



Roger That!

The Official Publication of Rolling Thunder®, Illinois Ch 2

Volume 23, Issue 1



OUR MISSION: The major function of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. is to publicize the POW-MIA issue: To educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars and to help correct the past and to protect future Veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners of War-Missing In Action. We are also committed to helping American Veterans from all wars.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. is a non-profit organization and everyone donates his or her time because they believe in the

DPAA Updates

Remaining Numbers to Date

27 December, 2022

WWII
72,261

Korean War
7,518

Vietnam War
1,581

Cold War
126

Gulf Wars
6

41,000 of these missing are presumed lost at sea due to ship losses or aircraft water losses.

This information is updated every Friday on the DPAA website. Check DPAA.Mil for the most current data.



Upcoming Events

JANUARY
1 NEW YEAR'S DAY
16 MARTIN LUTHER KING'S BIRTHDAY

FEBRUARY
1 Chinese New Year
2 Groundhog Day
3 Four Chaplains day
4 USO Birthday
12-18 National Salute to Veteran Patients
14 Valentine's Day
19 Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
20 President's Day

MARCH
3 Navy Reserve Birthday
4 Hug a GI Day
5 Seabee Birthday
13 K-9 Veterans Day
15 American Legion Birthday
17 St. Patrick's Day
21 Rosie the Riveter Day
25 Medal of Honor Day
29 National Vietnam War Veteran's Day

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WE WILL NEVER FORGET

JANUARY, 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You Never Know Where our Mission will take Us!!



So many experiences that comes from being ready! This past Veterans Day is a good example. As our Chapter was preparing for our annual "Stand To" ceremonies on Saturday, November 12th at Woodstock Harley-Davidson, I was asked by a Franciscan priest and Vietnam veteran, Fr. Ed McKinsey, if Rolling Thunder would attend his Veteran's Day Mass and reception on Friday, November 11th at St. Peter's in the Loop! For those who do not know what the Loop is, it's the business area in downtown Chicago that the elevated L train makes a loop around.



Fr. Ed was aware that I was a member of Rolling Thunder, but vaguely knew who we are or what is our mission. I told him our group is based in the far northern suburbs and it would be difficult for our members to attend especially during the week, but how can you say no to a priest! I told him I would attend. Fr. Ed was just trying to get vendors to participate at the reception after mass who could help the veterans in need. Some of the vendors present were the Road Home Program sponsored by Rush Hospital/Warrior Care Network, Veterans Retreat Coming Home sponsored by Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of

Chicago and a group dealing with Veteran Suicide.



Not coming under the category of a veteran's help organization, I still setup our tri-fold panel board telling the stories of the POW/MIA servicemen that Rolling Thunder had repatriated. Every person that I spoke to was unaware of our group and its mission and the fact that there are over 81,000 Americans remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars/other conflicts. They recognize the black POW/MIA flag but not so much as to who Rolling Thunder is. By just being there to tell our story, it accomplished our mission of educating the public on the POW/MIA issue.

The same can be said of our recent mission on 17 December 2022 of laying wreaths on the headstones at the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois. A group of our members organized by John Cummings attended this moving ceremony of paying respect to those fallen heroes by placing a wreath at their headstone during this holiday season. Especially moving was the placing a wreath at the headstone of USMC CPL Ryan Cummings, son of John Cummings. (For Pictures, See page 10) Again, just by our presence the public would ask the question who we are and what is our mission.

There is a lot of work to be done by all our members to publicize the POW-MIA issue, no matter where our mission will take us, even in Chicago, Illinois or St. Peter's in the Loop or Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, Illinois.

Remember, we will never forget!



Whenever we
Gather,
We will
Honor
and
Remember
Gratefully!



V.P.'s Vision

By: Andy Haszlakiewicz



Hello all! A big update for this quarter: The Thunder Run Raffle committee has been getting things ready for the 2023 event and decided on all cash prizes to be raffled off for Thunder Run 2023. Hopefully this will allow us to sell to a wider group of supporters! Those prizes will be 1st prize: \$2,000; 2nd prize: \$1,000; 3rd prize: \$500 and 4th prize: \$250 Gas Card. The raffle ticket design and printing should be completed before the end of January. I will also be working on the "Save the Date" flyers and business cards to be ready for our February function.



Even though I will be utilizing the same person for our graphics as last year, (see the design from 2022 on the left) I will gladly consider ideas from the membership for Thunder Run T-shirt design.



Everyone, Have a Great and Safe new year!

New Year's Resolutions.... Things to think about for 2023!

Thoughts submitted by: Mary Kirkpatrick

Thinking about how to make 2023 a year to remember? Here are some ideas for you to consider:

- ♦ *As we plan our Rolling Thunder 2023 events, picture yourself in action and get involved in the things that are planned.*
- ♦ *Plan an event that you know would honor our Mission... Bring it to the board.*
 - ♦ *Find a senior Veteran's facility that could use extra hands!*
 - ♦ *Identify a city, school or other facility that could use an Honor Chair!*
 - ♦ *Plan a gathering for our Chapter to celebrate our great energy!*
 - ♦ *Find a ride destination that will build our resolve to continue our Mission!*
- ♦ *Talk to your family about the importance of remembering our **POW/MJA** Heroes!*

*As we move into 2023... Let's build that energy that motivated those that we Honor!
A Happy and Invigorated New Year to YOU!*

Chairman of the Board Wayne “Traveler” Kirkpatrick



I suppose that there are words to describe most things in life but it becomes more difficult to describe things that are so overwhelmingly awesome that you have to experience them to understand them. Such is the case with Chapter 2-IL, Rolling Thunder at the end of every year.

With all of our accomplishments in 2022, it's easy to lose focus on our mission and veer off into fund raising, Veteran programs, VA hospital assistance, etc. While these are important issues, we need to keep our crosshairs on our core mission....the National POW/MIA issue.

The mission of Rolling Thunder, Inc is simple...to educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars, to help correct the past and to protect future Veterans from being left behind should they become Prisoners of War-Missing In Action. Our efforts should epitomize the National POW/MIA motto "You are Not Forgotten".

Each of us contributes to mission success with our time, our effort, our ideas, and our enthusiasm but, we get paid for all of our effort....right? Sure we do.

Our payday is just a little bit different from the traditional payday and, it's tax free!

You see, our paydays include the many words of appreciation we receive from those who we help and work with.

Our payday includes the images of the citizens and students standing along our route and honoring our

flag as a funeral procession, a parade, or a memorial that we are escorting passes by.



It is realized in that elderly man who struggles to stand up from his wheelchair to salute the flag as we pass by. It is that grey - haired grandmother at the cemetery who comes over to thank us for attending her brother's funeral.

It's that police chief who tells us that he would be proud to work with Rolling Thunder anywhere, anytime. It is that Army Master Sergeant who is the Casualty Assistance Officer who thanks us for adding dignity and honor to a repatriation.

It is that Boy Scout who proudly stands next to his high school classmates and salutes the hearse, regardless of the popularity of America's Scouting Program. It's the pride we feel when we conduct our Remembrance Table Ceremony.



And our year - end bonus is always that MIA's next - of - kin who thanks us, with teary eyes, for honoring their loved one. It's paydays like this that make us rich.

Yet at the end of the year, as you reflect on your personal contributions to the success of our Chapter, ask yourself if you did enough to earn your "Pay Check" and, more

importantly, what you can do this year to earn a raise.....

**HAVE
YOU
DONE
ENOUGH?**



Who was Uncle Sam?

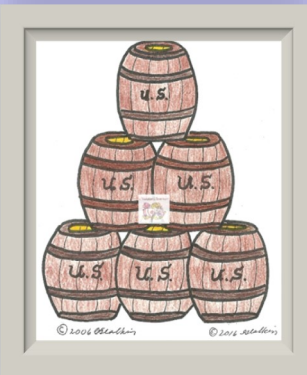
By Traveler



It is generally accepted that Uncle Sam was Samuel Wilson, a government meat inspector during the War of 1812 who stamped "U.S." on containers of meat

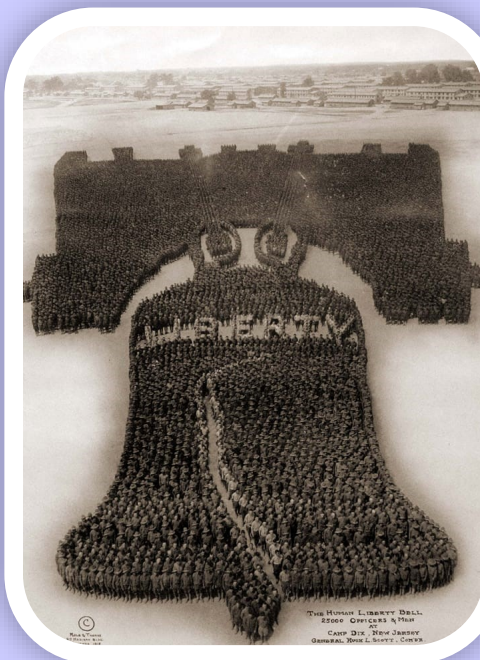
that met his approval.

The story goes that this was intended to stand for "United States," but workers perpetuated the myth that it stood for "Uncle Sam."



The Living Liberty Bell Formed by 25,000 Soldiers, 1918

Submitted By Mary Kirkpatrick



These are the Bell's Dimensions in feet: Length of beat at top: 368. Width of Bell at Bottom: 64. Length of each bolt, 395. Width of Beam top to bottom: 435. Total length top to bottom: 580. Due to effecting and perspective, there are more

than 11 time as many men in the beam as in the bell itself.



Veteran Writes a Book to Cope with PTSD.

By Caitlin Burchett,
27 December, 2022, Military.com

An Iraq War veteran scarred by invisible wounds has found a unique way to cope with his anxiety and post-traumatic stress: writing children's books that feature his beloved dogs.

Larry Wexler, a Virginia Beach native and former Army colonel, recently published "Forest of Dreams," a children's book inspired by his desire to escape the anxieties of deployment he still carries with him. The book tells the story of a young boy who is led on a journey through a magical forest by his two cockapoos, Max and Maggie, who are based on Wexler's real life pups.

"It was about escapism... Some people do horseback riding. For me, it is Max and Maggie and writing children's books," Wexler said as Max, one of his 3-year-old red cockapoos leapt into his lap.

While Wexler had not written a book before, he said he always enjoyed writing when he was growing up, even recalling winning an eighth-grade writing competition. Before starting "Forest of Dreams," he considered penning an autobiography or a memoir of his time in the Army, but he said he was most drawn to literature meant for children. "I chose children's stories because children are innocent. They don't have the baggage of adults," Wexler said. "The entire world is open to them. They can dream about anything and in many cases make it come true."

Wexler joined the Army in 1978, serving as active duty until 1989 before he left active duty for the Army Reserves. But it wasn't until his deployment to Balad, Iraq in 2009 that he began experiencing severe anxiety. His first night in the unfamiliar Middle Eastern combat zone was spent alone in his housing unit with no ammunition as "incoming, incoming" warnings blared.

Wexler self-referred to the combat stress clinic for treatment of what he suspected was post-traumatic stress disorder after the command shared tips on how to identify PTSD. "I thought, yes I am probably yelling at people that I shouldn't, not being able to really sleep well at night because I am watching the door," Wexler said.

A psychiatrist said Wexler had an "adjustment disorder," and prescribed him medications and set up regular counseling sessions. According to the Defense Health Agency, adjustment disorder symptoms arise in response to an identifiable stressor that occurred sometime within the prior three months -- this can include a new job, the end of a relationship, loss of a loved one.



MEDAL OF HONOR MONDAY

Highlighting recipients of the nation's highest medal for valor

Submitted By: Wayne 'Traveler' Kirkpatrick

When one of the most vicious battles of the Korean War broke out, Marine Corps Pvt. Hector A. Cafferata Jr. almost single-handedly kept enemy forces from pushing through a line that, if broken, would have left thousands of U.S. troops stranded. For his never-ending courage through that ordeal, he earned the Medal of Honor.



Cafferata was born on Nov. 4, 1929, in New York City. His father, Hector Sr., was a Peruvian immigrant who ran a paper mill. The family eventually moved to the area of Montville, New Jersey, where his mother, Helen, grew up. Cafferata had two brothers, Godfrey and William.

Those who knew Cafferata when he was young said he was always looking out for others. He liked chess and loved to hunt — even do-

ing so on his way to school sometimes, according to the Daily Record newspaper out of Morristown, New Jersey.

After graduating from Boonton High School, Cafferata played semi-pro football while also working at a manufacturing plant for the Sun Dial Corporation. He joined the Marine Corps Reserve on Feb. 15,

1948, and served with a local unit until he was called to active duty on Sept. 6, 1950. Cafferata was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. By mid-October, he was on his way to Korea.



Once Cafferata arrived in the newly war-torn country, his unit was ordered to march 75 miles from the Sea of Japan up the frozen peninsula to the Chosin Reservoir to push North Korean forces over the border into China.

This mission led to the storied Battle of Chosin Reservoir. Starting in late November and lasting for about 17 days, the battle was one of the most brutal of the war. About 30,000 troops from the United Nations, many of whom were U.S. Marines and soldiers, were ambushed and surrounded by about 120,000 Chinese fighters. They were forced to beat the enemy back and escape despite the rugged terrain and subzero temperatures.

During this crisis, Cafferata was one of about 220 Marines in Company F who were tasked with holding a three-mile mountain pass called Fox Hill, which overlooked the Tok-tong Pass. The route was vital for about 11,000 trapped Marines and soldiers to break free from the enemy that surrounded them.

In the early hours of Nov. 28, 1950, Cafferata snapped awake to the sounds of about 1,400 Chinese troops ambushing his company on the hill. Very quickly, all the other members of his fire team were killed or seriously wounded, except for him and fellow Pvt. Kenneth Benson.

Cafferata knew that if the enemy took the hill, it would create a gap in the line that the trapped UN troops were using to escape. So, without stopping to put his shoes on — despite ankle-deep snow — he got to work defending the hill. For about five hours, he fought the enemy using grenades and his rifle, with Benson feeding him ammunition.

Despite being targeted by the enemy, Cafferata moved up and down the line delivering accurate and effective fire.

He killed several enemy fighters, wounded many more and forced others to withdraw until reinforcements could consolidate the enemy position.



When an enemy grenade landed in a shallow entrenchment that was sheltering wounded Marines, Cafferata evaded heavy gunfire to grab it and toss it away. The device exploded as it was leaving his grasp, severing part of a finger and seriously wounding his right hand and arm. Ignoring the intense pain, though, Cafferata fought on until a sniper's bullet struck him and forced him to evacuate to a first-aid tent.

(Continued on pg 7)



Medal of Honor, Continued

By the end of the fight on the hill, only 82 Marines from Cafferata's unit were left standing, Army records showed. However, Cafferata was credited with saving many more men from dying. He was also considered an essential part of his unit's ability to keep the path open for the other thousands of trapped Marines to escape.



According to his Washington Post obituary, field medics who first treated Cafferata saw that his feet were blue from frostbite

since he'd fought for hours without boots or a coat. He was flown back to the U.S. and spent about a year and a half in hospitals recovering from his injuries, with doctors unsure at first if he would live. He did, becoming one of the men who survived the battle and were notably dubbed the "Chosin Few."

According to an Army writer, when the humble Cafferata first learned he had earned the Medal of Honor, he asked if it could be mailed to him. That request was turned down. Instead, Cafferata was flown to Washington, D.C. He received the Medal of Honor on Nov. 24, 1952, from President Harry S. Truman during a White House ceremony.

Cafferata's Medal of Honor citation said he killed 15 enemy fighters during the intense firefight. However, author Peter Collier wrote in a book about the battle that the private's fellow Marines counted more than 100 dead around the ditch where he had fought. Collier said that those Marines decided they wouldn't put that number in their reports because they didn't think it would be believed.

Cafferata retired from the service due to his wounds. He returned to New Jersey and spent the next few decades selling hunting and fishing equipment, working for the state's Division of Fish and Game and owning a bar. In 1965, he married Doris Giblock, and they had four children: Lynn, Deborah, Heather and Dale, the latter of whom attended the Air Force Academy and became a helicopter pilot.

The Medal of Honor recipient eventually retired to Venice, Florida, but continued to embrace the military com-

munity. Cafferata served as the parade grand marshal several times during the annual Armed Forces Day celebration at Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey. He also joined President Barack Obama in Seoul, South Korea, in 2010 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean War.

Cafferata died in Venice on April 12, 2016, at the age of 86. He was buried at Quantico National Cemetery in Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia, about a week later.



To Honor him, A school in Cape Coral, Florida, now goes by the name Hector A. Cafferata Jr. Elementary School.

Did you know?

** The Coast Guard seizes 169 pounds of marijuana and 306 pounds of cocaine worth \$9,589,000.00 every day.

** The U.S. Army was in charge of exploring and mapping America. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was an all-Army affair. Army officers were the first Americans to see such landmarks as Pike's Peak and the Grand Canyon.

** The Navy's bell-bottom trousers are commonly believed to be introduced in 1817 to permit men to roll them above the knee when washing down the decks and to make it easier to remove them in a hurry when forced to abandon ship or when washed overboard. In addition, the trousers may be used as a life preserver by knotting the legs and swinging them over your head to fill the legs with air.



(Continued on Pg 13)

Mission Complete U.S. Army Corps PFC John Lewis Ferguson

Submitted by: Wayne 'Traveler' Kirkpatrick

MISSING:

In late 1941, Ferguson was a member of the 28th Materiel Squadron, U.S. Army Air Forces, when Japanese forces invaded the Philippine Islands in December. Intense fighting continued until the surrender of the Bataan peninsula on April 9, 1942, and of Corregidor Island on May 6, 1942.

Thousands of U.S. and Filipino service members were captured and interned at POW camps. Ferguson was among those reported captured when U.S. forces in Bataan surrendered to the Japanese. They were subjected to the 65-mile Bataan Death March and then held at the Cabanatuan POW camp. More than 2,500 POWs perished in this camp during the war.

According to prison camp and other historical records, Ferguson died Dec. 10, 1942, and was buried along with other deceased prisoners in the local Cabanatuan Camp Cemetery in Common Grave 917.

RECOVERY:

Following the war, American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) personnel exhumed those buried at the Cabanatuan cemetery and relocated the remains to a temporary U.S. military mausoleum near Manila. In 1947, the AGRS examined the remains in an attempt to identify them. Five of the sets of remains from Common Grave 917 were identified, but the rest were declared unidentifiable. The unidentified remains were buried at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial (MACM) on Feb. 15 and 16, 1950, as Unknowns.

In March 2018, the remains associated with Common Grave 917 were disinterred and sent to the DPAA laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, for analysis.

To identify Ferguson's remains, scientists from DPAA used dental, anthropological, and isotope analysis as well as circumstantial evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), Y chromosome DNA (Y-STR), and autosomal DNA (auSTR) analysis.

Although interred as an Unknown in MACM, Ferguson's grave was meticulously cared for over the past 70 years by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC).

DIGNIFIED TRANSFER 27 September 2022

ROLLING THUNDER ATTENDEES (7) Andy Haszlakiewicz, Ted Makarewicz, Mark Anderson,



Don DeLordo, Mary Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick, and Chuck Schumann

INTERMENT 1 October 22:

US Army Air Corps PFC John L. Ferguson came home to rest on 1 October 2022 next to his family members in [Gridley Cemetery](#), Gridley, IL

More than 100 people came out to Gridley Cemetery to honor [PFC Ferguson](#), who was buried with full military honors for his sacrifice in WWII.

A military honor guard stood at attention as a 21-gun salute was fired and the bugler played taps before PFC Ferguson's brother Meryl, received the folded American flag that accompanied the remains.

Despite decades of time, the ceremony brought a sense of closure to the family, comfort to his friends, warmth to his fellow Americans, and pride to his Veteran brothers and sisters.



ROLLING THUNDER ATTENDEES (10) Ted Makarewicz, Rich Lanute, Paul Hebein, Mary Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Mark Anderson, Ron Carpenter, Chuck Carlson, Scott Seal, , and Mark Mazurkiewicz.



CHAPTER COIN and

POW/MIA FLAG: A National POW/MIA Flag, flown during the procession, and a Chapter 2, IL challenge coin was presented to PFC Ferguson's surviving brother, Meryl Ferguson and family members. Our coin symbolizes a "test of our metal" in supporting the on-going efforts to ensure the remaining 82,000 plus servicemen, servicewomen, and civilians, unaccounted for, are returned to our Country and to their loved ones.

symbolizes a "test of our metal" in supporting the on-going efforts to ensure the remaining 82,000 plus servicemen, servicewomen, and civilians, unaccounted for, are returned to our Country and to their loved ones.



Mission Complete 10 November, 2022 U.S. Army Corporal William M. Zoellick

Submitted by: Wayne
'Traveler' Kirkpatrick

INTERMENT 10 November 22:

US Army Corporal William Martin Zoellick came home to rest on 10 November 2022 next to his family members in Belvidere Cemetery, Belvidere, IL.



MISSING: Corporal William Martin Zoellick, missing from the Korean War, entered the U.S. Army from Des Plaines, Illinois and was a member of B Company, 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. CPL Zoellick was captured by Chinese People's Volunteer Force (CPVF) on November 30, 1950, after his unit encountered a CPVF roadblock near Kunu-ri, North Korea. A report provided to the United Nations by the CPVF stated that CPL Zoellick died at POW Camp 5 at Ch'angsong, North Korea, on February 27, 1951. CPL Zoellick was not identified from among remains returned to U.S. custody after the war.

RECOVERY: In 2018, the DPAA began its disinterment and reexamination of 652 Korean War unknown remains that were buried at the National Memorial Cemetery in Honolulu, Hawaii. One set of these unknown remains that had been recovered from the POW Camp 5 in Pyoktong, North Korea, were tentatively associated with CPL Zoellick. While this location was inconsistent with CPL Zoellick's reported place of death, DPAA historians surmised that the reported location may have been made in error, as Camp 5 was not yet operational until after CPL Zoellick's date of death, February 27, 1951. Laboratory analysis and circumstantial evidence allowed DPAA scientists to identify the remains as those of CPL Zoellick. Corporal Zoellick is memorialized on the Courts of the Missing at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific.

DIGNIFIED TRANSFER 31 October 2022

ROLLING THUNDER
ATTENDEES (10)
Andy Haszlakiewicz,
Ted Makarewicz,
Shawn Nisius,



Mary Kirkpatrick, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Nick Bender, Rich Lanute, Ron Carpenter, Chuck Carlson, and Mark 'Mazurkiewicz,



The funeral procession passed by 11 local schools on a 13 - mile route where approximately 3,000 students viewed the procession. These students were taught about CPL Zoellick before the procession from information provided by Rolling Thunder.



More than 100 people came out to Belvidere Cemetery to honor CPL Zoellick, who was buried with full military honors for his sacrifice in WWII.

A military honor guard stood at attention as a 21-gun salute was fired and the bugler played taps before CPL Zoellick's nephew, Arthur Zoellick, received the folded American flag that accompanied the remains.

A POW/MIA Flag was presented to Arthur Zoellick from the members of Rolling Thunder, Illinois.

Despite decades of time, the ceremony brought a sense of closure to the family, comfort to his friends, warmth to his fellow Americans, and pride to his Veteran brothers and sisters.





Toys for Tots Got it's Iconic Train Logo from Walt Disney!

By Heather Walsh

Submitted by: By: Traveler

It so happened that Hendricks' civilian job was as director of public relations at Warner Bros. Studios. Because the major regularly hobnobbed with Hollywood celebrities, Walt Disney was a part of Hendrick's social world.

As a favor to his friend, Disney and his studio artists designed the original poster for Toys for Tots.

Once upon a time, Marine Reserve-run Toys for Tots got help from the animator and businessman who created some of the most iconic children's films of the 20th century.

More than seven decades ago, Walt Disney and his studio designed the original logo for [Toys for Tots](#), an initiative [that helps Santa](#) deliver toys to children in low-income families, according to [a Disney press release](#) about its annual Toys for Tots drive.

As Toys for Tots enters its 75th year, the iconic train image that Disney designed is still part of the logo. Marine reservist Maj. Bill Hendricks had the idea for Toys for Tots in 1947 after his wife, Diane, told him she wanted to donate handcrafted dolls to an agency that would distribute them to children in need, according to [the Toys for Tots website](#). No such agency existed.

With help from the Marines in his Reserve unit in Los Angeles, Hendricks set out to change that. In its first year, the program distributed 5,000 toys to economically disadvantaged children.



The poster features a beaming Santa Claus — whose considerable belly is secured with a belt bearing an eagle, globe and anchor — carrying a sack of toys. In front of Claus runs a three-car miniature train in which “Toys for Tots” is inscribed.

A version of that train still appears in the program's logo today





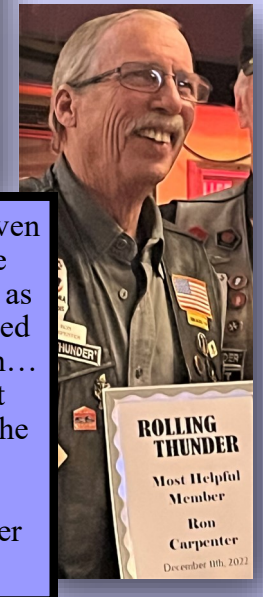
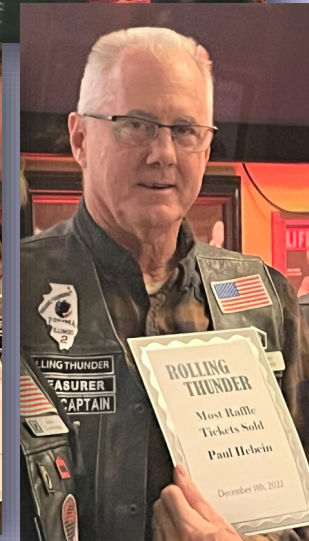
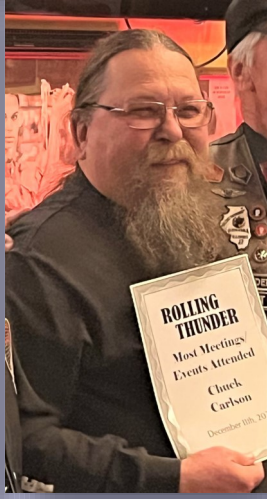
After Action Reports: Holiday Party & Toys 4 Tots!

What a Celebration! - Pictures are worth 1000 words!

We Gathered,
We Prayed,
We Ate,
We Celebrated!
So Much to be
Grateful for as
2022 comes to
a close!



Ted has become a great
leader and our 2023 looks
like we will have many
more times to gather and
celebrate as we carry out
our Mission!



Awards were given
to some of the
members... but as
each one received
their recognition...
they gave that
recognition to the
entire group!
We are
Rolling Thunder
Strong!



Roger That!



The weather was cold,
but
perfect for a day that was
to mark
remembrance of those
who served our country
with great valor!

Thank you for your
Service!

After Action Reports: Wreaths Across America!

What an Honor! - Pictures are worth 1000 words!



Ryan John
Cummings,
Thank you for your
Service and Sacrifice.
You are remembered
and honored today
and always!



Thank you, John
Cummings for
planning and executing this
2nd Annual Event for our
Chapter. It is an honor to
participate in
this Day!



A Prayer requested by John in Honor of John on
this day...

Heavenly Father,

We are humbled by being here today among these
men and women ~ whose numbers we cannot
count. As we look across these fields, it is evident
that your Spirit moves and gives courage in
wartime to embrace the dangers that come. We
know that you held them in your hands and when the
ultimate sacrifice was required, you held them even
tighter. We are grateful to you for these Heroes! We
are grateful for their sacrifice that was given to ensure
the safety of their fellow Americans!

Let us miss them with gratitude. Help us to grieve their
loss with gratitude. Let us look forward to seeing them
again with gratitude. Continue to hold them close and
let us find comfort as we envision their peace and our
future reunion.

We Praise you, Thank you and Trust you! Please
give us your blessings until we are all home in your
arms! In Jesus Name we ask these things. Amen





POW/MIA History

Submitted By Traveler

POW

A prisoner of war (POW, enemy prisoner of war (EPW) or “missing-captured”) is a person, whether combatant or non-combatant, who is held in custody by a belligerent power during or immediately after an armed conflict. The earliest recorded usage of the phrase “prisoner of war” dates to 1660.

Belligerents hold prisoners of war in custody for a range of legitimate and illegitimate reasons, such as isolating them from enemy combatants still in the field (releasing and repatriating them in an orderly manner after hostilities), demonstrating military victory, punishing them, prosecuting them for war crimes, exploiting them for their labor, recruiting or even conscripting them as their own combatants, collecting military and political intelligence from them, or indoctrinating them in new political or religious beliefs.



MIA

Missing in action (MIA) is a casualty classification assigned to combatants, military chaplains, combat medics, and prisoners of war who are reported missing during wartime or ceasefire. They may have been killed, wounded, captured, or deserted. If deceased, neither their remains nor grave has been positively identified. Becoming MIA has been an occupational risk for as long as there has been warfare or ceasefire.



Happy
New Year
Wishes to Soldiers



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Father Emil Kapaun: Shepherd in Combat Boots

By Susan Hines-Brigger, Published in the St. Anthony Messenger
Submitted by: Ted Makarewicz, President of RTIL2

Service. That is the word that can be used to sum up the life of Korean War chaplain Father Emil Kapaun.

In September 2021, a military plane departed Honolulu, Hawaii, headed toward Wichita, Kansas. Aboard the plane were the long-lost remains of Father Emil Kapaun, a highly decorated Army chaplain who died in a Korean POW camp. He was buried in an unmarked grave near the Yalu River and seemingly lost forever.

That was, however, until March 2021, when it was discovered through forensic science that Father Emil had actually been buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu. Remains of many US soldiers were moved there from North Korean burial sites in the 1950s and 1990s by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

The road to bringing Father Emil home had been a long one—70 years to be exact. So when his nephew Ray Kapaun got the call about his uncle's identification, he let it go to voicemail. After hearing the message, though, Ray's wife said she thought he should call them back.

Ray called and got news he never thought he'd receive. He was told that they had identified his uncle's remains. "It floored me," Ray says. "If the pope would have called me and said, 'We just declared him a saint,' I would have been less surprised."

Father Emil returned home to full military honors, complete with a 21-gun salute, color guard, caisson and riderless horse, and some of his fellow POWs to welcome back their beloved chaplain. A funeral was celebrated for him. Previously, in the absence of his body, he had only received a blessing.

Scott Carter, coordinator of Father Emil's sainthood cause, said the funeral "was a good reminder that you can love both God and your country."

The Journey Continues

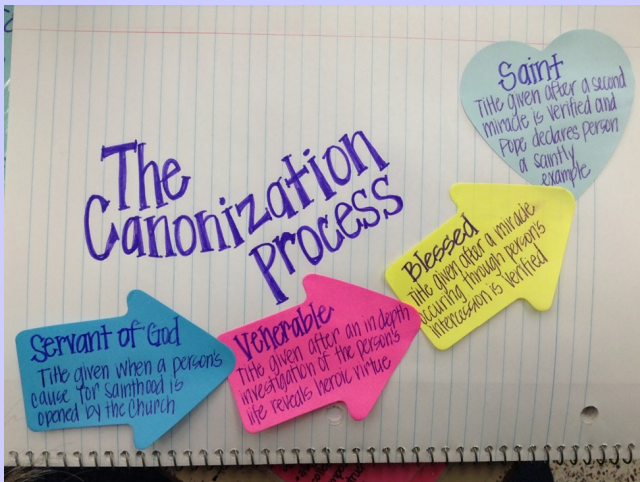
Even before Father Emil's remains were located and returned to Kansas, though, many people were already convinced he was a saint. In 1993, the Archdiocese of the Military Services opened the chaplain's cause, which is when Father Emil was named a Servant of God. In 2008, the Diocese of Wichita picked up the cause and opened its diocesan phase.

In this phase, according to Father John Hotze, the episcopal delegate of the cause, the diocese conducted an exhaustive investigation of Father Emil's life. Father Hotze handles the chaplain's sainthood cause on the local level and serves as an intermediary between the diocese and the Vatican regarding anything related to the cause.

Interviews were conducted with about 50 people who knew Father Emil from the various chapters of his life. A theological committee evaluated any writings, videos, or recordings related to the chaplain to make sure they were doctrinally sound. A historical committee was formed to look into everything they could find that had been written about Father Emil.

About 8,000 pages of documentation later, the diocese closed the first phase of the cause for beatification and canonization in July 2011. They sent all the pages—16,000, counting duplicates—to the Vatican for review. They are awaiting word regarding the next steps. In the meantime, the diocese will still work on the cause so that they are ready to go as soon as they get word that Father Emil has been named venerable. (Continued on pg 11)

Fr. Kapaun, Continued



When asked if he discovered anything in the process that surprised him, Father Hotze says nothing surprised him but instead made things about the priest more evident to him. “One of the things that I’ve always thought has been the appeal of Father Kapaun is that he’s proof that any of us can be a saint,” says Father Hotze.



Using skills he learned growing up, Father Emil fixed up a bike that he would ride to bring food and companionship to men in the field.

In the meantime, Father Emil’s life and story are still very interesting to people. There is his tomb at the cathedral that many come to visit, there is his family farm in Pilsen, Kansas, that contains many important items from the priest’s life and many other things related to Father Emil. Carter takes care of a good deal of that, but he considers it all a privilege.

One of the greatest privileges, he says, “is being able to talk with and hear from people not just in Kansas, not just in the United States, but all over the world who have been impacted by his story. I think the Holy Spirit is using his life to inspire other people to be saints in their own ways—little ways.”

The Road to Korea

Emil Kapaun came from humble beginnings. He was born on Holy Thursday in April 1916 in Pilsen. He and his brother, Eugene, grew up helping out on the family farm during the lean years of the Dust Bowl. During that time, he became somewhat skilled at fixing and building things. (Remember that point. It’ll be important later.)

Father Hotze points out that Emil grew up having nothing

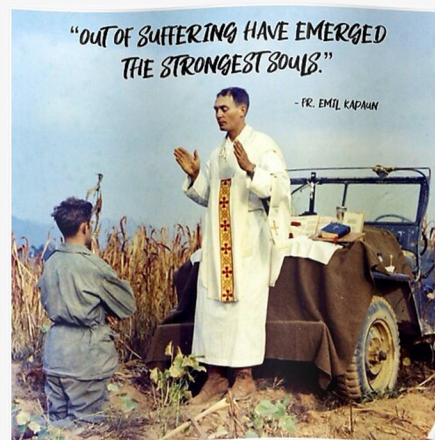
and that he had nothing when he went to the seminary to study for the priesthood. “Yet he was able to use the things he had been given and use them in service to God and service to his neighbors and even his enemies,” says Father Hotze. “It’s just an ordinary person who did great things with the meager things he has been given.”

Father Emil was ordained to the priesthood in 1940. Over the course of the next eight years, his ministry took on many forms, from parish life to military service. He spent time serving as a chaplain for soldiers in India and Burma at the end of World War II. At that time, the Army recognized his faithful commitment to his duties and promoted him to the rank of captain. But he was called back by his bishop, who requested that he go to Catholic University of America to earn a master’s degree in education, using the GI Bill.

Once he completed his studies, though, he asked to return to the military. It was ministering to the enlisted personnel to which he felt most called. In late 1948, he was granted his request and reported to the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Corps at Fort Bliss, Texas.

Two years later, Father Emil, along with his unit—the 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division—became some of the first American troops sent to assist the South Koreans in the Korean War. Fellow soldiers have recounted the heroics of Father Emil, who was well-known for facing danger in order to comfort a soldier, retrieve wounded soldiers amid gunfire, or enter no-man’s-land to provide a dying soldier with last rites. Sometimes, though, he would just sit with a soldier and talk. What the soldier’s religion was didn’t matter. They were all just Father Emil’s men.

He perhaps showed his care for “his men” more than ever on November 2, when Father Emil and his unit were captured by a regiment of Communist soldiers from North Korea and China. When Father Emil saw a Communist



soldier ready to shoot wounded US soldier Sgt. Herb Miller, the priest rushed over, pushed the gun aside, and picked up Miller. Stunned by the chaplain’s actions, the soldier let the two men live.

(Continued on page 12)

**Fr. Kapaun, continued****Prison Camp No. 5**

While in the camp, Father Emil cared for his fellow soldiers, using skills he had learned on the farm years ago. He would fashion scraps of metal into small bowls in which he could boil water. Given that dysentery was a big concern and was affecting many of the soldiers, Father Emil would hold the bowls of water over the fire to disinfect it or to melt snow he had collected.

He would wash the prisoners' clothes and pick lice from their bodies. And he would sneak out, when possible, to find food to bring back to the soldiers. "He would use whatever he had to survive," says Father Hotze, "which is basically what he did when he was growing up on the farm during the Depression."

And those were just the corporal works of mercy Father Emil provided for his fellow POWs. He also supported them emotionally and spiritually, leading them in prayer, celebrating Mass with them, or simply reminding them that they could survive this.

In fact, says Father Hotze, "All of the POWs that I interviewed said they would not have made it if it hadn't been for Father Kapaun."

Eventually, Father Emil himself came down with pneumonia and developed a blood clot in his leg. As he struggled, the guards saw an opportunity to rid themselves of the priest who was helping to lift up the other prisoners.

When the guards came to take Father Emil to the medical tent, also known as the death house, his fellow POWs struggled to keep their chaplain from being taken away. Father Emil comforted them, saying: "Don't worry about me. I'm going where I always wanted to go, and when I get there, I'll say a prayer for all of you." He then blessed his captors, forgiving them for their actions.

Two days later, on May 23, 1951, Father Emil died—alone and only 35 years old.

A Powerful Presence

Ray Kapaun wasn't even born when his Uncle Emil died. He and his siblings always knew about Father Emil and what he did during the war, he recalls, but his parents didn't often go into much detail. He didn't find out his uncle's full story until one day when he was snooping around his uncle's house and found a story about Father Emil in a 1954 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The article was written by Mike Dowe, a fellow POW with Father Emil, as told to Harold H. Martin.

"He wore the cross of the chaplain branch instead of the crossed rifles of the infantry, but he was, I think, the best foot soldier I ever knew, and the bravest man, and the kindest," Dowe wrote. "His name was Emil Joseph Kapaun, and he was a priest of the Roman Catholic Church."



Father Emil, seen here celebrating Mass for the soldiers of his unit, often used the hood of his Jeep as an altar. It is likely that this is the last photo taken of him before being captured.

Dowe recounted the many ways Father Emil ministered to the soldiers during their dark days of captivity. "By his very presence, somehow, [Father Kapaun] could turn a stinking, louse-ridden mud hut, for a little while, into a cathedral. He did a thousand little things to keep us going," Dowe said.

Over the years, Ray says he has learned so much more about his uncle, often from the people who served with him in the Army. And with each story he hears or person he talks to, he realizes this about his uncle: "He was an ordinary person who did extraordinary things. He went above and beyond and really did sacrifice himself for others."

An Ongoing Influence

In the years since his death, Father Emil has been the subject of books, movies, songs—one even by his nephew Ray—and a great number of articles. He has had children named after him, prayers devoted to him, and a yearly pilgrimage made in honor of him.

In April 2013, Father Emil was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. Ray Kapaun accepted the medal on his uncle's behalf from former President Barack Obama. This medal is the highest award given to a member of the military, and Father Emil is one of only five chaplains to have received it. He had already been awarded the Bronze Star for bravery in battle and received the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during and after the Battle of Unsan.

In his speech before presenting the medal, President Obama referred to Father Emil as a "shepherd in combat boots." He recalled the story of the priest's service, saying, "This is the valor we honor today—an American soldier who didn't fire a gun, but who wielded the mightiest weapon of all, a love for his brothers so pure that he was willing to die so that they might live."

Because of COVID-19 and personnel changes at the Vatican's Dicastery of Saints, Father Emil's cause has been slowed. But Ray is not deterred by that and says of his uncle: "It's not *if* he's declared a saint, it's *when*. I'm not going to think about him any differently. He's already a saint as far as I'm concerned."

(Continued on pg 13)



Fr. Kapaun, continued

Well aware of the length and slow pace of the sainthood process, Ray said he would be surprised and thrilled if his uncle were to be declared a saint during his lifetime. "But, like I said, after bringing his remains home, I'm never saying never again," he says with a laugh.

Kapaun's Crucifix

When people walk into the front entrance of Kapaun Mt. Carmel Catholic High School in Wichita, Kansas, they will see a 4-foot-tall crucifix. What they may not know, however, is the story behind it and its connection to the school's namesake.



The crucifix was created a year after Father Emil's death by POW Lt. Col. Gerald Fink, a pilot who had been shot down and captured. Fink would whittle on wood and caught the attention of his fellow POWs. They asked if he would carve them a crucifix so they could remember Father Emil. Fink, who was Jewish, was so taken by the stories of Father Emil that he said he would. He hand-carved the figure from scrub oak found around the camp. The cross was made from furniture pieces found in the camp. And the crown of thorns on Christ's head was made from radio wire to resemble the barbed wire that encircled the POW camp.

Father Hotze says the POWs asked Fink how he knew what Jesus looked like in order to carve him. He said that Fink told them, "That's not Jesus, that's Father Kapaun." He used the descriptions they had given him of Father Emil to carve the corpus.

When the POWs were released from the camp in 1953, nearly two and a half years after Father Emil died, three of the prisoners carried the cross out with them.



Happy New Year given in
Selfless Sacrifice to attain...
Peace on Earth!

Some of the Emergencies your VAC can help you with...

In all the situations below, you can always contact the County Veterans Assistance Commission directly for further assistance. If you are struggling with rent or mortgage payments with the elimination of pandemic forbearance programs, **Call the VAC immediately!**

- ♦ Rent or Mortgage payments or Emergency Housing
- ♦ Utility payments
- ♦ Food - Northern Illinois Food Bank - or
- ♦ Midwest Veterans Closet
- ♦ Medical Care - Contact VAC when civilian benefits lost - Do not go to VA if not registered with them. Contact the VAC to get you registered.
- ♦ Most VA visits are currently by Video Conference
- ♦ Family problems - In Lake County, contact 211 for referral to proper resource.



Happy Birthday to our
Newest Branch

The U. S.
Space Force
Dec 20, 2019

Planned National POW-MIA Memorial and Museum

Submitted By Traveler



The Hero's Walk and Freedom Trees are shown on the grounds of the Chapel of the High-Speed Pass at Cecil Commerce Center, where work is underway to create the National POW-MIA Memorial and Museum.

Nearly two years after ground was broken, construction is underway on the planned national memorial and museum in Jacksonville, FL to honor and remember all American prisoners of war and those missing in action during the country's wars.

When completed, it will be the first of its kind in the United States, according to the nonprofit Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial Inc., which is spearheading the project.

The National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum will pay homage to all those classified as prisoners of war or missing in action from World War II through current conflicts.

Although there is a National Prisoner of War Museum in Andersonville, Ga., it focuses on POWs. The Jacksonville memorial will focus on both POWs and those missing in action.

The memorial and museum are being built in two main phases at 6112 POW-MIA Memorial Parkway on 26 acres at former Naval Air Station Cecil Field, Master Jet Base (1941-1999), which now is Cecil Commerce Center.

The project evolved from the original POW/MIA Memorial, located just south of the Chapel of the High-Speed Pass, that was dedicated to those naval aviators stationed at NAS Cecil Field during Vietnam and Desert Shield/Storm eras.

With a tentative, estimated cost of roughly \$80 million, the ongoing memorial and museum project could span five to 10 years before being finished, Cassata estimated.

Their goal is to get national designation from Congress. That would help with fundraising as well as public awareness and education of the project currently funded by contributions from individuals, businesses, grants and the city of Jacksonville.



Michael Cassata, executive director of the nonprofit Cecil Field POW/MIA memorial Inc., points out some of the long-term plans for the National POW-MIA Memorial and Museum.

Michael Cassata, executive director of the nonprofit Cecil Field POW/MIA memorial Inc., points out some of the long-term plans for the National POW-MIA Memorial and Museum.

The project is to benefit all Americans, not just military personnel and their families, he said.

The organization's mission, "is to honor all former prisoners of war, remember and never forget those missing in action heroes and the families who see their return." Cassata said America is the only country in the world "that goes and searches for our missing."

The National POW/MIA Memorial and Museum in Jacksonville will give American military personnel the assurance that their country is behind them and they will always have the fullest possible accounting.

Cassata said the project also is for the families of the missing to bring them some sense of closure and to educate the public. Above all, he said, it's to help ensure those who are lost will not be forgotten.

Approximately 82,000 Americans remain missing from WWII, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars/other conflicts, Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency data shows.

Museum, Continued

About 75 percent of all the losses happened in the Indo-Pacific. More than 41,000 of the missing are presumed lost at sea, according DPAA.

The display is inspired by a sculpture of four Navy jets flying in the starburst formation at the end of the Hero's Walk on the grounds of the chapel.

The organization has three of the aircraft and is searching for the last one. The planes will be displayed on a replica of the runway configuration at the airfield. Memorial bricks will be laid at the site, with lighting and landscaping to follow.

Cassata estimated that Phase 1 will be completed in Spring 2022. Phase 2 focuses on the interactive museum, which was designed by Prosser Inc., headquartered in Jacksonville.

The museum will be in part of the chapel, which has been previously renovated. The organization is beginning to collect artifacts for the exhibits. The goal is to share the stories of those who have been lost rather than only displaying collections of equipment.



A plaque remembering LCDR M. Scot Speicher, the first US casualty of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, is shown on the Hero's Walk on the grounds of the Chapel of the High-Speed Pass at Cecil Commerce Center.

"We call it MIA Hall. We want it to be about the service member," Cassata said. "There is a story behind the exhibits and we want to tell it."

Cassata said when visitors walk in the hall, one side will be dark and the names of the lost will be projected onto a wall.

A plaque remembering LCDR M. Scot Speicher, the first US casualty of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, is shown on the Hero's Walk on the grounds of the Chapel of the High-Speed Pass at Cecil Commerce Center.

"You can see them, but not touch or feel because they are not home. They are not here. They will be the names of those who are missing," he said.

Then there will be the "Gallery of Light," with the names of those who have been returned etched on the walls," Cassata said.

Book and PTSD, Contin-

The symptoms, which can range from anxiety to depression to mood swings, typically go away after the stressor is removed. On the other hand, post-traumatic stress is considered a long-term disorder that arises after a traumatic event.

"I did not tell anyone because of the stigma associated with PTSD at the time and because I was a colonel -- afraid I would be perceived as weak," Wexler said.

Following his final deployment, Wexler struggled with mental health for more than a decade. Having been diagnosed with PTSD stateside, he sought treatment through the Department of Veterans Affairs and private mental health professionals to no avail. It was October 2020 before he found an outlet that helped him expel the anxiety and gave him a renewed purpose.

"While looking at the (Chesapeake) Bay one day, with Max and Maggie sitting in the chair with me, the idea of the children's book came to me," Wexler said. Wexler put pen to paper, drawing on inspiration from his hyper but ever-so-loyal cockapoos. Max and Maggie's real-life adventures guided Wexler's writing as they guide his main character, Adam, in the book. "Adam is me. In Iraq and even in the condo, I am alone just like Adam. And the 'Forest of Dreams' is my escape where you need to hang onto your dreams and make them happen," Wexler said, "I want to try to have the 'Forest of Dreams' series help kids facing life issues -- like if one lost their father in Iraq, it would show them their father is still with them in their heart. It would be to help them get through it, like how this book helped me get through things," Wexler said.

For Wexler, publishing the books is not about making money -- it is about pouring his trauma into his writing.

"It is about finding something to help deal with PTSD. It is about coping in a positive way and not giving up," Wexler said.



This Green Beret will serve as the Army's New Top Enlisted Leader

By: Steve Beynon, 8 December, 2022
Military.Com



Command Sergeant Major Michael R. Weimer, then Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, presents a green beret to a graduate during a Regimental First Formation at Fort Bragg, North Carolina August 18, 2022.

(U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens)

Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Weimer will serve as the Army's next top noncommissioned officer, Military.com confirmed Thursday. He'll take over as the service's 17th sergeant major of the Army in August 2023, replacing Michael Grinston, who is set to retire shortly after the handover.

The sergeant major of the Army is one of the service's most visible leaders, sitting at the intersection of soldiers' needs and policy and as the de facto public face for the enlisted ranks of the Pentagon's largest branch -- taking frequent questions from the press and testifying on Capitol Hill -- all while serving as the enlisted adviser for the Army secretary and chief of staff.

Weimer, who currently serves as the senior enlisted leader for U.S. Special Operations Command, joined the Army in 1993, earned his green beret in 1996 and served as a Special Forces weapons sergeant. He is a graduate of Norwich University, where he earned a bachelor's in strategic studies and defense analysis.

Some of his previous assignments include deployments with 7th Special Forces Group and Special Operations Command's operations sergeant major. His awards include the Legion of Merit; Bronze Star with two "V" devices and 5 oak leaf clusters; the Purple Heart; and the Joint Commendation Medal and Army Commendation Medal, both with a "V" device.

Weimer will take the helm at a critical time for the Army as it transitions from the Global War on Terrorism era to a force focused on preparing for a conventional fight against China, and as the service grapples with recruiting struggles while trying to make military service more hospitable for a diverse range of soldiers.

The Army is still hitting speed bumps implementing its troubled fitness test, the Army Combat Fitness Test, or ACFT. The weapons set to replace the M4 and M249 SAW will also start trickling into the force.

Grinston is largely seen as a transformational leader, pushing for policies and efforts behind the scenes to boost soldier quality of life. Part of that included frequently touring barracks known to have mold or other infrastructure issues. After his visit to Fort Bragg, North Carolina's troubled Smoke Bomb Hill barracks, the decision was quickly made to demolish a dozen buildings five years ahead of

schedule. He was also the hype man

for the ACFT, pitching it to a skeptical rank and file -- often traveling to multiple installations a week and taking the test with the troops. Grinston is probably best known for his wielding of social media, where he and his staff are constantly available on Twitter, Instagram and Reddit and use those platforms to directly communicate with soldiers, even as the rest of the service struggles with what its social media footprint should look like.

New Fitness Test is Here!

By: Steve Beynon, Sept. 29th, 2022

"There should be one standard for combat arms branches and it shouldn't be gender based," one female artillery officer told Military.com. "The soldiers in my platoon all have to carry artillery rounds. [High-explosive] 155mm rounds are loosely around 100lbs, that weight doesn't change based on the gender of the person carrying it. I need my soldiers to be able to carry a lot of these rounds, not just one round and then they're done."

That same month, lawmakers on the House Armed Services Committee passed an amendment into the annual defense policy bill directing the Army to establish new fitness standards for combat arms troops. It was a move that some see as a compromise between the early idea on how to grade the test while also not requiring too much of soldiers in jobs that aren't physically demanding, something the Army was already working on, one source with direct knowledge told Military.com.

"If we stumbled anywhere, it was perhaps going too far, too fast," East said. This [test] will have to go back into a cycle of revisions and updates."



The Air Force Reveals New B-21 Bomber, Keeping the Pilot for now.

By: Thomas Novelly, 3 December, 2022
Military.Com



*The B-21 Raider was unveiled to the public at a ceremony Dec. 2, 2022 in Palmdale, California. Designed to operate in tomorrow's high-end threat environment, the B-21 will play a critical role in ensuring America's enduring airpower capability.
(U.S. Air Force photo)*

The Air Force's highly classified B-21 Raider was revealed in Palmdale, California, on Friday evening, marking the Pentagon's first new American bomber in more than 30 years and the latest upgrade to the U.S. military's nuclear triad amid rising tensions with China.

Stage hands at Northrop Grumman's facility pulled a massive sheet draped over the aircraft revealing the muted white, long, narrow and sleek B-21 beneath it. The new aircraft is a significant update to the Pentagon's nuclear arsenal – the triad of land, sea and air weapons that can deliver a nuclear payload. Prior to Friday's ceremony, the public had only seen artist renderings of the aircraft.

"The B-21 looks imposing, but what's under the frame and the space-age coating is even more impressive," said Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III. "This isn't just another airplane. It's not just another acquisition. It is a symbol and a source of the fighting spirit that President [Ronald] Reagan spoke of. It is the embodiment of America's determination to defend the Republic that we all love."

The Northrop Grumman-developed B-21 is capable of carrying conventional bombs and missiles as well as nuclear munitions. The defense manufacturer was awarded the contract for the aircraft in 2015.

Northrop Grumman also makes the B-2, the last generation of bomber that bears more than a passing resemblance to the B-21. That aircraft, which first flew in the 1980s, has been a backbone U.S. projection for decades. It was one of the first major aircraft designed as a "flying wing" that didn't have a tail, an approach that gained prominence during World War II with aircraft developed for Germany by the Horten brothers.

The B-21 was named for the U.S. Army Air Force's Doolittle Raiders, whose surprise attack against Japan during World War II boosted American morale. Austin said during his speech that there were family members of the Doolittle Raiders present in the audience.

America's newest nuclear stealth bomber made its debut Friday after years of secret development and as part of the Pentagon's answer to rising concerns over a future conflict with China. (Dec. 3) AP

"The audacity of the Doolittle Raiders has inspired generations of American airmen and it's fitting that the next chapter in American air power is named in their honor," Austin

said.

Many of the details, such

as the size, payload and technology, of the aircraft have not been made public.

But the B-21 – according to an Air Force fact sheet – was "designed to accommodate manned or unmanned operations," a reflection of the increasing reliance on unmanned aircraft by the U.S. military and the future of the pilot specialty.

The service has not fully delivered on, or explained what, that unmanned concept or capability would look like. Defense experts told Military.com prior to the rollout that it is unlikely we'd see a fully autonomous bomber anywhere in the near future.

"There will always be the need to have a human to occupy an aircraft for a variety of reasons," Dave Deptula, a retired Air Force lieutenant general and dean of the nonprofit Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, told Military.com on Friday. "And there's enormous potential for unmanned aircraft in the future, but we have yet to build one that provides the capability like the B-21 ... Do you want to take a human out of an aircraft that has nuclear capabilities?"

In 2021, Air Force Secretary Frank Kendall publicly discussed the idea of having a drone counterpart to the B-21 that would essentially act as a wingman alongside the bomber. But Kendall later backtracked, telling *Breaking Defense* in July that the concept was not as "cost-effective" and "less attractive" than previously thought.

Mackenzie Eaglen, a researcher at the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute think tank who focuses on Air Force defense budgets and military readiness, told Military.com that the technology, as well as the public's comfort with an unmanned aircraft such as a bomber, isn't there just yet.

"As far as I know, there will always be a man in the loop or on the loop," Eaglen said on Friday, referring to the idea that a human would be either in control of weapons use or able to stop a computer from firing. "But, increasingly, the machine will be making the calculations and decisions, but a human will be there to authorize it or possibly walk it back."



Doc's Corner...

By: Mark Mazurkiewicz

Holiday Challenges. Not all things are Merry and Bright...

*From the VA News, December 18, 2019
Tips for Managing Stress Around the Holidays*



There are many joyous things about the holiday season, but this time of year can also bring on stress, depression, and other challenges. For Veterans or their family members, the unique experiences of the military and transitioning back to civilian life can make enjoying the season difficult.

Here are a few things to keep an eye out for as the holiday season approaches — as well as healthy tips for managing these challenges.

Withdrawing From Friends and Family?

The holidays are typically times spent with family members and friends. But Veterans transitioning back to civilian life — or even those who returned home years ago — might find themselves avoiding the people and activities they would usually enjoy.

"I'm a pretty extraverted, amicable person, but I didn't want anything to do with anybody. I didn't want to talk with anybody," says Bryan, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran. Sometimes a vicious cycle can develop: The more time you spend alone, the less you feel like people will understand you. And the less you feel like people understand you, the more time you want to spend alone.

"You can't isolate yourself," says Bryan. "You have to surround yourself with good people that want to see you do better. Take advantage of the programs they have at the VA or the nonprofit organizations that are there to help Veterans out."

Feelings of guilt can sometimes lead people to withdraw, become irritable, or feel like life has lost meaning. These behaviors can strain personal relationships, especially during the holidays, when most people spend a lot of time with family members and friends. But if you're having trouble forgiving yourself — for something you did or *did not* do — talking with your family members and friends is actually a positive first step.

If you notice yourself withdrawing from loved ones, here are a few ways to begin breaking a pattern of isolation. If these actions feel overwhelming, start with small steps: Identify the thoughts and feelings that make you want to be alone.

- Reach out to your family members or friends, even if it's the last thing you feel like doing. Research shows that spending time talking with family members and friends improves your mood and your health.
- Connect with Veterans' groups or participate in clubs or hobbies focused on something you like.

"Isolation and withdrawal [are] not going to get you the end result that you need," says Marylyn, a U.S. Army Veteran. "You want to get back to enjoying your life, the things you like to do, and be able to explore new things. So you're going to eventually have to talk to someone and connect with someone."

Feeling on Edge in Large Crowds?

Whether you're walking through a crowded shopping mall or attending a large party with loud noises, you may find yourself in situations that make you uncomfortable during the holidays. Your military training taught you the importance of being observant and alert when you need to be — and being in that state of high alert in civilian life may be stressful.

"When you're in large crowds or there's a lot of chaos, you have to keep an eye on everything because you don't know where a potential threat is," says Casey, a U.S. Army medic. "After you see things like a life or death matter, your No. 1 goal is 'I'm always going to protect myself.'"

This experience of feeling on edge is also called hypervigilance, a symptom experienced by some Veterans who have returned from war or experienced traumatic events during their time in the military. Hypervigilance is a state of being on very high alert — constantly "on guard" — to possible risks or threats.

"It takes a long time to shed that alertness," says Casey. "Once it's there and you depend on it to stay alive, it's really hard to lose it once you've been back." Talking to your family and friends can be a first step. Turn to them whenever you are ready.

On edge?

Here are a few tips to keep in mind if you find yourself feeling on edge in large crowds:

- If you're with friends or family, tell them what you're feeling so they can try to help you work through it.
- Try grounding yourself by focusing on details of your surroundings or neutral physical sensations, such as the feeling of your feet on the floor.
- Practice relaxation exercises, such as taking slow, deep breaths.
- Calmly remove yourself from the situation.

"Being able to talk helps me manage, because it's not built up," says Ertell, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran who served in Vietnam. "It helps me to manage my hypervigilance."



Military Celebrations for 4th Quarter

<https://veteran.com/military-calendar-holidays-events-observances/>

January

- 1 New Year's Day!
- 16 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
(Third Monday in January)
- 20 Presidential Inauguration Day

February

February is Black History Month

- 1 Chinese New Year
- 2 Groundhog Day
- 3 Four Chaplains day
- 4 USO Birthday
- 12-18 National Salute to Veteran Patients
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 19 Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
- 20 President's Day



March

March is Women's History Month

- 1 Mardi Gras
- 3 Navy Reserve Birthday
- 4 Hug a GI Day



March Continued...

- 5 Seabee Birthday
- 12 Daylight Savings... Spring Ahead!
- 13 K-9 Veterans Day
- 15 American Legion Birthday
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 21 Rosie the Riveter Day
- 25 Medal of Honor Day
- 29 National Vietnam War Veteran's Day



So many days

To honor our

American

History and our

Heroes!

Hearts filled with the desire to give!



Happy Birthday to
Our Great
Americans!

1 January Wayne Kirkpatrick
1 January Juergen Lutz
7 January Singer Michael
31 January Shawn Nisus

2 March Steve Johnson
7 March Ron Carpenter
9 March Rich Lanute
10 March Scott Seal
24 March Cindy DeLordo!



Happy Days to our Chapter Celebrities for January,
February and March

Let us know your special Dates so that we can celebrate with you!



Projects that need YOU!

Below, you will find a short description of our ongoing projects. These have been developed to support our mission to Honor and Remember our POW/MIA Heroes! Contact a member of the Board to see how you can add your hands to the working committees!

Honor Chair

You have seen the chairs in stadiums, city halls and the National Capitol? Help us to identify new settings for this Chair!

Street Signs

We have over 60 MIAs in Illinois due to the Vietnam War. This project includes contacting the hometowns and discussing how to remember these heroes by naming a street in their honor!

Table Ceremonies



The Honor Table that you see here on this page, is a very somber memorial to the 82,000+ still Missing. The Ceremony can be presented to any size group... large or small and teaches the importance of remembering!

School Presentations

Teaching the next generation about our Heroes allows them to appreciate the sacrifices made to maintain American Values! Ask your children/grandchildren for the information for their social studies teachers! We will do the rest...

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