routinely deployable units,

c. 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(6) of the FOIA, when disclosure of such information would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy,

d. 5 U.S.C. 552 § (b)(7)(C) of the FOIA, where disclosure could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy and,

e. 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(7)(F) of the FOIA, that could reasonably be expected to endanger the life or physical safety of an individual.

Remember – hundreds of backlogged files. Two hundred phony SEALs for every one that actually graduated SEAL training (BUD/s) – and they black out the NAME! A case number was provided... but that is only found in the REPLY letter received from the Navy, not OUR records.

So were they SEALs? Rarely in our experience. Drops or quitters? Could be. Hurt? Maybe. But they CLAIM TO BE SEALs. Earning a Trident is a very long, grueling process. Stolen Valor is a crime. Without actual records, employers get robbed, friends are deceived, honor destroyed. And no referral for investigation or prosecution is possible!

Suddenly in late October, news splashed across military networks with the headline "First Amendment Advocates Say Air Force Tweak to Public Records Request Process 'Very Troubling'" (Military.com, By Thomas Novelty."

The story went on to say "A new change to the Air Force's Freedom of Information Act submission portal, asking whether individuals

seeking public information from the service would agree to accept only "clearly releasable" information, is alarming First Amendment advocates and government watchdogs.

... A newly added question asks the filer to check "yes" or "no" and agree in advance to potential redactions of information before submitting their form online.

But government watchdogs and First Amendment advocates who spoke with Military.com expressed concern over the change, saying it is unclear what information is considered "clearly releasable" and what would require more intense scrutiny. ...the new question further complicates an already convoluted process."

WE pay taxes. Those taxes are used to "employ" thru Congressional mandate (our proxies) military personnel. Are they not then "employed" by the taxpayer? Our tax money is wasted on frauds, phonies, liars and sociopaths stealing from the VA. Thousands are defrauded. Widows lose everything. Families are lied to. The federal "Veterans History Project" is rife with fraudulent stories. (*Error, fraud mar vets' oral histories, critics say*, NBC News, 09/18/2007)

Denying military record files needed to prove lies and deceit is aiding and abetting STOLEN VALOR. It changes history. It harms the legacy of those that earned an honor, title, rank or spilled their blood so that others might walk in Freedom.

Protecting the liars has to stop.

civilian

Santo Tomás Liberation

Originally published in the *AMCHAM Philippines Business Journal*, February 2022, Vol. XCVII No. 2

It has been 79 years since the liberation of Santo Tomas Internment Camp (STIC), but most of the details of the eventful night of 3 February 1945 remain forever etched in my memory.

During the afternoon and evening of that Saturday, we heard distant gunfire and explosions of various kinds, and we could see evidence of conflagrations in the form of heavy smoke in the distance. Of course there were always internees ready, willing and able to concoct alleged “explanations” of those events; but in such a notorious rumor mill as STIC, we had long ago learned to pay no attention to such talk.

Regardless, that evening there seemed to be a different kind of feeling in the air, as the blackout-enforced darkness enveloped the camp’s buildings. An indefinable premonition, a feeling that something out of the ordinary might soon happen, was intensified by two things. One was the famous episode — knowledge of which quickly spread throughout the camp — of the U.S. aircraft pilot who had flown low over the camp and dropped goggles with an attached note, whose message “Roll out the barrel” hinted at impending liberation. On the other hand, it was widely feared

(with good reason, as it turned out) that the Japanese planned to “terminate” the residents of STIC before they could be rescued. Thus there was a sensation of combined foreboding and anticipation in the air.

As a result of the feelings aroused by these conflicting possibilities, after the nightly roll call I did not follow my usual routine of hanging out with fellow teenagers for a couple of hours or so before going to bed. Instead, at around 8 p.m. I was sitting and talking with my parents at our “dining room” — folding chairs at a card table placed next to the hallway’s inner wall (that is, the wall next to the Main Building’s west patio), across the corridor from my mother’s room. Her room was on the first floor (whereas my father and I were in a room on the third floor); it was located at the front of the building, at the juncture of two long hallways.

One hallway, perhaps 30 or so yards long, led directly to the building’s large, high-ceilinged lobby, where the front entrance was located. Thus we could easily hear (but in the darkness we could not see) that there was a very large and very noisy crowd of internees (possibly imbued with the aforesaid sense of foreboding/anticipation) milling around in the lobby and spilling into the adjoining hallways. The other and much longer hallway, which was at least twice as long, led toward the rear of the building, where hardly anyone could be heard that night.

Suddenly, shortly before 9 p.m., we heard a loud roar coming from the lobby, and I could make

out shouts such as “They’re here!” and “It’s our boys!” and “Look at those tanks!” Realizing that the building’s front doors somehow had been opened, I jumped up and, leaving my parents to follow, hurried toward the lobby. There I managed to squeeze myself into the unruly mob, whose surge through the front entrance carried me out onto the spacious plaza in front of the Main Building.

I then witnessed a scene that aroused what can be only inadequately described as a sensation of incredibly unbounded jubilation. That feeling is impossible to put into words, so I will not even attempt to do so; however, I can certainly describe the scene in front of me. What I saw were several tanks (later I learned there were five of them), which had smashed through the gates at the camp’s entrance and were coming up the driveway toward the plaza. They were flanked by soldiers on foot, and their spotlights were playing around the area. Those GIs looked like gods to this 14-year-old, and I sought to join the deliriously joyful internees ahead of me who were rushing to meet them.

But just at that point I heard authoritative shouts above the crowd’s uproar warning that the situation was extremely dangerous, that we were impeding the work of the GIs, and that we should get back into the building immediately. Not everyone obeyed, but I was among those who did.

Once back in the building, I excitedly paced on a euphoric high back and forth along the hallway between the lobby and my mother’s room. In the

liberation, cont'd...

process, I tried to absorb the realization that at long last we had actually been liberated after more than three years of captivity. While doing that, I had to keep dodging in and out of the melee in the packed corridor; I assumed my parents also were embedded somewhere in the crowd — I do not recall having seen either of them since leaving our card table.

What I certainly do recall seeing, however, was an extremely sobering counterpoint to the events of the night, so much so that it actually dampened my sense of exultation over our liberation. That was the sight of a half-dozen or so dead Japanese and American soldiers, whose bodies were placed in single file along the hallway's outer wall (that is, the wall closer to the front of the building).

Thereafter, I was perhaps subconsciously motivated to seek to at least partially compensate for that grim spectacle. In any event, in due course, after I had somehow managed to squeeze myself into the jam-packed lobby, I was able to receive a few of the candy bars and chewing gum sticks being passed out by the handful of GIs who were crammed in the midst of adoring, almost worshipful (ex-)internees.

Eventually, as the night wore on, at the insistence of my parents when we finally met up at my mother's room, I very reluctantly went upstairs to get a few hours of sleep. I awoke early the next morning, fully prepared and anxious to savor the benefits of our newly-attained freedom, both gastronomical and otherwise. Nor has my resulting heightened appreciation of those benefits been dimmed in the slightest by the passage of 79 years

news

On Nov. 10, 2023, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that **all** World War II Veterans are now eligible for no-cost VA health care, medical services, and nursing home care.

All WWII Veterans who served between Dec. 7, 1941, and Dec. 31, 1946, are eligible under this expansion, regardless of their length of service or financial status. These Veterans will not have to pay copays, enrollment fees or monthly premiums.

VA is reaching out by phone and mail to encourage WWII Veterans who are not currently enrolled in VA care to apply today. Veterans who enroll may also keep their private providers, Medicare, and most other insurance to meet their health care needs.

"These members of Greatest Generation answered the call to serve when our nation – and the world – needed them most. Now, it's our job to serve them in every way that we can," said VA Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Shereef Elnahal. "We are proud to provide world-class, no-cost health care to these heroes at VA, and we encourage all of them to enroll today."

All WWII Veterans are encouraged to enroll in VA health care – the best, most-affordable health care in America for Veterans. Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are proven to have better health outcomes than non-enrolled Veterans, and VA hospitals have dramatically outperformed non-VA hospitals in overall quality ratings and patient satisfaction ratings.

Veterans who were not approved for VA health care in the past due to income limits should apply again; income levels no longer apply due to this expansion. VA cannot automatically enroll these Veterans in health care; WWII Veterans must apply for VA health care if they are not currently enrolled.

This expansion is made possible through the Joseph Maxwell Cleland and Robert Joseph Dole Memorial Veterans Benefits and Health Care Improvement Act of 2022 (Cleland-Dole Act), signed in December 2022.

To apply for VA health care, visit VA's health care enrollment website, call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411), or visit your nearest VA medical center or clinic.

Happy 100th Birthday to Francis Goplen!



1924 in review...

January 20 – Francis Goplen born

February 9 – Canada's National Hockey League expands to the United States for the first time with the inclusion of the Boston Bruins.

February 12 – *Rhapsody in Blue*, by George Gershwin, is first performed in New York City, at Aeolian Hall.

February 14 – *IBM* is founded in New York State.

February 22 – Calvin Coolidge becomes the first president of the United States to deliver a radio broadcast from the White House.

April 16 – American media company *Metro Goldwyn Mayer (MGM)* is founded in Los Angeles, California.

May 3 – The Aleph Zadik Aleph, the oldest Jewish youth fraternity, is founded in Omaha, Nebraska.

May 10 – J. Edgar Hoover is appointed head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

May 26 – The Asian Exclusion Act is enacted, banning all Asian immigration to the United States. It was a slap in the face to Japan after their participation as a principal ally in WWI, and is seen as the spark that spurred Japan's alliance with Germany and down the path to World War II.

June 2 – U.S. President Calvin Coolidge signs the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 into law, granting citizenship to all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the United States.

June 23 – American airman Russell L. Maughan flies from New York to San Francisco in 21 hours and 48 minutes on a dawn-to-dusk flight in a Curtiss pursuit.

July 9 – John W. Davis of West Virginia is nominated by the Democrats to oppose Calvin Coolidge in the presidential election.

October 9 – Soldier Field, the home of the Chicago Bears opens.

October 10 The Washington Senators defeat the New York Giants (baseball), 4 games to 3.

November 4 U.S. presidential election, 1924: Republican Calvin Coolidge defeats Democrat John W. Davis and Progressive U. S. Senator Robert M. La Follette

Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming is elected as the first woman governor in the United States.

November 27 – In New York City the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is held.

December 1 – George Gershwin's *Lady Be, Good*, including the song "Fascinating Rhythm", (book by Guy Bolton and Fred Thompson, lyrics by Ira Gershwin) premieres in New York City.

Francis will be turning 100 January 20, 2024. Francis was a B24 Pilot in the 15th AF 465th Bomb Group, 783rd Bomb Squadron, flying out of Pantella Italy. He was flying his plane, Section 8, on his 39th mission for a bombing run on the rail yard in Munich Germany. He was shot down July 19, 1944. He was imprisoned at Stalag Luft 1 Barth Germany.

You can send him a card at: 690 Jefferson Dr. Zumbrota, Minnesota

A Proclamation on Veterans Day, 2023



This Veterans Day, we honor the generations of women and men who have served and sacrificed — not for a person, a place, or a President — but for an idea unlike any other: the idea of the United States of America. For nearly 250 years, our veterans have defended the values that make us strong so that our Nation could stand as a citadel of liberty, a beacon of freedom, and a wellspring of possibilities.

Today, I am thinking of all our Nation's veterans, who put their lives on the line to protect our democracy, values, and freedom around the world. We honor our wounded warriors, so many of whom the First Lady and I have met over the years, who are bound by a common sense of duty, courage, and optimism, and we remember those who are still missing in action or prisoners of war and renew my pledge to bring them home. Our military families, caregivers, and survivors also answer the call to serve. I remember so clearly the pride I felt in our son Beau during his service in Iraq as well as those mornings I saw the First Lady saying a prayer for his safe return. Our veterans and their families give so much to our Nation, and we owe them a debt we can never fully repay.

As a Nation, we have many obligations, but we only have one truly sacred obligation: to prepare and equip the brave women and men we send into harm's way and to care for them and their loved ones when they return home. Since the beginning of my Administration, we have worked to make good on that promise, passing nearly 30 bipartisan laws to support our veterans and service members and their families, caregivers, and survivors. That includes the PACT Act — the most significant effort in our Nation's history to help millions of veterans exposed to toxic substances during their military service. Since I signed the PACT Act into law last year, more than 478,000 veterans and survivors are already receiving benefits — ensuring that veterans exposed to burn pits and other harmful substances and their loved ones get access to the care and support they need.

My Administration is also committed to ending veteran suicide and homelessness and ensuring that our veterans have the resources they need to live full lives and thrive in their communities. We released a national strategy to reduce military and veteran suicide by improving lethal means safety and enhancing crisis care as well as by addressing the economic, legal, and mental health issues that impact veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs is also funding community-led suicide prevention programs, which help connect veterans and their families to needed services. Every veteran deserves a roof over their head, which is why we have taken bold actions to end veteran homelessness, permanently housing more than 40,000 veterans last year and investing \$1 billion to provide supportive services to help homeless and at-risk veterans and their families. My Budget also proposes tripling the number of rental-assistance vouchers for extremely low-income veterans to prevent homelessness. Further, we have taken steps to improve the

economic security of veterans and their families by expanding job training programs for transitioning veterans and their spouses and issuing rules to protect them from predatory educational institutions. We are also working to ensure every veteran has access to the benefits and services they have earned.

Earlier this year, I signed an Executive Order directing more than 50 actions to improve access to child care and long-term care for Americans, including military and veteran families, and to support family caregivers, especially those who care for our veterans. Recognizing the talents and contributions of veteran and military spouses, caregivers, and survivors to our workforce, I signed an Executive Order establishing the most comprehensive set of administrative actions in our Nation's history to support their economic security — increasing training and employment opportunities for military spouses in the workforce throughout the transition to veteran spouses status and encouraging all Federal agencies to do more to retain military and veteran spouses through flexible policies. The First Lady's Joining Forces initiative is further supporting military and veteran families, caregivers, and survivors by improving economic opportunities and expanding resources to promote health and well-being for this community.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of an all-volunteer force and the 75th anniversary of the full integration of women in the Armed Forces and the desegregation of the troops, my Administration reaffirms our commitment to supporting everyone who serves in our Armed Forces. We have taken steps to ensure that the more than 918,000 women veterans enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs health care have equitable access to benefits and health services, in part by expanding access to reproductive health care. We have worked to proactively review the military records of veterans discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and to modernize the process of upgrading discharges to help all veterans access their earned benefits. We will continue to support our LGBTQI+ veterans and veterans of color who have made innumerable contributions to our Nation and have truly made our military stronger, tougher, and more capable.

This Veterans Day, may we honor the incredible faith that our veterans hold, not just in our country but in all of us. They are the solid-steel backbone of our Nation, and we must endeavor to continue being worthy of their sacrifices by working toward a more perfect Union and protecting the freedoms that they have fought to defend.

In respect and recognition of the contributions our veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors have made to the cause of peace and freedom around the world, the Congress has provided (5 U.S.C. 6103(a)) that November 11 of each year shall be set aside as a legal public holiday to honor our Nation's veterans.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR., President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim November 11, 2023, as Veterans Day. I encourage all Americans to recognize the valor, courage, and sacrifice of these patriots through appropriate ceremonies and private prayers and by observing two minutes of silence for our Nation's veterans. I also call upon Federal, State, and local officials to display the flag of the United States of America and to participate in patriotic activities in their communities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventh day of November, in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-eighth.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR

Matt...

Excerpt from *Code of Conduct*

By Karen Black

Matt, the squadron's maintenance officer, and Roy Roberts, his assistant, entered the intelligence briefing room just as Jack Hayes, air wing commander, rapped for attention. Tom entered and sprawled in one of the uncomfortable chairs. A map of Vietnam showing the most recent photos of the target...a bridge north of Haiphong and the nearby flak sites...hung on the wall.

"Matt, your fighters will be flying escort. Our route will be north over water toward the China border." Commander Hayes drew an imaginary line on the map. "We'll hug the north side of these mountains until the last minute when we'll pop over this karst, hit the target, then retrace our course and proceed east to feet wet. You are to position your fighters here, above my A-4s, between the target and Kep Airfield." Again, he pointed to a specific location on the map. "Any questions?"

The pilots nodded their understanding. After hundreds of missions over the past seven months, they all knew the routine by heart. After the aerographer filled them in on weather and visibility, Matt and his crew headed to their squadron ready room.

Okay, guys, listen up," Matt began. "Bingo fuel to the ship is twenty-eight hundred pounds; to the refueling tanker is eighteen hundred pounds, and to punch out feet wet will be one thousand pounds. Keep your eyes open for MiG action; they've been sighted on recent flights. And watch out for flak. We'll be flying low to avoid being spotted on radar any sooner than necessary."

"There are two other VF-211 missions in the area. Jonesy will be flying escort for Lou West, who's conducting photo reconnaissance on the Northeast Railroad, and Dan White will be escorting another photo recce driver shooting the road from Hongay to Haiphong. Any questions?" He paused, looking around at his three squadron mates. "No...Okay, let's suit up."

"Pilots, man your planes," blared over the ready-room intercom. Matt finished zipping his torso harness and donned his hard hat.

Matt, Roy, Tom and Edward 'Frenchie' French grabbed the escalator to the flight deck and scrambled to their assigned F-8s. After visually checking his aircraft and ordnance, Matt climbed into the seat. His plane captain helped him strap in, drawing the harness tight. The distinctive smell of jet fuel permeated the area.

At the Air Boss's command, "Jet Pilots, start your engines," the flight deck turned into a crescendo of noise and feverish activity. Jet engines spooled up, and pilots and crews completed pre-launch checks while waiting for the carrier to turn into the wind. Matt's plane captain rapped on his canopy. Holding up four fingers of his left hand, he motioned thumbs down with his right. Matt nodded his understanding: Frenchie's plane was down. He scratched #4 off his kneeboard checklist.

Six slower, heavy, bomb-laden A-4s launched first. Then, shortly after twelve hundred hours, Matt saluted the catapult officer, checked his gauges, stuck his right elbow in his gut and cradled the stick, then pushed on full power, gripping the T-bar and positioning his head against the headrest. As the carrier's nose rose on the waves, the Cat officer's hand flashed forward. Immediately, the jolt of the steam catapult's power gripped the plane, hurling it from a dead stop to 200 knots in 220 feet, pinning Matt's one-hundred-eighty-pound muscular frame flat against the back of the seat. Even after hundreds of these, it still got his adrenalin flowing, second only to the ultimate E ride: the controlled crash - charitably called a landing - aboard a bucking carrier in the middle of a black ocean.

Matt retracted the wheels and executed his clearing turn as soon as his aircraft cleared the bow. The two remaining members of Foxtrot Flight were catapulted within seconds of each other. Like the precision team they were, all three joined up on assigned TACAN radial, fell in behind the bombers and headed north toward the China border.

Streaking low over the Gulf of Tonkin in his sleek, supersonic

matt, cont'd...

Crusader, Matt warily recalled the saying in the fleet that a pilot could find his way to Hanoi by simply following the wreckage of F-105s, the Air Force fighter-bombers lost on earlier bombing missions. He hoped none of Commander Hayes' A-4s would contribute to that metallic highway. Maybe the Navy was lucky to approach from the sea. At their coast-in point, the flight turned inland.

Rising out of the ravine where the bridge had been, Commander Hayes reported, "Eagle One, off target. Outbound."

Matt signaled thumbs up to his wingmen. But Foxtrot Flight had little time to enjoy the success. Over the guard channel came Jonesy's excited warning, "Falcon, Falcon, you've been hit. You're on fire. Get out. Get out."

Matt keyed the microphone. "Eagle One, this is Foxtrot One. We're going into the area to see if we can spot the pilot."

"Okay, Foxtrot One, we'll orbit ten east. Report downed pilot's status."

In trail, Foxtrot flight turned north. With the A-4s circling on the other side of the mountain, Matt contacted the recce escort pilot, "Falcon Two, Foxtrot One. What state?"

"Twenty-eight hundred pounds."

"Rog. Head out. I have smoke from the recce in sight."

Matt, Roy and Tom made one sweep through the hilly area where the plane had augured in, taking care to avoid a nearby flak site off to the right. Crossing a ridge, Matt called out, "There's Lou's flare. Let's make one more pass to see if he comes up on Guard channel."

Flying low, hoping to pick up Lou on the radio, the trio made one final pass. Roy's excited yell shattered the silence, "Tally Ho, guys. MiGs. Two o'clock."

Matt twisted his head in time to see four MiG 17s coming from the direction of Kep, the big North Vietnamese airfield nearby. His mind raced. The

MiGs were flying in formation, indicating they hadn't sighted Foxtrot flight. Each of his aircraft still had a full bag of Sidewinders and 20 mike mikes. If they could maneuver in behind the MiGs unnoticed, it would be a duck shoot.

Confident his wingmen would be right behind him, Matt pushed the power up, pulling his long, flexing Crusader in a steep climb to the right. They had to fall in behind the MiGs before they were spotted. His hand tightened on the stick, his whole body tensed at the prospect of his first kill.

"Matt, watch out for the flak site," Tom warned, his voice urgent but calm.

Suddenly, the sky exploded in front of Matt like the final salvo at a Fourth of July fireworks spectacle, with him right in the middle of the show.

"Shit." He stroked the burner and the big jet jumped past the zinging fragments like the old mare on the farm when they whooped her on the rear.

"Foxtrot One, you've taken a hit. You're blowing smoke, and there's a MiG on your tail. Break right. Break right." Tom's excited voice, no longer calm, chilled Matt to the core.

Matt spotted the fifth MiG coming in at four o'clock at about 500 knots. "Sonofabitch. Where'd he come from?" Matt jerked the stick to the right and pulled back, at the same time applying right rudder; he had to turn into the oncoming fighter.

"What the hell?" His normally obedient partner didn't respond to his commands. In his rearview mirror, he saw the MiG's muzzle flashes. Desperately, he yanked the nose up and came out of afterburner. The bullets zipped past on his starboard. The MiG flew by just below, yo-yoed high and turned back toward Kep, probably low on fuel.

Matt let out a long, audible sigh as he mentally plotted his course while weighing his options. *If I can reach that scattered layer of clouds and level the wings using rudder control, I might be able to ride this baby out to the ocean for a pick up.* He checked his instruments...his primary hydraulic system was gone and the hydraulic failure light was on, but he didn't have an engine fire warning light. He wasn't out of the woods yet, but he still had a chance.

matt, cont'd...

Suddenly, the jet pitched forward violently, transforming it into a manned air-to-ground missile, gathering speed as it zeroed in on its target. The negative Gs slammed him upward, his straining shoulder harness stopping him just before he splattered against the top of the canopy. He fought to reach the overhead face curtain, the primary ejection device located on the seat behind his head, now well below his shoulders, but his arms were pinned above him as if tied to some imaginary sky hook. The G forces held him taut. His heart thumped wildly above the deafening roar. How much time? Panic-propelled adrenaline surged through him. Forcing his elbows to bend, he willed his arms to move downward...just enough...until he felt the handle and yanked savagely. The canopy left the aircraft.

"Jesus," he shouted in frustration, his stomach spinning like a kite in a Kansas twister. The ejection seat hadn't fired; he was still strapped in. The curtain had blown around to the left, leaving his face and upper body fully exposed to the biting blast of the pounding wind stream. Only seconds remained. Only seconds before.... It appeared hopeless. But his survival instinct proved more powerful than the seducing temptation to just give up.

In a frenzy, he exerted all the strength he could muster on the face curtain. The seat fired. Suddenly, Matt was free, a human projectile rocketing through space. Almost simultaneously, he saw the fireball, heard the roar and felt the concussion and heat as his fighter exploded like an Oklahoma thunderclap only a few hundred yards away. His own dire situation afforded only a split second to grieve over the fiery demise of his once-fierce metallic protector.

The clumps of bamboo on the ground loomed larger and larger. He could make out the contours of the terrain. *I'm going in. This is it.* Wrapping his hands across the front of his lowered face, tightly shutting his eyes and gritting his teeth, he braced himself for the inevitable deadly impact.

Whoosh. A sensation like floating in air, as if suspended, engulfed him. *So this is how death feels.* He'd seen the drawings where the spirit ascends from the body of someone who has died. Strange. He hadn't felt the impact, no pain as he had expected and feared.

Daring to open his eyes, he squinted. No body, just that same green carpet of grass, but much closer now. The sting of the shroud lines cutting into his neck signaled he wasn't dead after all, just as his body swung half an arc backward, then slammed into the ground, feet first and hard.

For several seconds Matt, dazed and disorientated, gasped for air and fought faintness and nausea. From his prone position, he saw his wingmen headed toward Kep in hot pursuit of a MiG. One of the F-8's missiles fired with deadly accuracy just as the planes disappeared over the ridge. *Gotcha.*

Wiping the sweat from his face with his sleeve, he inhaled deeply, then slowly exhaled, totally drained. Rolling over, he rose to a crouching position on his hands and knees. Dropping his head between his arms, he pondered, *what the hell did those geniuses in Survival School say I should do next? If I'd have thought I'd end up here, I'd have paid more attention.* He recalled the instructions: first, hide your parachute, then look for a means of escape. "Escape, hell," he sneered aloud.

Trying to stand, he wobbled a bit, fell back to his knees and steadied himself with one hand. His internal gyro still fluctuated wildly.

After the adrenaline slowed down to warp speed, Matt turned his attention to his predicament. Checked – it didn't feel like any ribs were broken. On the second try, he made it to his feet.

matt, cont'd...

He unlatched the parachute's fasteners. *Gotta remember to buy that rigger a bottle if I ever get home.* Gathering the billowy material into his arms, he ran up the hill toward a high grassy area that would afford at least some measure of cover until he could get his bearing, dispose of his excess gear and figure out his next move.

Reality hit him like a kick in the gut. His wingmen already had turned for home, their fuel state precariously low after the dogfight with the MiGs. A helicopter couldn't be sent this far north. The sea, which might have offered a reasonable chance for a rescue attempt if he could have reached it, was more than one hundred rugged, enemy-infested miles away. He couldn't avoid detection very long, even if he went in the right direction and not in circles, the more likely course. His prospects seemed bleak, but he had to try. He needed rest, water, and time to sort things out; time to think straight. He'd hide out for a while, develop a plan. By some miracle he had survived, but there was a lot to do if he wanted to stay that way.

Just as he reached the edge of the tall grass, something moved ahead, causing him to stop dead in his tracks and crouch down, waiting, and watching. Had it been the wind? His imagination? His eyes probed the terrain. Then he heard it - the distinct sound of a gun being cocked. He stiffened.

Two Vietnamese militia rose from their hiding place in the grass directly in front of him - his intended hiding place. Both held rifles pointed threateningly in his direction.

Matt inhaled sharply, involuntarily whistling through his teeth as he stared into the business end of two large weapons. A quick assessment convinced him he had no chance to go for the .38 still strapped in its holster across his chest. That would be an irrational act. He hadn't survived being shot down only to now

commit suicide. For the same reason, he didn't give in to the urge to run. The inescapable truth was that he lacked a safe place to go, even if his suddenly jelly-filled legs could have responded.

The taller of the two men approached Matt and, motioning with his rifle, ordered, "Han Up."



Matt Tillet, an F-8 Crusader pilot, is shot down over North Vietnam in 1966, just one week before his ship would be heading home after his second back-to-back six-month tour. Escaping from his spiraling out-of-control jet with only seconds to spare, and evading for all of three minutes, he becomes a Prisoner of War. Surviving torture, months of solitary confinement and the infamous Hanoi March, the dream of returning home to his wife and two children keeps him going. Repatriated in 1973, he returns to find his dream shattered.

Code of Conduct takes place in the middle of a war, however, it is not so much a blood and guts war novel as it is the emotional tale of a family torn apart by war, more than seven years of separation, and the long journey to reconstruct their lives.

The goal of Karen Black, the author, is to present the horrendous prisoner-of-war experience and the resulting shattered personal lives in the format of a novel.



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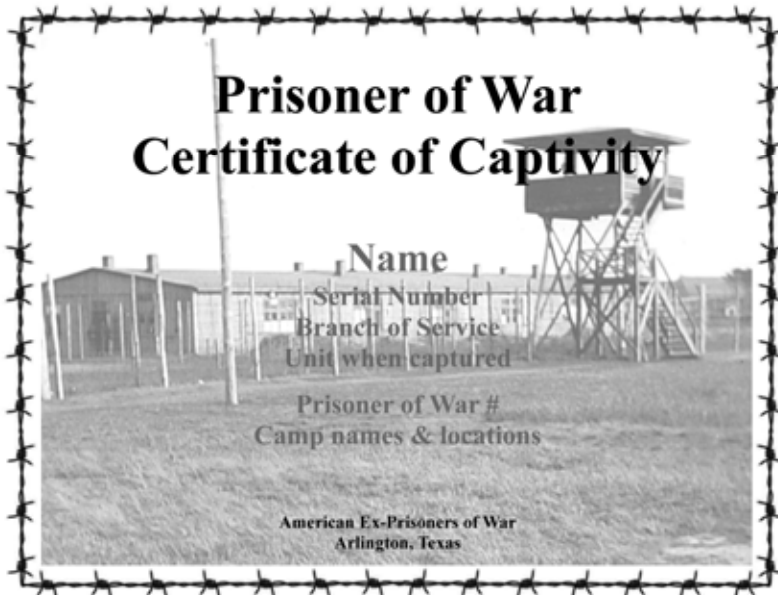
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A number of years ago, one of our members made the decision to establish a bequest to the American Ex-Prisoners of War. He felt strongly that he truly cared about our future and wanted to leave a legacy to us. He and his wife are now gone, but their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

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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!

Contributions



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In honor of Cheryl Cerbone, and her good work,
by Patricia Anloff Sanders

In honor of Kenneth Collins' 100th birthday,
by Minerva Morris

In memory of Kerry McLaughlin,
by Leo Schlocker



taps



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

BOOKSIN, Irving, 98, of Singer Island and Frenchmen's Creek, FL, died Sept. 19, 2023. He was a proud Army veteran, serving in the ETO during WWII with the 78th Inf., CO G, 810th Reg. He was part of the D-Day invasion, wounded, then captured during the Battle of the Bulge. He spent the duration of the war in Stalag 9B. His wife, Marion, predeceased him. He leaves 1 son, daughter and his partner of 8 years, Ruth Karlin. Irving will be remembered for his sense of humor, infectious smile, and being a great dad and partner. His motto was "never give up".

EDGELL, Okla Elmer "Okey" of Fairmont, WV passed away October 22, 2023. He was 3 days short of his 98th birthday. with his

wife Arlene holding his hand. He was a life member of AXPOW and member of the Barbed Wire Mountaineer Chapter and Dept. of WV. He served with the 446th Bomb Group during WWII. This group was chosen by Eisenhower to lead the bombers into Normandy on D-Day. He was a tail gunner on a B24 Bomber and his plane was shot down by the Germans over Barendrecht, Holland in 1945. He was held in the Aalsmeer POW Camp until liberated on V-Day 1945. He leaves his wife, Arlene, 2 daughters, 1 stepdaughter, 3 stepsons, 11 grandchildren, 16 great-grandchildren and 9 great-great-grandchildren.

In loving memory
Your presence we miss...
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Forgetting you never



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AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR VOLUNTARY FUNDING PROGRAM

The AXPOW Voluntary Giving Program parallels that of other VSOs, whereby the entire membership, including life members, is given the opportunity to contribute to the operation of our organization, based on ability and willingness to contribute. All contributions are to be sent directly to National Headquarters to be used for the operation of the organization. A complete accounting of contributors will appear in the Bulletin each issue.

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