

EX-POW BULLETIN

the official voice of the
American Ex-Prisoners of War

501(c)3 Veterans Service Organization

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2024

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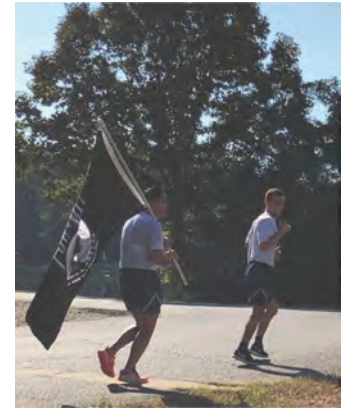


We exist to help those who cannot help themselves



Andersonville National Historic Site ~ Wreaths Across America

Photos from the past



January-March 2025

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Bittersweet...

This is the last issue of the EX-POW Bulletin. After 83 years, we have completed our transition into a legacy organization. A number of years ago, our members voted to – for all intents and purposes – close shop once the number of Ex-POWs dropped below a level compatible with continuing. We have fewer than 650 former POWs alive. That is good news and sad. The good news is that we are not in a war where POWs are taken. The sad news is that nearly all of our dads, husbands and grandparents are now deceased.

This issue highlights some of our achievements over the last years...and also showcases three of our WWII Ex-POWs who have turned 100 and 103. It also has a Taps for my best friend and your long-time adjutant, Executive Director and COO Clydie Morgan.

Our contact information is in this issue. So please, if you have need of any of us, do not hesitate to reach out. We may not be here in printed form, but our website is still active and we are still at the end of the phone line.

Love
Cheryl

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As we close in on the “folding of the flag” event in April, I feel like I’m writing an obituary for the American ExPOWs. Since 1942 this organization has advocated for former prisoners of war held during WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, and the various sites in the global war on terror. We were among the founders of the Military Coalition to keep health and compensation issues before the Congress. For many years we had paid Veteran Service Officers dedicated especially to our small but important subgroup of veterans. We have had a lot of successes and very few failures in our 82-year span.

On a regular basis we find the names of old friends and fellow POWs in the obituaries of our papers. While we are saddened to see them go, we rejoice that they lived long and successful lives following repatriation. Those of us who fought, died, or nearly died in the service of our nation and our allies can hold our heads high knowing we acted with valor, honor, and dignity.

While our beloved organization may be gone, the memory of our sacrifices and those of others will be kept alive by the National Park Service and the Friends of Andersonville at the Andersonville National Historic Site in Georgia. That site comprises the former site of Camp Sumter military prison, the Andersonville National Cemetery, and the National Prisoner of War Museum, which honors all U.S. POWs in all wars. Its National Cemetery has been used continuously since its founding and currently averages over 150 burials a year.

To all our members, to those who have served on our board of directors, our officers, VSOs, and especially the lady who has kept us so well informed, Cheryl Cerbone, I say “bravo zulu” good and faithful servants.

Commander Robert Certain

from the CEO



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This is my last article addressing each and every one of you. I do so with honor, respect, and well wishes for the future. Meeting so many EX-POWs from across our nation and serving the American Ex-Prisoners of War Veteran Service Organization has been an experience I will always treasure. We have so much to be thankful for as an AXPOW organization, as individuals, and for the thousands of EX-POWs who served our grateful nation.

As previously reported, as of April 2025, AXPOW is changing from active to inactive status. What happens is exactly what those words describe. The Congressionally chartered Veterans Service Organization AXPOW remains available should the need arise in the future however it is no longer actively engaged in providing services. Our hope and prayers are that the need never again arises. Our membership has

reduced dramatically over the past few years. Not surprisingly, our ability to provide services has reduced commensurately. Going forward, there will still be access to the AXPOW website information which will be static, without updates. Let's reflect on where we have been and what AXPOW has accomplished.

During WWII the mothers of two sons who were captured in 1942 by the Japanese joined for the common purpose of sending aid to their imprisoned sons. Their actions ignited others throughout the country to form groups for the same purpose of sending relief to imprisoned military personnel. Over the next 7 years the organization grew in size and scope. In 1949, the group changed its name to the American Ex-Prisoners of War and broadened its membership to include former prisoners of all wars, civilian internees, and their families and descendants. AXPOW was an organization originated by need and fueled by unselfish volunteers. That same drive has served AXPOW for its' 80-year history. An organization like AXPOW is simply a shell without the caring effort of the people who make it work. I want to thank all veterans who have become members of AXPOW and supported the organization and each other. Additionally, I want to extend my thanks for the many who have volunteered their time in support of AXPOW extending years and even decades. Without those volunteers, the organization would have never been able to help the countless EX-POWs.

Many of you offered donations which were vital to AXPOW fulfilling its mission to help veterans. Some found it in their heart to leave a bequest for AXPOW in their Will. What a special acknowledgement for how they felt about our organization, their comrades, and entrusting AXPOW with their generosity. Our funds will continue to be invested in enhancing the EX-POW legacy primarily through the Friends of Andersonville, a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancements at National EX-POW Museum located at the Andersonville Georgia historic site.

As a veteran service organization, our mission was addressing the needs of veterans and their families on an individual basis as well as a governmental policy basis. While veterans were helped with education and assistance in receiving their earned VA benefits, at the broader view, AXPOW worked with other veteran service organizations, individual elected officials and their staff at state and national levels, to influence law makers in addressing the needs of the veterans and their families. Many laws were passed as a result of these efforts, most notably the Bill signed by President Reagan providing for presumptive conditions for all those imprisoned veterans. That single act continues to serve our very special class of veterans in addressing their needs. While the ever-changing needs of veterans will continue, the hard-fought gains made over the years ensure the

Vets Day 2024



ceo, cont'd...

earned benefits of the EX-POWs are guaranteed for generations to come.

This past November 11th Debra and I attended Veterans Day Ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. There were many hundreds of people in attendance as we laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier on behalf of AXPOW. The American Ex-Prisoners of War organization is announced during the proceedings which are carried live on C-SPAN. I have been attending on behalf of AXPOW since 2012. I can report that this event was heavily attended, with standing room only. Those in attendance were very engaged in all proceedings. In addition, even as we were leaving there were crowds entering Arlington cemetery to honor our Veterans. This formal ceremony is one of many conducted across our grateful nation. And yes, it too helps the legacy of the EX-POW. Debra and I plan on attending again in 2025.

While the work of AXPOW will not continue, we all play a part in preserving the legacy of the EX-POW. This legacy lives in our hearts and minds. Please do your part to keep the EX-POW legacy visible. We owe it to our family and friends who have served our country and faced the enemy in prison camps. Through constant awareness and education, the public and especially our future generations learn and honor the plight of the EX-POW. As individuals, we must continue.... continue to share the memories, continue to tell or retell the stories of the EX-POWs, continue to attend and participate in veteran functions and celebrations, continue to give honor and respect. And yes, we will miss the camaraderie uniquely shared with the common bond of the EX-POW and their families.

Remember...

Charles A. Susino

President's message



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It's been a couple years since I've reached out to you all...and this time is one of the hardest articles I've ever written. It's the last time I'll have this special connection to you and members and friends.

As a tiny organization of POWs and their families, we were able to have legislative successes. From our first foray in 1949-50, to 1956, when Congress passed Public Law 744: Effects of Malnutrition and Other Hardships on the Mortality and Morbidity of Former US Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees, until 1999, when Title V of Public Law 106-117 offered much-needed assistance to the widows of former POWs, our organization has been leading the effort to educate Congress and the American public about effects of incarceration on former prisoners of war. In the intervening years, we successfully navigated between the aisles.

In 1983, my parents asked me to help set up an office for AXPOW in their basement. Earl Derrington was the National Commander; Joe Galloway was next in line. The organization had gotten two important bills passed – one which established “presumptives” and a National Advisory Committee for Former POWs and the other gave us long-denied recognition as a Congressionally-Chartered Veterans Service Organization in the 97th Congress. These two public laws changed our trajectory forever and Earl and Joe wanted my dad to take on “educating” Congress about ex-POWs.

It was also the year we began to grow. From 8,000 to our top end of more than 33,000.

DAV helped us pay for our first Congressional Receptions. I started attending them and the twice-annual meetings of the Advisory Committee in Washington, DC – headed up by General Flynn and with our own “Angel” Madeline Ullam. I still have a beautiful brooch she gave me one year. I also met my best friend, “bestie”, sisters of the traveling pants and the sister I would have wished for if I had known she existed. Clydie Morgan became the other – sometimes better – half of me.

In 1986, I became Public Relations Chair. Those of us who had been around a bit were surprised how little we were known on the outside. My first budget was \$5,000.

In the background, Historian Helen Smith and NPS Ranger Fred Sanchez began work on a possible National Museum for POWs. We entered into agreements and started raising nickels and dimes to build the museum.

Under Commander Galloway, we began to raise money. Brick Mill Studies was our foray into address labels sent to our members and requesting donations. We slowly began making money. In the early 1990s, we added a calendar – a job I loved. We actually won an award one year for our calendar.

In the first Gulf War, the VA set up a hotline to help our members and other veterans cope with flashbacks. We sent out posters with yellow ribbons to support those who were captured. And prayed for their release.

After years of passing the hat to raise money for a museum, we decided to go again to Congress and request permission to mint a commemorative coin. We got it after we joined with two other VSOs and a lot of arm-twisting and “educating”. Three coins were minted. Ours showed the American Eagle on the front and the proposed National POW Museum at Andersonville on the reverse.

As a Congressionally-chartered VSO, we were responsible for hosting Veterans Day ceremonies at Arlington Cemetery. Our year was 1997 and we were in no financial shape to do it, so we reached out to you once again with a postcard appeal. It

allowed us to play with the big guys on a level playing ground.

On April 9, 1998, our museum opened. We had an impressive line-up of dignitaries and thousands of our members. My parents' videos are in the back in the "Those who wait" section and whenever I need to see them, I go to Andersonville and sit in the semi-dark and watch.

In the early 2000s, we increased our list of presumptives and provided support to a dwindling number of members. From the thousands attending National Conventions, our special group

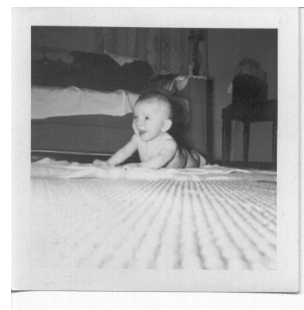
has declined to just over 600 Ex-POWs. It's time to focus our efforts on our legacy.

I've worn a lot of hats in the last four plus decades – Public Relations, Direct Mail, Bulletin Editor, National Director, Jr. Vice Commander, CEO and now President. But the job I always bring my heart to is that of "one of the kids". You all have been so dear and I will miss most having you reach out to me when you have a question. I am still here for you...and you have my information.

I give you all love and peace.
Cheryl

Some of the "kids"

Left to right, top to bottom: Edward Schwarz, son of Otto Schwarz; Joan Barton, daughter of Cecil Barton; Karen Stantz, daughter of Frederick Stantz; Marcia Jean Smith, daughter of Warren Smith; Philip Joel Mihok, son of Joseph A. Mihok; Stephen Stone, son of Preston Stone; Sylvia Stone, daughter of Preston Stone, Marsha Coke, daughter of Sally Morgan.



Andersonville



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Greetings from Andersonville National Historic Site. Let me start off by thanking AXPOW for your partnership and support of Andersonville National Historic Site over the years. We quite literally could not have done it without you. Your legacy will live on in the National POW Museum.

Our annual Living History weekend was the first weekend of November. We had a great turnout. The guest speaker for the weekend was Dr. Susan Easterbrook, Professor Emerita at Georgia State University. She presented the story of her ancestor, John E. Davis, and shared her process for conducting genealogy research as well as answered questions from the audience who were interested in uncovering their own family histories.

Finally, at long last it appears that we will be starting the project to re-grade and improve the drainage in Section Q and a small portion of Section J within Andersonville National Cemetery. The project will allow the cemetery to remain open to new burials for the foreseeable future; a re-graded Section Q has space for approximately 700 gravesites.

The museum water feature renovation has also been funded for the fiscal year and we are trying to get funding to make some of the museum exhibits more accessible.

We had a phenomenal turn out for Wreaths Across America this year with about 2,000 in attendance.

We are grateful for the support we get from AXPOW and many others who again raised enough funds for us to place a wreath on each veteran's headstone, 20,700. It's our biggest opportunity to appreciate and teach the public to appreciate the sacrifices of our veterans and their families and I believe people are moved by both the ceremony and the laying of the wreaths.

I hope each of you knows that you are family to us, and that you continue to feel that Andersonville is a home of sorts. We hope you will come see us anytime you can. We are saddened by the end of the AXPOW era, yet your legacy will always be remembered because of your efforts and your support of the national historic site and the National POW Museum that you built so others never forget. From the bottom of our hearts, we wish you all well.

Upcoming Events for 2025.

Please check our website for updates;
more will be added.

April 4-17, 2025 Avenue of Flags
April 9, 2025 National Prisoner of War
Recognition Day
May 24, 2025 Memorial Day Flag
Placement
and Ceremony
May 16-July 10, 2025 Avenue of Flags
September 5-25, 2025 Avenue of Flags
September 19, 2025 National POW-MIA
Recognition Day
November 7-20, 2025 Avenue of Flags
December 13, 2025-- Wreaths Across
America

Wreaths Across America at ANHS 2024



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A Beautiful Friendship, The Story About the Relationship Between AXPOW and Andersonville National Historic Site. *By Fred Boyles*

The last line from the 1942 classic film, *Casablanca* was, "Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." Rick (Humphrey Bogart) says this to Captain Louis Renault (Claude Rains) as they walk across the airport runway into the fog. Little did they know, but that line could well have described what American Ex-Prisoner of War (AXPOW) National Historian, Helen Smith and Andersonville National Historic Site Chief Ranger, Fred Sanchez contemplated how the National Park Service (NPS) could partner with AXPOW to preserve and present the legacy of POWs in American history.

Those discussions in 1984 led to the first of many formal agreements between AXPOW and the NPS. That first agreement had its roots much earlier when Congress directed the NPS to tell the larger story of POWs beyond the Andersonville Civil War story in its 1970 legislation. It was the

law that prompted Sanchez to reach out to AXPOW and found Helen Smith, who was very receptive to kicking off what became a "beautiful friendship."

In the 1980s, Andersonville's Superintendent was John Tucker. John took three important steps to advance that relationship. First, Tucker started a new General Management Plan, or GMP. Developing a GMP is a tedious and expensive process, but necessary in developing the park. Andersonville's GMP tackled many challenges, but its greatest was in developing a new visitor center to tell the Camp Sumter story, and the story of all POWs in American history, as stated in the park's enabling legislation. The GMP was approved in June 1988 and provided major goals for the park to pursue. It is important to note that the GMP process includes a public input process, which members of AXPOW were actively engaged with.

The next two initiatives during the 1980s resulted in more tangible results. There was one space left in the National Cemetery for the placement of a monument. AXPOW Board Member and Judge Advocate Hubert Davis had long wanted to have a memorial for those who endured in his POW camp, Stalag 17-B. Hubie worked closely with the park and his fellow POWs to request that the space in the cemetery be reserved for a Stalag 17-B monument. Then came the difficult task of raising money for the monument and having it made, transported and put in place. It was dedicated in May 1989 at a moving ceremony to mark the occasion. At roughly the same time, the park staff took

steps to develop a small museum to present POW history other than the Camp Sumter story. The park staff converted a small building built 90 years earlier into an exhibit space for the public. The maintenance staff revamped the building while the ranger staff, led by Fred Sanchez, created exhibits in the building for visitors to view. Someone came up with the idea that it would enhance the visitor's experience if former POWs hosted them. Thus began the POW Guest Host program. Soon AXPOW members from all over the country were coming to Andersonville to spend time greeting the public and engaging with them, telling them about their personal experiences. One AXPOW member in particular, Bob Windham from Columbus, Georgia, became a regular volunteer at the park when AXPOW members from far away were not available. In 1999, the small POW Museum was revamped by the park maintenance staff into a small apartment for use by guest host volunteers. The Georgia AXPOW Department provided all the furnishings for the house. The most powerful part of that experience was when school groups would visit and talk with a former POW. For the kids, they gained a new appreciation for the freedom they enjoy. The POW Guest Host program continued for 30 years.

As a personal note, I arrived as superintendent at Andersonville in November 1989. John Tucker had moved on to Fort Sumter National Monument. His were big shoes to fill. I came to the job knowing little about the NPS and AXPOW relationship. My previous park had a partnership with an organization that supported the

friends, cont'd...

site, so I was excited about the prospects of working with a group like AXPOW. Within days of arrival, I was meeting with several AXPOW leaders who would guide me down the long road ahead. The AXPOW National Commander then was John Edwards, from New York who had been a POW in World War II. Another key person was Korean War POW, Bill Fornes from Valdosta, Georgia. Both John and Bill shared with me their vision for a museum (not a visitor center) to tell the story of all POWs. They impressed me that this was their legacy. As a 35-year-old government "paper pusher" such an ambitious endeavor intimidated me.

AXPOW knew how to get things done in Washington. Their leader on this front was Chuck Williams who served as Executive Director of AXPOW. It would be a serious omission not to include Chuck's wife Ruth, since she was on the job every day advocating for AXPOW initiatives. Chuck and Ruth were able to convince Georgia's Third District Congressman, Richard Ray, to include a modest appropriation into the Interior Appropriations Bill for the initial planning and design of a new visitor center at Andersonville. That allowed for two architects from the NPS Design Center in Denver, Colorado to be assigned to the project and to begin planning. Beginning in 1990, AXPOW appointed a group of its members as the Andersonville Committee. Former POW, Bill Fornes served as the Andersonville Coordinator to work with the NPS on a regular basis. The Andersonville Committee was chaired by

National Commander John Edwards and had AXPOW members from WWII Europe, WWII Asia, Korea and Vietnam. Some members came and went over the eight years the committee worked on the project, but Edwards, Fornes and Vietnam POW, Wayne Wadell stayed on the committee throughout. This committee met often to consider the plans the NPS developed on the building design, exhibits, audio visuals and more. Their input was invaluable. The committee recommended that the designers make presentations at two AXPOW annual conventions, which they did, which further generated excitement for the project.

From the beginning, all the agreements between the NPS and AXPOW had a provision that the organization would raise \$2.5 million towards the project. Personally, I believed that was not right. Why should an organization made up of members of our military who had been locked up, starved, and tortured by our nation's enemies be raising money for a project to tell their story? I reconciled with that because AXPOW's membership was fully committed to the project and were willing to take on the task of raising money for the plan. What I came to understand was that former POWs never tired of giving back to the nation they loved. Their patriotism was unrivaled.

AXPOW's private fund raising was difficult. Members contributed personally to the project. Several plans paid off and others did not. One innovative idea came from Bill Fornes, who requested that the Veterans Administration send out a small card with its monthly

compensation checks asking for donations. The VA sent out 1.9 million cards to veterans in 1994 and resulted in thousands of donations totaling over \$77,000. Bill and his wife Nancy moved to the park in a camper and spent several months answering every donation with a personalized thank-you letter. A similar project initiated by AXPOW National Commander Chuck Minięta resulted in another round of donations totaling \$80,000. At about this same time, the Friends of Andersonville (FOA) became involved in helping raise funds. The FOA concentrated on developing support for the project in the local area. This may seem like an easy sell. It was not. There were still old Confederate sympathies in the area and a deep suspicion of Andersonville as the "Yankee prison."

Overcoming these long-held biases took many years and still exists to some degree to this day. A key element of the plan and support for the museum was a new entrance road into the park. I used to joke to the park staff that the Confederate government laid out the park in 1864 and the NPS was trying to fix it 125 years later. The obstacle to that was a tract of land owned by a farmer who lived about 50 miles away. That land had to be purchased for the road to be built. The land owner was not interested in helping with the project. The park's original 1970 law only allowed for the NPS to acquire land by donation only. That meant that the park could only use donated funds to buy the land. That negotiation dragged on for over three years and was accomplished after the farmer died and his heirs agreed to sell at the appraised price. The park

friends, cont'd...

had set aside donated funds for nearly 10 years to cover the acquisition.

In looking back at AXPOWs relationship with Andersonville and the NPS, there was no other initiative more impactful than the oral history program. In 1991, Fred Sanchez proposed that the park fully commit to recording former POWs telling their personal stories through oral histories. Webster defines oral history as "*a recording containing information about the past got from in-depth interviews concerning personal experiences, recollections, and reflections.*" Conducting oral histories is not as simple as turning on a tape recorder and letting someone talk. The person conducting the interview needs to be knowledgeable on the subject, know the general story surrounding that person's experience, and must be able to ask clarifying questions. The largest obstacle was to acquire funding to support it. In 1992, Andersonville NHS received a \$20,000 grant from the Georgia Humanities Council to support the purchase of equipment and to support staff traveling to events where former POWs could be recorded. AXPOW also helped by contributing to the program. The Magnolia Chapter in Mississippi contributed to the cause when the grant funds were expended. Beginning in 1992, Andersonville Park Rangers traveled to AXPOW meetings, conferences and events to record personal stories of POWs and their spouses. The role of POW spouses became an important part of the program that had not been fully appreciated when recordings began. Another positive outcome

of the project was that the park staff became much more educated about POW history by hearing these remarkable stories.

The oral history project's unspoken part was the understanding that if they were not recorded then, these stories would disappear once those individuals died. By about 2010, the oral history program began to diminish which was mostly because of the number of AXPOW members who had passed away. The oral histories became one of the most appreciated features of the National POW Museum's exhibits where visitors can access hours of personal vignettes as told by the people who experienced it. Today, the POW oral history program is still the largest of any program in the National Park Service. The program, managed for years by Alan Marsh, has 1,154 recorded oral histories from World War I through both Gulf Wars. This program's long-ranging impact on future generations is immeasurable.

Another key part of the relationship between AXPOW and the NPS was artifacts. This was especially important to National Commander, John Edwards. He would personally tell his fellow POWs to donate their objects associated with their captivity to Andersonville. At times this could be a very difficult and emotional decision. I recall meeting with former POWs who were torn about parting with something as precious and meaningful as their POW dog tags (issued by the Nazis), or a handwritten diary that told their unique personal story of captivity. The park staff never pushed these tough decisions. The donations flooded in as POWs parted with items. Many would make the trip to the

park to deliver them to the curator. Often, there were calls from children of POWs who said that their parents wanted a particular item to be presented to Andersonville as a last request. Today, the museum collection contains over 6,500 objects. Within that collection, 51% of those items are from WWII to the present. It is impossible to know how many of those items were from AXPOW members, but I am sure the number is significant.

As planning for the museum was proceeding, fundraising was not doing so well. Both the leadership at AXPOW, the Friends of Andersonville and at the park, realized that there was a more fundamental problem that few people knew little about Andersonville, let alone that it had a larger mission to tell the story of all POWs. What we needed was publicity or to promote the site and the museum project. The President of the Friends of Andersonville (also an AXPOW member), Carl Runge, took on generating publicity for the project. Carl reached out to newspapers, magazines and television stations all over the nation to generate interest in the park and museum project. Soon articles and editorials appeared in the Atlanta Constitution, USA Today, Boston Globe, Philadelphia Enquirer, New York Times and Washington Post. Articles in support popped up in Associated Press, Knight Ridder and Gannett papers that reached smaller papers all over the country. Articles in Parade Magazine, US News and World Report, Time and other prominent periodicals reached huge audiences with the message. Television, radio stories and interviews followed. Nationally recognized speakers for the annual Memorial Day program also generated news

friends, cont'd...

stories. Retired Vice Admiral and former POW Jim Stockdale's visit for Memorial Day in 1994, where he spoke, generated the largest attendance in the known history of that event. But the largest generator of interest in the park came thanks to the production of the made for TV mini-series, *Andersonville*, by Turner Network Television (TNT). The show aired in early 1996 and brought an enormous interest in the park. These attention-grabbing stories built like a tidal wave for supporting the park and the vision of a museum about all American POWs.

It was unclear if the museum project was going to get the federal funding necessary due to the need for political support. In 1993 Sanford Bishop became the representative where Andersonville was located. Bishop went all in for the project. He was a junior member with little seniority. Other house members and senators had their own projects, which they supported. To show widespread backing, each former President of the United States, along with the sitting President, wrote support letters for the project in 1992. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell, added his support with a letter. Surprisingly, there was a lack of awareness of the project in the Interior Department. Chuck Williams arranged for several leaders from AXPOW, along with NPS leaders on the project, to meet with Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan to show him the plans for the museum. The key

person whose support was necessary for the federal funding of the museum project was an Ohio congressional representative, named Ralph Regula. Regula Chaired the House Appropriations Subcommittee for the Interior Department. Every dollar that came to the NPS in those days was scrutinized by Regula. Like many members of Congress who held key leadership positions, Regula refused to meet with anyone who was not a constituent of his district. An AXPOW National Director member named Bill Heubner, just happened to live in Regula's district. Bill was able to visit with the powerful committee chair and convince him why the museum was a national resource and deserved funding.

Just as political support at the federal level was important, so too was state support. The Georgia State Senator that represented Andersonville, George Hooks, suggested that the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) could support the project. Carl Runge, Hooks and I met with the GDOT Commissioner, Wayne Shackelford. To our surprise, the Commissioner committed to supporting the project almost immediately. It was agreed that the GDOT could fund the construction of the new entrance road and parking lot at the museum through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) that provided federal gas tax funds to states. But there was a catch. ISTEA could only fund 75% of a project according to the federal statute. The 25% match had to come from non-federal funds.

Senator Hooks, who just so happened to Chair the Senate Appropriations Committee, secured state funds to serve as the match. The final step that brought about Georgia's support for the project was a visit from Governor Zell Miller. Miller was a Marine Corps veteran who, as a young officer in Vietnam became close with a fellow marine, a senior enlisted former POW and Bataan Death March survivor, George Burlage. The Governor brought his old friend to the park to visit the site. Miller stated his support for GDOTs funding and the state 25% match of the critical infrastructure for the museum.

The federal funds would not be appropriated until private funds rose to \$2.5 million. By the mid-1990s, the fund was well short of that amount. There were always dreams that someone like Ross Perot would swoop in and write the check to cover it. That never happened. And it wasn't for the lack of trying. Everything changed when the idea was pitched for the US Mint to produce a commemorative coin to sell. Congressman Pete Peterson represented a north Florida district and was a former Vietnam POW and AXPOW member. He introduced the bill. But where did that idea come from? It just so happened that AXPOW Executive Director Chuck Williams was a retired employee of the US Mint. He understood how the commemorative program worked and that since the public purchased the coins as collectibles, the funds they brought in could be used as the non-federal match. The coin bill

friends, cont'd...

was not an easy sell in the congress. It was not that anyone opposed the bill; it was that other members had their own priorities. To the shock of everyone involved, Georgia Senator Sam Nunn had reservations about the Andersonville Coin bill. He wanted to see a coin bill passed that would support the planned 1996 Olympics to be held in Atlanta. The Andersonville coin bill was introduced and sent to the House Financial Services Committee where it sat in limbo. To get the bill to move out of committee, Chuck Williams and AXPOW National Commander Wayne Hitchcock began walking the halls of congress and met with members and staff to convince them to co-sponsor the law. This process went on for months, but one by one, senators and congressman could not say no. At the same time, Congressman Bishop became a champion of the bill with his fellow members. One member was Joseph Kennedy II, brother of the guy who is the nominee for Health and Human Services Secretary). Kennedy chaired the sub-committee that had jurisdiction over the US Mint. No coin bill could move ahead without his approval. Bishop delivered a framed photo of the Massachusetts Monument at Andersonville that remembers the 766 prisoners from that state buried in the National Cemetery and the ~2,700 men from there who were imprisoned at Camp Sumter. The US Commemorative Coin Act of 1993 passed. The sale of the coin provided the non-federal funding necessary to match the appropriated funds.

Once all the funds were committed from federal, state and private sources, the museum project moved ahead. Through a competitive bid process, a contract was awarded to a Georgia construction firm. It took over a year to complete the building. When the completion of the museum was inevitable, another phase kicked in. In March 1997, the Andersonville Committee morphed into the Grand Opening Committee. That group met often to offer input on what kind of event should mark the debut of the museum. The committee wanted the opening to take place on April 9, 1998, which is recognized as Former POW Recognition Day. Yet another hurdle was encountered. NPS funds could not be used for nearly every aspect of the one-time event. The committee would not be deterred. Jim Petty was the commander of the AXPOW Magnolia Chapter in Mississippi. That chapter had already contributed more than any other chapter towards the project. The Magnolia Chapter owned and operated a bingo hall on the Gulf coast. Petty's chapter funded nearly all the grand opening to include an enormous tent, chair rentals, busses for transporting guests to and from the remote parking lot and other items the NPS could not pay for. The local community kicked in by providing lunch for everyone who attended. The Marine Corps Band, a joint armed forces color guard and B-1 Bomber fly over, added to the festive feel of the event. Speakers came from the house and senate, Georgia's governor, the NPS Director and Senator John McCain offered the primary address speaking about the heroism of Vietnam POW Lance Sijan. But perhaps the

most powerful part of the opening was the ribbon cutting. Ten different people were selected to cut the ribbon representing each war since WWII who were different AXPOW members and others from the local community and the NPS. It was symbolic that so many people had worked together since 1984, focused on achieving what once seemed like an impossible goal. Over 4,000 people were in attendance. Most were AXPOW members.

The opening of the museum was covered by all kinds of media. Four cable news network's broadcast it live. Other stories in newspapers, magazines and radio also reported on the new museum. Two weeks after the opening, the C-SPAN School Bus came to Andersonville and televised live for their morning show, Washington Journal, from the lobby of the museum for two, hour long segments with Bill Fornes and myself. It was intimidating to be on live television taking phoned in questions. The publicity generated even more interest in the park thanks to the museum, and visitation went up. The park staff was overwhelmed by the attention and the flood of visitors, but they genuinely loved the workload because of their commitment to the mission.

Looking back some 30+ years on that exciting time, it is important to note that the relationship between the AXPOW and the NPS was far from perfect. Like any relationship, there were squabbles and disagreements. AXPOW leadership often resisted some of the NPS rules regarding fund raising and how the museum (and park) is operated. One

friends, cont'd...

AXPOW National Commander threatened to withdraw from the agreement over a fundraising issue. After the highly publicized fight over the project to restore the Statue of Liberty in the late 1980s, the NPS was imposing restrictions on fundraising for NPS partners working on development projects like the POW Museum. In the early 1990s, AXPOW hired a private fundraising consultant to lead the effort. The company was ineffective with no funds raised and held back other efforts for over a year.

My greatest concern in the first seven years of the project was fund raising. Despite the successes, there were far more rejections than victories. AXPOW members gave generously, as demonstrated by the statistic that there were over 10,000 donations to the project. But most of those donations were modest. Corporate giving was sparse. Southwest Georgia is an impoverished region and local donations were small. One surprising area where we had success was in gifts from

foundations. One of the Woodruff Family of Foundations gave the largest single gift to the museum's construction in a \$250,000 donation. The Woodruff family were the original founders of Coca-Cola. It helped tremendously that Jim Sibley served on the Woodruff Board of Directors and was a former POW and "guest" of the Nazis in Stalag Luft I. Foundation donors require detailed written proposals which were carefully written to meet their guidelines. It was frustrating to work on a proposal for weeks only to be turned down. There were many instances where I felt that our shared dream for a National POW Museum would never happen. I am embarrassed to admit this in hindsight, but I thought the Coin Bill would never pass. It wasn't that congressman and senators were against it. Other coin bills had been proposed, all of which were for a wonderful cause. It was a difficult sell to convince a Kansas congressman that a museum in Georgia should be a priority. It embarrasses me that I doubted the resolve of former POWs. I should've known, they don't give up.

When Congressman Ralph Regula spoke at the grand opening of the museum, he quoted John Kennedy in saying, "A failure is but an orphan, while a success has many fathers." Nothing summed up the shared dream of a museum about all POWs in American history like that quote. Despite the setbacks and rejections, the team persevered. At the most important times, everyone pulled together. Each National Park Service area (battlefields, parks, historic sites, etc.) are created for the purpose of serving this and future generations. Although nearly everyone who worked towards that shared goal has now passed away, their visionary dream carries on. Today it is a wonderful thing to visit the park and see the yellow school buses and their unruly cargo. Often a 5th grader will naively ask, "What is a pow?" Some may see this question as an affront to our schools. Park rangers see this question as a teachable moment to instill into a young mind to understand what others have done so we all can enjoy the freedoms of living in the United States of America. That is the greatest result of this beautiful friendship.





Photo Captions:

Photo 1: AXPOW Executive Director Chuck Williams, Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan and National Commander Fran Agnes point to a model of the National Prisoner of War Museum in a meeting in the Secretary's office.

Photo 2: Georgia AXPOW leaders meet with Governor Zell Miller as he signs a proclamation in support of a museum to honor all POWs at Andersonville National Historic Site.

Photo 3: AXPOW leaders (from left to right) Hubie Davis, John Edwards, Fran Agnes and Bill Fornes pose with their "golden shovels" used to break ground for the National POW Museum on April 9, 1992, 50 years after the surrender of Bataan. The symbolic ceremony was headlined by former Attorney General of the United States, Griffin Bell, whose support for the project behind the scene was pivotal to the project.

Photo 4: Vice Admiral and Medal of Honor Recipient, Jim Stockdale poses with his wife Sybil at the 1994 Memorial Day program at Andersonville National Cemetery.

Photo 5: While he was a young Marine Corps officer in Vietnam, Zell Miller was mentored by Bataan Death March survivor George Burlage. They became life-long friends. Burlage accompanied the Governor on a visit to Andersonville in 1996 which further cemented the state's support for a project to build a museum to tell the story of all POWs.

Photo 6: Fred Sanchez is seen in the back row of this group photo of AXPOW members at the 1989 annual convention in Niagara Falls, New York. Attending reunions and conventions by the Andersonville staff was crucial to building a partnership with AXPOW.

Photo 7: Senator John McCain's attendance as the keynote speaker at the grand opening ceremony of the National POW Museum helped draw attention to the event. Here he speaks to some of the 4,000 attendees after the ceremony. Standing behind the Senator is AXPOW National Chaplain John Romine, who provided the invocation for the event.

Photo 8: Often the unsung heroes of the NPS are the maintenance staff who do much of the hard work needed to make the park run smoothly. This photo is of one of those folk working to convert the old carriage house in the park to the POW Museum that operated for nine years before the National POW Museum opened. That project was the venue where AXPOW Guest Hosts volunteered to greet visitors to share their stories.

Photo 9: Alan Marsh (dressed as a Union Soldier) looks on as AXPOW member and Andersonville volunteer Gerry Smith shares his personal story to a group of students.

Photo 10: The US Mint issued the Prisoners of War silver dollar in 1994. Its powerful design evoked the symbolism of the American eagle breaking free from the chains of confinement. The other side of the coin featured the design of the museum, which the Andersonville Committee of AXPOW provided important input to the project's architects.

namPOW news

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With sadness regarding the closing of the AXPOW magazine let me reflect on its important impact. The magazine has been a noble effort in keeping POW issues alive and focused, as well as providing specific advice to those of us who were POWs. Cheryl Cerbone, the editor, has been at the helm for many years and she cites her father's WWII POW experience as the incentive for what she calls her "labor of love." We thank you Cheryl for your dedication and talent over these many years and we wish you smooth sailing in the future.

In this article I want to discuss my personal experience as a POW in Vietnam for over eight years. I was the second pilot to be captured, the first being Everett Alvarez who preceded me by six months. He and I are good friends now, but we never met while in prison. The Vietnamese philosophy was to separate the prisoners, prevent them from communicating, exploit them for

propaganda purposes, and resort to torture when prisoners resisted.

I was shot down near Dong Hoi in February 1965 just as the war was starting to escalate. I was flying an F-8 Crusader off the aircraft carrier Coral Sea, and I soon learned that planes don't fly very well with bullet holes in them. I was at a low altitude and had to eject; by the time my parachute opened I was only thirty-five feet over the ground and I hit really hard. We're trained to try to distribute the shock of landing by performing what is called the "seven-point roll", but time was short and I landed smack on my *bottom* breaking my lower back. Consequently, I'm an inch shorter than God intended me to be. In those days we did not carry hand-held radios, so I concealed myself in bushes as a hoard of soldiers and civilians scoured around shouting "Anglais" (the French word for English man). You probably remember that the French had colonized Vietnam for the preceding hundred years, leaving only after being defeated at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. They all passed me by and I thought I had a chance to escape . . . but a dope-off soldier bringing up the rear spotted me and I was soon staring at the wrong end of an AK-47 rifle.

I was marched to a large auditorium filled with hundreds of very mad people and was put on display amidst a lot of shouting. I was then placed in front of a firing squad. My back was causing a lot of pain, and I had just two thoughts. First was chastising myself for not having bought more life insurance and second, telling myself this ordeal would be simply like going to a

dentist. . . a brief hurt and then it would be over. But thank goodness, the guards didn't pull their triggers. Shortly afterwards I was on my way to Hanoi in a jeep, blind folded, over the bumpiest road you can imagine. The jeep would stop at every small village along the way and I would be forced to walk down the main street while villagers threw stones and sticks at me. After two days of this treatment the jeep pulled into the center of Hanoi, the capital, and deposited me at the large prison known as Hoa Lo which the French had built. It served as the city jail.

I had considered myself as a pretty good fighter pilot, knowledgeable about tactics and technical issues. Boy was I in for a surprise in learning about psychological warfare. Wars are won not just by bombs and bullets but instead by lots of other factors such as economics, politics and psychology. I learned this lesson rather quickly. With my injuries they indicated that I'd be going to a hospital; they got me dressed back in my flight suit and off we went in a blacked out jeep. The jeep stopped a block away from a building which they said was the hospital, and the pathway there was lined with photographers. I hesitated, thinking this may be a propaganda trick, but I ran the gauntlet and entered the building along with the photographers. At a wooden table sat a guy with a stethoscope alongside a female in a white frock who spoke English. The doctor made a grand show of listening to my heart and smiling for the press, and the nurse stated "the doctor says you will be feeling better in a few days". That was it . . . not even an aspirin. That was my

namPOW, cont'd...

first lesson in learning how propaganda works.

I was housed in a room, not really a cell. Several times a day I'd be summoned before a group of three officers for what we called a "quiz". I gave them only the allowed information, the big 4 (name, rank, serial number, and date of birth). For days they wanted to know more about me and my family, specifically how many chickens my father owned. Yes, really! Chickens. To them that signified wealth in that rather impoverished and backward country. After three days of pursuing this question, I didn't see any harm in telling them he owned thirty-five chickens (a bold-faced lie). But then I realized that was a big mistake, for I had crossed the line. I resolved then that if they wanted anything more, they would have to force it out of me. And eventually, they did.

My wooden cell door had a worm hole through it, and by getting down close to it I could see a bit of the courtyard. Every day a guard would open the door and escort me to a tattered outhouse to dump my toilet bucket. After three months in solitary confinement I imagine my surprise to discover another American follow my trip to the "john". I took a chance, made a note on toilet paper and dropped it near the drain. The note read "welcome to the Hanoi Hilton; if you get this note scratch your ass on the way back". Sure enough, he did scratch, and that's how the place got renamed the Hanoi Hilton. Ron Storz, the scratcher, was a tough Air Force captain; sadly, he died several years later as one of the Alcatraz Eleven.

Several months into my incarceration the prison became crowded with Vietnamese criminals. Soon they moved three other guys into my cell, and it was wonderful to be with other Americans. Being the senior guy, I suggested that we invent ways we might communicate if we were separated again. One of them, Smitty Harris, came up with an ingenious scheme we called the tap code. By arranging the alphabet into a square with five rows and five columns (omitting the letter "k"), we would tap on the concrete walls and send messages. For

example, the letter "D" (which is in the first row and the fourth column) would be sent by one tap, short pause, then four taps. This code caught on and eventually became our life line for the next eight years.

There were eventually 591 POWs incarcerated there. We had some talented and courageous senior officers who were inspirational in their leadership qualities. They paid a heavy price for their role. In 1967 the Vietnamese singled out eleven of them and gave them special treatment... especially bad treatment. They were put into solitary confinement in small 4' by 9' concrete cells without any view of the outside. Their ankles were bolted together for sixteen hours a day, and each cell was equipped with a ceiling loud speaker which broadcast propaganda four hours or so each day. Jim Stockdale was the senior guy followed by Jeremiah Denton (both Admirals later on, and both politicians). Sam Johnson (former Thunderbird pilot) lived next to me and wanted to learn to speak French. For two and a half years I would tap through the wall five French words a day. I never got farther away from him than ten feet, but I never saw him. You can imagine my surprise when we finally were moved to a larger cell block and I got to meet Sam...who I soon learned could speak better French I could. Never have figured that out!

Food was pretty limited and monotonous consisting of cabbage soup for a period of six months. We knew it wasn't very nutritious because when we'd try to stand up after sitting down our vision would grey out. Imagine my surprise one day in middle of an air attack to hear an American voice shout out, as if to the attacking aircraft, "bomb the cabbage patches".

So, what did we do to pass the time? You'd be surprised at the various talents within a group of guys. They tapped poems, mathematical equations, scientific facts, movies, historical information, Spanish, French, and all sorts of knowledge. Anything to keep our minds active.

In 1968 the U. S. government conducted a rescue attempt at a camp named Son Tay. It almost worked, but the Vietnamese had moved the POW's located there just a few weeks before. Nonetheless, this raid caused our captors to remove us from solitary confinement

namPOW, cont'd...

weeks before. Nonetheless, this raid caused our captors to remove us from solitary confinement and put us into rooms holding about sixty or so POW's. This allowed us to structure our military organization which we called the Fourth Allied POW Wing. Another factor prompting this move was the death of the Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh. Thankfully the torture stopped after he died.

What did we learn as a result of eight years of captivity? We learned a lot about ourselves, our strengths and our weaknesses. We learned that the toughest critic we faced was our own conscience. I wanted to eventually return home with my head held high, knowing that I had done my very best to represent the finest nation ever created, to conduct myself so that the Navy and my family would be proud of my behavior as a POW. I learned that no man stands alone, and that human contact is so very important. I learned that the human mind has a vast capacity and can hold scads

of memory that can sustain you in adversity. And I learned that humor has its place even in drastic circumstances.

So how did it end? Henry Kissinger was our chief negotiator at the Paris peace talks. They argued for several years about whether the negotiating table should be round, square, oval, or whatever. Finally, after heavy bombing of Hanoi by B-52's, we got the word that we'd be released shortly in three groups. As we walked up the ramp of the rescue C-141 that had come to retrieve us, my first realization of freedom was the smell of the nurses' perfume. I knew then that I was headed home. After a short stay at a hospital in Manila, we were flown back to the United States. During our absence the young women's clothing style was "mini skirts" and my wife met me so attired. Our nearly nine-year old son broke away from his mom and ran into my arms. Seems like only yesterday, but he recently turned sixty and now practices medicine as a neurosurgeon. I returned to school and earned a doctorate degree in electrical engineering which helped me manage several

important "smart" missile programs.

Most other POWs have generally fared well in their careers. Admiral Stockdale ran for Vice President, Admiral Jeremiah Denton became a Senator from Alabama, Colonel Sam Johnson from Texas became a U.S. Representative for twenty-seven years. Douglas "Pete" Peterson was elected to Congress from Florida, then after four terms, appointed the first U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam. Joe Kernan became governor of Indiana. John McCain is possibly the best known for service to country – as a long-serving US Senator and two-time Presidential candidate. Others became doctors, lawyers, ministers, ambassadors, etc., distinguishing themselves and America on local levels and individual fields.

Life can be a struggle with multiple challenges. You don't have to become a POW to realize this fact. But as our POW experience taught us, it is you, and only you, who is the master of your fate. Stand tall, be proud of your behavior, learn to communicate, be kind to others, and simply appreciate the honor of being an American citizen.



pow/mia

Mary Schantag,
Chairman
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20,440 days and counting

"There were no shovels in the ground over the past year to search for the body of Maj. San D. Francisco, a Kennewick High graduate, who was shot down over Vietnam.

On Veterans Day, his family will have been waiting for news that he is coming home for 20,440 days."

According to an article in the Tri-City Herald By Annette Cary, the burial site was identified 20 years ago. Two site searches found no remains, and a 3rd site was identified after new local interviews. Then COVID hit.

Excavations finally resumed Vietnam this year - but not for the F-4 co-pilot San D. Francisco. The pilot survived, but resisted capture, and was killed. Francisco had 2 broken legs and shrapnel wounds. He died shortly thereafter.

DPAA stated in 2020 evidence of the new site was "credible."

Family is asking "Tri-Cities residents, plus residents of Burbank, Wash., where her brother grew up, and those who went to school at Central Washington University as her brother did, to contact Sens.

Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, both D-Wash., to ask that another excavation to look for Francisco be scheduled."

Flashback – 2006:

"On Nov 18th. Chris called out to me to hurry to the bedroom. It looked like they were excavating my dad's site. Low and behold yep they were doing the proposed area in questioned. The one I have been so hard to fight for. And finally got a date at the last League meetings in June for schedule for Spring 2007.

Not one word to any one of the three families involved in the case the ... clip showed on NBC nightly news.

The day was a Sat. and of course I was not going to find any one until Monday. When I called the USAF, they were as clueless as I was. But informed me I would get my answers by the afternoon.

The short of it, from the Government in high places. Being that no names were used, all polices were followed. And an "We're sorry".

... By midweek I had also contacted NBC through email and they kindly contacted me, with such kindness and apologies I was truly taken aback.

They became very interested in the daughter side of the story and sent a crew from Atlanta to do a follow up to the first piece."

"... I hope it will give in the spirit for all the families as well as for my family and the other 2 families involved in our unique case of our fathers how we felt when we saw the excavation on National TV first."

His daughter Diane has stood at his grave. She has GPS coordinates, pictures, local commentary.

It's now been 21,561 days for Chief Master Sgt Thomas Moore's family.

DPAA states, "Based on all information available, DPAA assessed the individual's case to be in the analytical category of Active Pursuit."

2024

Still trying for JUST military records! 22,887 days since he was declared dead – no remains were recovered at sea.

"Thank you for contacting the National Personnel Record Center. A search of our registry using the Name and Social Security number provided was negative. We also searched for an electronic record maintained by the Military Service Department and no matching record was found. We regret that we cannot assist you. If the information you provide is incorrect... you can submit a new request with the current information..."

The request included name, DoB, SERVICE NUMBER from last orders, date of loss.

The family still waits.

This search starts March 2024 – for a KIA/BNR record. The request included name, SSN, DoB, Date of casualty.

To shorten the story – Request was sent to National Personnel Records Center. They state the record was loaned out to Army Human Resources Command and not returned.

HRC replies in April that they have no file. "If you have additional identifying informa

pow/mia cont'd...

tion".... We will conduct another search for responsive records."

Refiling the request with NPRC, an August reply states they have referred it to HRC AGAIN.

With a complaint filed at NPRC, the reply stated "...unfortunately the Research Services staff were not able to find anything of value to assist you in their records. This may be one where we can't find the responsive record. Let me circle back with the staff one more time."

My question back, "There are no files on an MIA that has yet to be recovered !!?"

It's been 19,612 days. The family waits.

A New Year, new hopes for answers.

Those that can help can't seem to do so. DPAA can't even provide a usable website anymore for those of us that need research information. There is no longer a simple updated, printable list of missing for the states – by war, for services or POW/MIA recognition day. Complaints bring silence.

In 2012, news headlines talked about the need to recover remains from Vietnam's acidic soil before any chance to do so was destroyed by Mother Nature.

Naharnet Newsdesk reported "...investigators warn there is little time left before all evidence is lost."

Records are lost.

Families still wait for the lost.



Number of Americans Still Missing and Unaccounted-for

Dec. 13, 2024
TOTAL: 1,574

Alabama	30	Montana	16
Alaska	2	Nebraska	15
Arizona	15	Nevada	6
Arkansas	15	New Hampshire	6
California	160	New Jersey	40
Colorado	24	New Mexico	12
Connecticut	25	New York	101
Delaware	4	N. Carolina	38
DC	8	N. Dakota	9
Florida	55	Ohio	75
Georgia	28	Oklahoma	30
Hawaii	7	Oregon	35
Idaho	8	Pennsylvania	89
Illinois	65	Rhode Island	7
Indiana	51	S. Carolina	27
Iowa	25	S. Dakota	7
Kansas	24	Tennessee	26
Kentucky	14	Texas	99
Louisiana	24	Utah	33
Maine	11	Vermont	5
Maryland	23	Virginia	45
Massachusetts	39	Washington	36
Michigan	48	W. Virginia	17
Minnesota	33	Wisconsin	25
Mississippi	12	Wyoming	4
Missouri	35	Canada	2
		Panama	1
		Philippines	4
		Puerto Rico	1
		Civilian*	7

*These 7 civilians do not have a listed home of record

civilian

The Georgia Peach

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Internee at Santo Tomas Internment Camp
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"Lady, would you move your God damned ass so we can fight a God damned war!!"



*Heroes George Fisher and
Mervyn Herndon and their
steel chariot "The Georgia
Peach*

Those words were yelled at my mother at about 7:30 PM on February 3, 1945 by a tank commander as his tank rumbled into Santo Tomas University which had been converted into an internee camp to house 3,800 captured Americans in the heart of Manila. The liberation had begun on the treads of two tanks that broke through the walls of Santo Tomas in what General MacArthur called a Flying Column. He had ordered this column of tanks to go directly to the camp and liberate the men, women and children (including me) from the Japanese captors.

There was urgency because the Japanese had issued an order to kill all of the internees if things turned bad. We had been imprisoned for over three years since the Japanese Imperial Army captured the Philippines in 1941. The internees had heard the rumors about the possibility of annihilation by our camp guards so there was chaos and pandemonium as the tanks and troops stormed into Santo Tomas.

My Mother had said that that shouted command was delivered by a soldier with a deep Southern accent. And, she said that although she had many beautiful words spoken to her in her lifetime, those were the most beautiful words she ever heard.

Over the years, I researched the history of the liberation of our internment camp. The Army writes a history of its engagements and doing my research, I learned that the names of the first two tanks into Santo Tomas Internment camp were "The Battling Basic" and the second tank

civilian,cont'd..

was called "The Georgia Peach". That corroborated the story that I often heard from my mother about the trooper with the Southern accent.

Fast forward 69 years, two and a half months later to April 2014. I was attending a commemoration at the General Douglas MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia with my oldest son. One of the programs included an elderly 93-year old gentleman, George Fisher, who spoke to our group. It seems that Mr. Fisher (Corporal Fisher in 1945) was a crewman on that very tank, "The Georgia Peach". He was part of the Company "B", 3rd Platoon of the 44th Tank Battalion part of the First Cavalry Division that the General ordered to free the American civilians in Santo Tomas. Mr. Fisher was the "loader" for the tank but he told me the tank commander was Mervyn Herndon who was indeed from Georgia. He said hardly anyone could understand him due to his Deep Southern accent. Tank commander Herndon was the G.I. that yelled those beautiful words of freedom to my mother. Sometimes it takes a long time to complete a circle, but when it does happen, it is worth the wait. I have thanked trooper George Fisher for what his generation did to save the world. I know that most of my colleagues are too young to know what it was like in that World War, but some of us have links to that dreadful epoch in the history of the world.

It was men like George Fisher and Mervyn Herndon (since deceased I have learned) and millions like them that actually saved the world and, of a more personal note, people they didn't even know...people like my family and me. I am forever in their debt.

CPOW

Civilian Ex-Prisoners of War

Sally Meadows

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80th Commemoration of the Liberation of Manila

On 22 February 2025, starting at 4:30pm, the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial will host a significant commemoration to mark the 80th anniversary of the Liberation of Manila. This event honors the valor and sacrifice of U.S. and Filipino service members, civilians, and all those who endured the brutal Battle of Manila during World War II. The commemoration will reflect on the shared history and enduring partnership between the United States and the Philippines, recognizing the profound impact the conflict had on the lives of countless individuals.

The ceremony will feature poignant elements, including an honor guard presentation by the joint U.S. and Philippine military, an honor guard by the 11th Airborne Division, a musical performance by the US Navy's 7th Fleet band, and a symbolic flyover by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, complete with a rose petal drop.

Attendees will also have an opportunity to explore the Manila American Cemetery grounds, where over 17,000 service members are laid to rest, and reflect on their stories of courage and sacrifice. This commemorative event aims not only to honor the past but also to inspire hope and unity for the future, emphasizing Manila's historic role as a "citadel of democracy in the East."

For those with ties to this chapter of history, we invite you to join us in remembering and honoring the lives impacted by the Liberation of Manila.

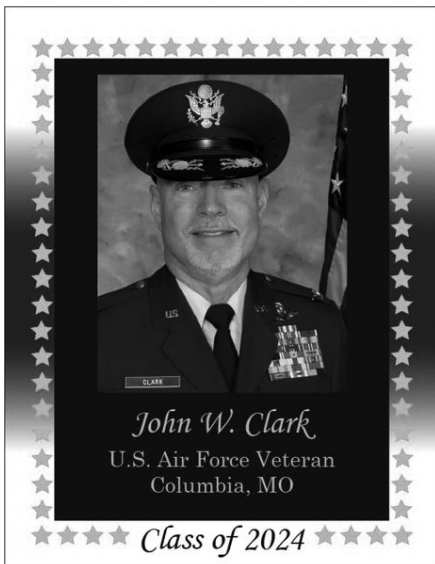
Contact manilaVC@abmc.gov for more information.

Missouri Veterans Hall of Fame Announces 2024 Class

We are proud to announce the Missouri Veterans Hall of Fame 2024 inductees. Inductees require a Missouri connection, honorable military service, and must have contributed exceptionally to the community, the state and/or the nation. Six veterans will be inducted this year, plus one honorary inductee. All exemplify the spirit, character, and commitment of our Missouri Veterans.

John W. Clark, Columbia, Missouri.

John Clark graduated from Air Force ROTC at the University of Missouri and received his Commission after completing a degree in mechanical engineering. He flew C-131 aeromedical evacuation aircraft and RF-4C tactical reconnaissance missions. John was shot down over North Vietnam, was captured and spent six years as a POW in North Vietnam until released in 1973. He has been active in The American Ex-Prisoners of War organization and is an active member Mid-Missouri Chapter of MOAA. John speaks to numerous organizations around the State and country about his experiences.



Caregivers program expansion planned

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced its intent to expand access to its Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) — a program that provides family caregivers of eligible Veterans access to services and supports, including training and education, financial assistance, health care coverage, beneficiary travel, peer support, and more.

Through the proposed rule, VA seeks to expand and clarify access to the program; reassess eligibility less frequently, reducing burden on Veterans and caregivers; and expand access to telehealth home visits in case of emergencies. The new eligibility criteria are more expansive, meaning that thousands more Veterans and their caregivers will be able to access the program.

The proposed changes to the program include:

Expanded eligibility: This proposed rule would expand certain PCAFC eligibility criteria to include a more expansive definition of "serious injury."

Telehealth flexibility: The proposed rule would allow VA to conduct home visits via telehealth during any emergency declared by a federal, state, or local authority involving certain safety or public health risk.

Fewer reassessments: Under the proposed rule, VA would reassess eligibility less frequently, lowering the burden for Veterans and their families.

Delayed discharges: The proposed rule would further delay discharges based on eligibility reassessments for legacy participants, legacy applicants, and their family caregivers for an additional 18 months after the effective date of a final rule.

Clarified eligibility: New criteria would expand and clarify the bases on which a Veteran may be determined in need of personal care services for six continuous months. It would also update criteria for determining primary family caregivers' eligibility to receive the higher stipend level.



Past National Commanders...Our history and our heroes

Virgil McCollum 1948-1949
Kenneth Day 1949-1950
John Walker 1950-1951
Ray O'Day 1951-1952
Robert Geis 1952-1953
William A. Berry 1953-1954
James S. Browning 1954-1955
Roger Bamford 1955-1956
Walter Yosko 1956-1958
Leo J. "Moose" Maselli 1958-1959
Paul Richter 1959-1960
George Coates 1960-1961
Jack Warner 1961-1962
Alex Salinas 1962-1963
Pat Wheat 1963-1964
Ralph Rodriguez 1964-1965
Rufus W. Smith 1965-1966
Calvin Graef 1966-1967
DC "Bull" Massey 1967-1968
Chuck Towne 1968-1969
John Lay 1969-1970
Grady Inzer 1970-1971
Juan Baldanado 1971-1972
Harold Page 1972-1973
Walter Pawlesh 1973-1974
DC Wimberly 1974-1975
Joseph Perry 1975-1976
Melvin Madero 1976-1977
Joe Schisser 1977-1978
Joe Upton 1978-1979
Herman Molen 1979-1980
Stanley Sommers 1980-1981
Charles Morgan 1981-1982
Charles Miller 1982-1983
C. Earl Derrington, Jr. 1983-1984

Alfred "Joe" Galloway 1984-1985
Orlo Natvig 1985-1986
William Curtis Musten 1986-1987
Albert Bland 1987-1988
Milton Moore, Sr. 1988-1989
John Edwards 1989-1990
Francis W. Agnes 1990-1991
John Krejci 1991-1992
Charles Minietta 1992-1993
William E. Bearisto 1993-1994
Charles Prigmore 1994-1995
Lawrence S. Moses 1995-1996
Wm. "Sonny" Mottern 1996-1997
Wayne Hitchcock 1997-1998
Richard Throckmorton 1998-1999
Zack Roberts 1999-2000
William "Bill" Schmidt 2000-2001
John W. Klumpp 2001-2002
Maurice Sharp 2002-2003
F. Paul Dallas 2003-2004
James Cooper 2004-2005
Gerald Harvey 2005-2006
Warren King 2007-2008
Jim Clark 2008-2009
Kenny Hanson 2009-2010
Morris Barker 2010-2011
Carroll Bogard 2011-2012
Charles Susino, Jr. 2012-2013
James Lollar 2013-2014
Milton "Skip" Moore 2014-2015
Ed Dement 2015-2016
Charles Susino Jr. 2016-2018
Jack Warner 2018-2019
Bob Certain 2019 - present

Happy 100th Birthday, Bill!

William E. "Bill" Hureaux reached the age of 100 years on November 22, 2024, at a party hosted by Bill and his wife Barbara. He was drafted into the Army on March 22, 1943 in Sacramento, CA. Later, at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, he was placed in Company D, 291st Regiment, 75th Division. Company D was a heavy weapons company made up of 8 heavy water-cooled machine guns and four 81mm mortars. He was trained as a machine gunner and weapons/ammo jeep driver.

After intensive training in the U.S., he was shipped to England as a casualty replacement. Then on July 17th he landed on Omaha Beach just over a month after the D-Day landings in June. He was finally assigned to Company "K" 320th Infantry Regiment, 35th Division, Patton's 3rd United States Army. After fighting all the way across France, his battalion reached the German border on December 12, 1944. On that date he was captured and eventually taken for interrogation. His first POW camp was Camp IIA at Limburg, Germany. Later in December he was transferred to Luckenwald POW Camp IIIA near Berlin. In January 1945 he was transferred to POW Camp 499E at Wundsorf, also near Berlin. Bill was treated humanely by his captors in the various POW camps in which he was held. On March 15th an errant American B-17 dropped a bomb about 30 steps from the POW camp fence where Bill and other POWs had hit the ground. The explosion left the men deaf with loud ringing in the ears.

By April the Russians were getting close, and the POWs were marched west for five days with little food. On April 25th they arrived at POW Camp XIA near the American lines. On May 3rd the camp was liberated and the POWs were driven into friendly lines for food, baths, new uniforms and more food. Eventually Bill made it to England and visited with his sister who had married an RAF flyer. Bill was discharged on November 2nd, 1945, in California. He was offered a job and was married on December 2, 1945. The bomb that was dropped near him in the German POW camp had destroyed a portion of his inner ear. He lost his hearing completely in 2001 and had a cochlear implant.

Bill was married to his first wife Carol for 67 years, and they had three children. Carol predeceased Bill. He and his current wife Barbara live in Carmichael, CA and have enjoyed life together for ten years including extensive travel. Bill is a member of the Greatest Generation who risked his life in war, and was severely wounded while preserving freedom. After the war he worked in various employments including 18 years as a general manager in a Ford service department, then for years as a warehouse manager on the Alaska pipeline. He retired in 1990 and is a member of the American Ex-Prisoners of War (AXPOW), Disabled American Veterans, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In many instances Bill's restaurant meals are paid for by customers when they recognize he was a WW II veteran and former POW.



Happy 100th Birthday, PNC Morris Barker!



His story: I went into the service in March 1943 at the age of 18. I went through basic in the artillery and was shipped to Camp Buckner, North Carolina, with the 270th Field Artillery Battalion, Battery C, 2nd Army. In December 1943, they came out with a program. They needed aviation cadets, so I went into Durham and took a physical and a written test and was accepted into the aviation cadet program. After orientation I was sent to Harlingen, TX for gunnery school. After a lot of different states and training, I was assigned to the 15th AF, 451st Bomb Group, 726th Squadron, stationed near Foggia, Italy. There were still enemy in northern Italy then, so we were bombing northern Italy and into Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Germany. I flew 7 missions.

We were shot down on my 7th mission, on our way to Vienna, Austria to bomb the German oil refinery there. The Germans came in trucks and picked us up. After about a week, we were put on a troop train, and ended up in Stalag Luft 4. Around the 1st of September, we were in camp and we heard artillery fire in the distance. Later we found out the Russians were moving in from the east.

The Germans didn't want us liberated, so on February the 6th, 1945, they started moving us west. We were divided up into groups, about 30 or 40 people in each group with guards. They had long machine guns and they had guard belts

so we would march down the middle of the road and they would be on the outside. This is actually the coldest weather in history in northern Germany, and so we would walk every day, and sleep on the ground or in barns at night. We had a blanket apiece, and we'd put on blanket down and cover another, which didn't help much but it helped a little. In the morning the blanket would be frozen on the ground and you would have to peel it off.

We were on this march 86 days, and I guess total miles were about 500 because we marched from northern Germany west up to Swinemunde and then on down to Lurenburg down to southwest of Berlin. At one time during these 86 days, they put us on boxcars and took us to another camp - Stalag 11B. It had all nationalities - Allied prisoners - Russian, Polish, or English, and so forth. Then they put us on small boxcars and moved us again.

I never did lose hope. I have a daughter living in Waco. My wife and I had lived in Odessa for 50 years, then we moved close to her. I was chapter commander and state commander, National Director, Jr. Vice Commander, Senior Vice Commander, and National Commander. I've stayed involved with veterans through the years.



Happy 103rd Birthday, Lloyd!

From the CCC in Texas to the Army Air Corp...POW in Stalags 6 and 4 and the cold winter march across Germany, Lloyd Gabriel has stories.

He is still telling them.



Gabriel was born Dec. 2, 1921, in Texas and was just 20 when Japanese forces attacked the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor, forcing the United States into World War II. As a Texan, Gabriel said there was no question that he was going to join the war effort.

On Jan. 8, 1942, he left Groesbeck, Texas, hitchhiking to Dallas, where he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He did his basic training at Camp Walters in Texas. He was sent to gunnery school, where he demonstrated proficiency as a ball-turret gunner for a B-17 Flying Fortress.

By October 1943, he was in England, having sailed over on the Queen Mary, and was assigned as a replacement crew in the 351st Bomb Group. He flew on 11 missions over France and Germany. His luck ran out on his 12th mission, on Jan. 30, 1944. His plane was hit by anti-aircraft artillery over Brunswick, Germany, and the plane began limping home on three engines. But over Holland a second engine caught fire, and the crew couldn't put it out, or "feather" the propeller to stop its spinning, which destabilized the plane. After landing, Dutch civilians pointed the way to the woods, and he got a mile before he was captured by the Germans.

He was first sent to a prison camp in Germany and then transferred to one that is in what is now Poland. On Jan. 31, 1945, as Soviet forces advanced on the area, Lloyd was among 6,000 prisoners the Germans "evacuated" from the camp before the Red Army could liberate it.

For the next 92 days, Lloyd and the other prisoners were forced to march 600 miles back to Germany, subsisting on three golf-ball-sized potatoes and two slices of black bread that had been partly made with wood fiber.

They made it to Halle, Germany, where they were liberated May 2, 1945, six days before fighting officially ended in Europe. Lloyd had survived, but his weight had dropped from 158 to 92 pounds.

He was transferred to a camp — named Lucky Strike after the popular cigarette brand — in France to recuperate, but he got permission to go to England and visit his old base and look up a pilot he knew. Then he headed back to the United States, and with 30 days furlough, went back to Texas and saw his family again.

He was called back into the service in the Korean War, as a gunnery and mountain survival trainer. After the service, he taught in Hawaii and White Salmon. He later joined the education faculty at Central Washington University, retiring after 20 years.

Lloyd was commander of the Tri-Cities chapter, AXPOW



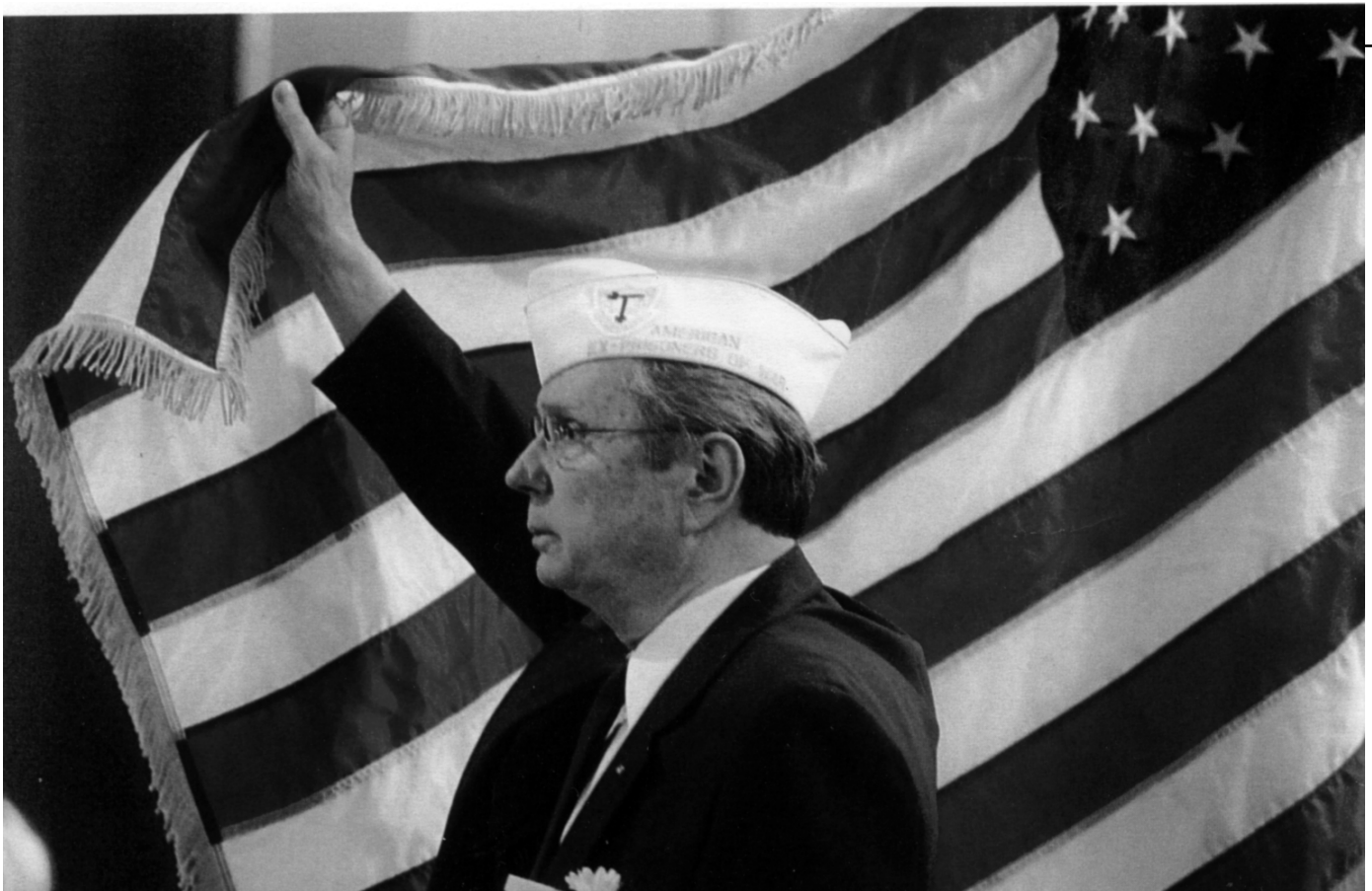
Susan J Allen
St Petersburg FL
Granddaughter of William M Allen, Korea

Maryann (Wojtas) Potts
Harvest AL
Daughter of Victor S Wojtas, ETO

new members

Amanda Allen
Tampa FL
Granddaughter of William M Allen, Korea

Welcome



PNC John Edwards at National Convention 2004



Contributions

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GENERAL FUND

John F Olsen

In memory of POW/MIA Fallen Heroes, by Air Force Sergeants Assoc, Chapter 1372, Beale AFB

In memory of Clydie Morgan, by Brenda Bateman

In memory of Clydie Morgan, by JoAnn Ratliff

In memory of Clydie Morgan, by Rebecca Morgan

In memory of Clydie Morgan, by Larry & Mary Brown

In memory of J.B. White, by Linda Puckett

In memory of Victor S Wojtas, by Maryann Wojtas Potts

In memory of William M Allen, by Susan J Allen

In memory of William M Allen, by Amanda J Allen

VOLUNTARY FUNDING

John Mock, Winfield KS

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.

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

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

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

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



Cheryl Cerbone, 23 Cove View Drive, South Yarmouth, MA 02664



CLYDIE JOANNE MORGAN
April 23, 1950-October 3, 2024

Clydie arrived in Heaven on wings and immediately made her presence felt. It was much like when she arrived at birth – loud and proud, independent and irrepressible. She joins her Daddy, Bill Morgan, her brother Billy Morgan, brothers-in law Alan Lyon and Mike Coke.

She never let anything stop her...Born in Lebanon, Missouri, Clydie contracted polio at age 2. She spent time in the Shriners Hospital in her toddler and young teen years. Her polio never left her. She struggled with it the last 25 years. It finally took a toll on her body. A child and young adult in Kansas City, MO, and as an adult in New Orleans, and Arlington, TX, she grabbed life with a smile (and sometimes an argument).

After a career with the Federal Reserve in Dallas, she came home to Arlington and worked

with her mother, Sally, and sister, Marsha, at the American Ex-Prisoners of War. She was first elected to office in the early 1980s as National Adjutant – a position she held until job titles were changed and she became Chief Operating Officer some 35 years later. That job was a labor of love for her and she applied the same dedication to it that she did everything. She oversaw the organization grow and garner the respect of Congress and educated dozens of National Commanders and board directors and officers. She walked the halls of Congress each year advocating for benefits for veterans, danced at Presidential Inaugural balls and shook the hand of President Clinton at a White House breakfast.



She, and her best friend Cheryl spent many “after Thanksgiving” weekends in New Orleans. In fact, together they celebrated in the streets of New Orleans when her beloved Saints first won their Super Bowl. Even though the game was in Florida, it was tail-

gate parties all over the French Quarter!

Clydie was a wonderfully caring daughter, sister, aunt, great-aunt and friend. Her capacity for loving and being loved was unbounded.

Those of us left to grieve her know she is in a place of grace. It doesn't make it easier to live without her, but it is a comfort to know.



She leaves her mother, Sally Morgan; her sisters Debbie Lyon and Marsha Coke; nieces and nephews Erich Lyon, Teresa Hutchison, Wesley Coke (Jodi), Elizabeth Peralez (Albert), Genafur Hillman (Jeff), Billy Morgan (Mika) and James Dean Morgan; great- and great great-nieces and nephews; aunts Mildred Climer, Donna Roper, Kathryn Morgan and Micky Shatkin; cousins, her best friend, Cheryl Cerbone, and so many, many other friends who think of her as the sister of their hearts.

She will be missed...and always loved.



taps, cont'd...

CAMPBELL, Donald D. of Scottsdale, AZ died July 9, 2024. He was 93. He enlisted in the Army in 1948 and was stationed in Japan in 1949. When the Korean War broke out, he was shipped to Korea and assigned to the 1st Cavalry, 8th Reg. where he was captured. Don was a life member of AXPOW and the Korean War POW Association. He was an honored guest at the unveiling of the Korean War Memorial in Washington, DC. Survivors include 2 daughters, 1 sister, and a number of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

CAROLAND, Thomas M., age 93, passed away September 16, 2024. He was captured while serving in the Army, spent 33 months in captivity before being released. Tom was past Commander of the Middle TN Chapter of the American Ex Prisoners of War. He was a kind, humble, and generous man who loved the Lord, his family, and his country. He was preceded in death by beloved wife, Carolyn (Shepherd). He is survived by 2 sons, 1 grandson, 1 great-granddaughter, as well as numerous cousins, nieces & nephews. He will be greatly missed by all those that loved him until we meet again.

CARUSO, William R. "Bill", 96, of Morristown, NJ passed away January 16, 2018. Bill was a US Army Veteran and P.O.W, serving during WWII and the Korean Conflict. He volunteered for many veteran associations, including at the Lyons V.A Hospital for 25 years. Beloved husband of 67 years to Anne Caruso. Devoted father of William "Bill" Caruso and his wife Maureen. Loving grandfather of Bill Caruso. He is also survived by his sister Camille.

POWELL, Ruth Ann Murphy, passed away November 15, 2024. She was the widow of Korean War Ex-POW, John. A retired social worker, she worked for 20 years at the Edith Nourse Rogers VA Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts where she also served as the POW Coordinator. For many years she served as MedSearch Coordinator for AXPOW and was on the board for the Korean War Veterans Association. She attended the national conventions with her Magnolia Chapter "girls" and always had a kind word for everyone. Ruth leaves 3 sons, 8 grandchildren, 7 great-grandchildren and 7 great-great-grandchildren, 1 sister, two brothers and a host of friends.



AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION

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