



Roger That!

The Official Publication of Rolling Thunder®, Illinois Ch 2

Volume 23, Issue 4

DPAA Updates

Remaining Numbers to Date

3 October, 2023

WWII
72,138

Korean War
7,486

Vietnam War
1,578

Cold War
126

Gulf Wars
5

El Dorado Canyon
1

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.



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 her time because they believe in the POW/MIA Issue.

Upcoming Events

OCTOBER

- 9 Columbus Day
- 13 U.S. Navy Birthday
- 26 Day of the Deployed
- 27 Navy Day

NOVEMBER

- 1-5 National Veterans Small Business Week
- 5 End of Daylight Savings Time
- 10 Marine Corps Birthday
- 11 Veteran's Day
- 11 Armistice Remembrance Day
- 23 Thanksgiving Day
- 30 Giving Tuesday!

DECEMBER

- 1 Civil Air Patrol (USAF) Auxiliary Birthday
- 7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 7-15 Hannukkah
- 13 U.S. National Guard Birthday
- 18 National Wreaths Across America
- 25 Christmas Day
- 26-January 1 Kwanzaa
- 30 New Year's Eve

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In the Beginning....



As I start my second year as president, I would like to thank those officers and directors who completed their terms, those that re-upped for another term and those members who are new to the board. I would like to especially acknowledge Andy Haszlakiewicz, who served as my Vice President last year. The Vice President's main job besides filling in for the President when needed, is to organize and run our Thunder Run. This year's Thunder Run had its challenges. Besides the fact that it rained (for the first time in many years) and we had a very small turnout, our raffle ticket sales were also way down. We changed our raffle format from firearms to cash prizes due to the bad image currently held by the public for the illegal use of firearms and the increase in gun violence. Maybe cash is not as glitzy as a Colt 45 revolver or an AR15, but we will have to decide for next year if we will go back and raffle off firearms or not. Our new Vice President Tony Yarbrough will be tasked with this issue as well as reviewing the entire Thunder Run process.

I would also like to acknowledge another unsung member of our chapter, Mary Jo Scarlette. Mary Jo re-upped for another term as secretary to take the minutes of our meetings. It is important that the minutes are taken accurately and transcribed in a timely fashion. This is important for the continuity of our chapter's governance.

We have some other members who stepped up and re-stepped up on the board. A new face on the board is Cindy DeLordo. Cindy will be our Director of Membership replacing Tony Yarbrough. I'm sure Cindy will make sure everyone signs in and is accounted for or else! Mary Kirkpatrick is not new to the board, but Mary, who has a passion for education, will be our Director of POW/MIA Issues and Education, a position she previously held. And finally, the capable Bill Fulton will continue on as the Director of Activities keeping us informed of all upcoming events.

But the glue that keeps this all together is our Chairman of the Board Wayne Kirkpatrick. Congratulations or maybe condolences are in line for Wayne being re-elected for another term. All the OPODS, all the repatriation ceremonies, the local community holiday parades, the missing service person table ceremonies, the annual Rolling Thunder Nationwide Ride for Freedom, leading the Front Range Ride, the "Stand To" and all the emails. Thank you for your service.

I look forward to another successful year of activities and the involvement of all our members, especially our new members, in fulfilling our mission. Remember we will never forget!

Ted Makarewicz, President, Rolling Thunder IL, Chapter 2



Whenever we
Gather,
We will
Honor
and
Remember
Gratefully!



V.P.'s Vision

Rain, Rain, Go Away... Come Again Another Day!

By: Andy Haszlakiewicz



The 21st edition of Thunder Run didn't go as planned. IT RAINED! And it rained from the time we got to the James Lovell Federal Health Care Center in North Chicago until we were half way to Woodstock. Yet, in spite of that, 15 intrepid riders (and 2 passengers) braved the elements. Ten RT CH2 members rode: Nick Bender, Paul Hebein, Wayne Kirkpatrick, Jim Lasak, Ted Makarewicz, Garret Petersen, Bob Pullman, Scott Seal and Greg & Jane Smith (two up). Our seven guests included 2 or 3 from the Second Brigade (Becky Lenz's contacts) and a couple (two up) from R.T. Chapter 1. We had GREAT support from members who drove: Chuck Carlson, John Cummings, Don & Cindy De Lardo, Bill Fulton, Andy & Bozena Haszlakiewicz, Steve & Cindy Johnson, Mary Kirkpatrick, Rich Lanute, Becky Lenz, Mark Mazurkiewicz, Mary Jo Scalette (at Woodstock HD), Chuck Schumann, Patricia Theis and Tony Yarbrough. A GREAT BIG THANK YOU TO ALL!

We were fortunate to be able to use the parking garage structure at Lovell to stage and hold our ceremony which went smoothly. The escorted ride began in a steady rain, followed an altered, more direct route, and arrived at Woodstock Harley Davidson in cloudy but DRY conditions, All SAFE!

Had it not rained, we should have had 100+ bikes – as it was, due to the low turnout, the “festivities” at WHD were somewhat subdued. The dealership did provide a large tent and tables and a cooler with ice and water. And little else. There was no visible WHD staff support. Fact is the current WHD management has been much less supportive of us than the previous one. So due to the constraints placed by WHD we had one vendor – Midnight Machete (biker clothes), a military display by the local VFW and pizza for lunch. Each somewhat disappointing in their own way.

THE RAFFLE: The winners were - \$2000 to John Mihelich, \$1000 to Peter Diaz, \$500 to Paul Hebein's son, Nolan and the \$250 gas cards went to Paul's wife, Jacqui!

The TOP raffle ticket sellers were: 94 – Paul Hebein, 84 – Ted Makarewicz, 81 – Andy Haszlakiewicz, 78 – Nick Bender, 62 – Mart Jo Scarlette, 60 – Scott Seal, 60 – Bob Pullman, 54 – Bozena Haszlakiewicz, 50 – Jim Lasak, 50 – Becky Lenz, 49 – Reggie Rush. A GREAT JOB BY THESE ELEVEN MEMBERS FOR SELLING 722 TICKETS!! THANK YOU!

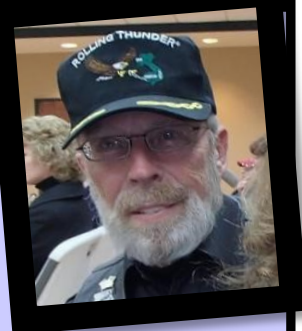
Another 10 members sold a total of JUST 177 tickets. Not counting our German contingent, we had 9 rostered members who were either no shows at meetings or have health issues which precluded them from selling. That leaves NINE members who attended at least one meeting during the spring and summer who did not sell or buy EVEN. ONE. SINGLE. TICKET. ??? My disappointment is profound! 899 tickets sold. \$8050 collected. And this is BEFORE expenses. Our one and only fundraiser... We were able to reduce expenses by not hiring a DJ and being able to cut down the pizza order on the day of the event. WE CAN AND NEED TO DO BETTER.

To all of you who stepped up and helped, I want to say again, THANK YOU! And I especially want to thank Wayne and Ted for their help, guidance, and support throughout this endeavor. Oh, and Chuck Carlson should get the award of “Driver in a Pinch” for shuttling members to the Port-a-Potties.





Chairman of the Board Wayne “Traveler” Kirkpatrick



There are so many good topics to address that it makes writing the Chairman's column easy.

We were notified of two re-turning MIAs recently. One family, however, desired a limited, quiet service and declined our participation. The other MIA's family was overjoyed with, and very grateful for, our request to participate.

We just held elections and what a great Board we have for next year.

Currently, we plan on escorting WWII Army Air Corps 1LT Ed McGuire from Midway to Alsip, IL and support interment services on 28 Oct. This family had heard of Rolling Thunder and they are excited over having us participate in the repatriation. I, personally, will be very proud to participate in the escorts and honors, once again, with all of you who can attend.

President: Ted Makarewicz
VP: Anthony Yarbrough
Secretary: Mary Jo Scarlette
Treasurer: Paul Hebein
Past President: Don DeLordo
Dir, Activities: Bill Fulton
Dir, QM/Vet Affairs: Mark Mazurkewicz
Dir, Membership: Cindy DeLordo
Dir, Education & POW/MIA: Mary Kirkpatrick

Our outgoing Board members include Andy Haszlakiewicz and Rich Lanute, who will still be around and able to contribute to our Chapter with their expertise and experience. This is a great team for a great Chapter, for a great cause!

Thanx to all of your effort, led by Andy Haszlakiewicz, our Thunder Run went smoothly in spite of the downpour. The turnout was not what we wanted, however, if we measure success by the metrics of safety, camaraderie, and a smooth operation, we were very successful. And, if we made \$1.00 in profit, that's more than we started with.

This year's POW/MIA National Recognition Day Remembrance Table Ceremony at Lovell VA was a bit challenging, with the changes in dates / times, member availability, etc. However, those of you who could, stepped up and, with minimal members, conducted one of our better ceremonies.

We are in the initial planning stages of our annual Veterans Day Stand To. Meetings with Windy City Harley Davidson resulted in their complete support for our event. With every member stepping up to make this happen, I know that we will be able to honor our Veterans with an event that is worthy of their attendance.

As our popularity grows with more public exposure, so does the demand for our participation in various events. We typically must decline requests for missions that are not within our POW/MIA mission scope. Obviously, this is difficult when we must decline escorting a 75 y/o Veteran, who served on active duty for 4 years, to the cemetery. Missions like that are referred to Patriot Guard, Legion Riders, etc with our apology and condolences communicated to the requestor.

Finally, as the Summer winds down, our events always seem to ramp up. So, stand by for some great Chair of Honor ceremonies and, hopefully, a few more reparations.





Pilot Accounted for from WWII

Submitted By: Traveler



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Edward Barnett, 24, of Chicago, Illinois, killed during World War II was accounted for May 5, 2023.

In the summer of 1943, Barnett served with the 66th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 44th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 8th Air Force. On Aug. 1, 1943, the B-24 Liberator aircraft on which Barnett was serving as a co-pilot crashed as a

result of enemy anti-aircraft fire during Operation TIDAL WAVE, the largest bombing mission against the oil fields and refineries at Ploiesti, north of Bucharest, Romania. His remains were not identified following the war. The remains that could not be identified were buried as Unknowns in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiesti, Prahova, Romania.

Following the war, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searched for and recovered fallen American personnel, disinterred all American remains from the Bolovan Cemetery for identification. The AGRC was unable to identify more than 80 unknowns from Bolovan Cemetery, and those remains were permanently interred at Ardennes American Cemetery and Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery, both in Belgium.

In 2017, DPAA began exhuming unknowns believed to be associated with unaccounted-for airmen from Operation TIDAL WAVE losses. These remains were sent to the DPAA Laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, for examination and identification.

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

Barnett's name is recorded on the Tablets of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery, an American Battle Monuments Commission site in Impruneta, Italy, along with others still missing from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

Barnett's funeral will be in Arlington National Cemetery, on a date to be determined.

Airman Accounted for from WWII

Submitted By: Traveler



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Walter B. Miklosh, 21, of Chicago, Illinois, killed during World War II, was accounted for May 5, 2023.

In the summer of 1944, Miklosh was assigned to the 678th Bombardment Squadron, 444th Bombardment Group (Very Heavy), 58th Bombardment Wing, Twentieth Bomber Command. On June 26, Miklosh while serving as a navigator on a B-29 Superfortress crashed into a rice paddy in the village of Sapekhati, India after a bombing raid on Imperial iron and steel works at Yawata, Kyushu Island, Japan. All 11 crew members were killed instantly in the crash.

On June 28, 1944 a team from 342nd Service Squadron, 329th Service Group visited the crash site recovering and identifying only seven sets of remains which were interred at in United States Military Cemetery in Panitola, Assam, India and subsequently disinterred and sent to their final internment on Jan. 13, 1948.

In September 1948 the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), investigation team searched the area of the crash site, but they did not discover any remains associated with Miklosh. He was declared non-recoverable Jan. 2, 1948.

In October 2014 the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command (a DPAA predecessor organization) conducted a Joint Field Activity in Sapekhati, which led to the location of the crash site and the recovery of life support equipment and wreckage associated with the B29 aircraft. In 2018 and 2019, Southeastern Archaeological Research (SEARCH) a DPAA partner organization excavated the site and recovered possible osseous remains and material evidence.

To identify Miklosh's remains, scientists from DPAA used material evidence. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used Y chromosome (Y-STR), analysis.

Miklosh will be buried in Sierra Vista, Arizona, on a date to be determined.

The USS Benevolence Brings Home American POWs From Japan

By: Jenny Ashcraft

September 1, 2023

Submitted by Traveler



On August 29, 1945, the USS Benevolence sailed into Tokyo Bay. She was the first American hospital ship to arrive in Japan to evacuate American, Allied, and civilian POWs from two internment camps following the end of WWII. After spending the fall onboarding patients and caring for them, the *Benevolence* set sail for the US on November 27, 1945.

She reached San Francisco on December 12, 1945.

Japanese surrender at Tokyo Bay



After Emperor Hirohito announced that Japan would surrender on August 15, 1945, military officials began moving 300 US Navy ships toward Tokyo Bay, where Japan would sign the official Instrument of Surrender on September 2. Among those ships were three hospital ships: the USAHS *Marigold*, the USS *Rescue*, and the USS *Benevolence*.

The *Benevolence* was a new hospital ship, recently converted from the cargo ship SS *Marine Lion*. She had over 800 hospital beds, state-of-the-art operating rooms, labs, other medical facilities, and a highly trained medical staff. The ship included another revolutionary feature – air conditioning.

Master Sgt. Oliver C. Thomas, left, and ARM 3-C Alvin Hughes are treated aboard the USS Benevolence. Fort Worth Star-Telegram – September 11, 1945



Soon after entering the harbor, the *Benevolence* began receiving patients. Among them was Master Sgt. Oliver C. Thomas. Thomas enlisted in 1941 and served

in the 421st Squadron, 504th Bomb Group, as a B-29 flight engineer. On May 29, 1945, his plane was hit by flak on a bombing run over Yokohama. Losing altitude, the crew of 12 jumped. Nine ended up in the same POW camp in Japan. Thomas described the conditions of his imprisonment in a newspaper interview following the war. “Sixteen of us were crowded into a cell 8 by 10 feet. Military police beat us on the heads with rifle butts... one crewman was beaten unmercifully with a bamboo rod.” During his imprisonment, Thomas lost 50 pounds. Despite the beatings, he fared better than many others.

Sgt. Harold T. Hedges – bottom row, second from right (no. 10)



Sgt. Harold T. Hedges served in the 500th Bomb

Group, 882nd Bomb Squadron, and was the only survivor when a Japanese suicide plane rammed his B-29 over Nagoya on January 3, 1945. He endured horrific torture by his captors and was so severely beaten that he had to be carried aboard the *Benevolence* on a stretcher. Crew members reported the shock of seeing liberated prisoners’ thin and emaciated bodies.

In November, the *Benevolence* sailed toward California with 1,000 passengers. Medical personnel worked tirelessly to treat their precious human cargo. On December 12, 1945, the *Benevolence* arrived in San Francisco, where all patients and passengers disembarked. Those needing further medical care were transferred to Base Hospitals.

During her service in caring for liberated Allied POWs, the crew of the *Benevolence* screened 1520 prisoners of war and provided them with the best possible care.

Recent Repatriation Sgt. Willard Kendall

By Traveler



While POW/MIA issues are the heart of our Chapter, we must recognize that there are some in our society that do not, necessarily share our passion.

This appears to be the case with a WWII Hero from Chicago, Army Air Force Sgt Willard S. Kendall. We regret that we could not personally honor this hero however, we must always respect the family's desire for privacy. Sgt Kendall was buried with his mother and father at Forest Home Cemetery in Forest Park, IL on 16 September 2023.

Also buried in the same plot are sisters Mabel and Mary Kendall, his brother Elmer Kendall and Elmer's son, Willard S. Kendall. Buried in an adjoining plot are a brother George Kendall and George's wife, Louise.

Born March 5th, 1920. He was married to Dorothy M. Kendall and they had one son, Wayne L. Kendall, born August 21st, 1941.

Willard was the 11th of 13 children born to Bertram and Bertha Kendall.

Sergeant. Kendall entered the U.S. Army Air Forces from Illinois and served in the 32nd Bombardment Squadron, 301st Bombardment Group (Heavy).

On February 25, 1944, a B-17G Flying Fortress with a crew of nine was on a bombing mission against enemy targets in Regensburg, Germany. While flying

over the Austrian Alps, the Flying Fortress was hit by an enemy fighter plane and crashed into the mountains. All but one of the crew members bailed out before the plane crashed and were taken prisoner by German forces who returned them to U.S. custody following the war. The ninth crew member went down with the plane and remains unaccounted for.

He was the tail gunner aboard the B-17G when it went down and is the only crew member who perished in the incident. A surviving crew member reported that SGT Kendall had been wounded during the flight yet still managed to man his guns; however, he was unable to successfully bail out of the plane due to his injuries. Reports indicate he was buried in a small cemetery in Austria; however, American personnel were unable to locate his remains in the cemetery following the war. From the time of his death in 1944 until 2023, Willard's remains were unidentifiable. Sergeant Kendall was memorialized on the Tablets of the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery in Impruneta, Italy. Recent DNA technology allowed for positive identification in 2023.

During Willard's service in World War II, he was the recipient of a number of Air Force Oak Leaf Combat Awards and the Purple Heart Medal.





DPAA Begins a Multi-Year “Hellship” Accounting Project

Submitted By: Traveler

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) began the multi-year project to disinter the remains of 431 Unknowns that are associated with those lost on the Enoura Maru, a cargo ship used by the Imperial Japanese Navy in World War II to transport prisoners of war (POWs). Nearly 1000 service members are unaccounted for from this incident.

The first step of the Enoura Maru Project began with an effort to collect DNA samples, which was necessary for the agency to propose the disinterment.

“An important part of the project is that we [take] the DNA from the bones,” said Carrie LeGarde, a forensic anthropologist, and the project lead. “Then, that needs to be compared to a sample to figure out who it is, so the DNA we get from living biological relatives is really important.”

Once enough family reference samples were collected and Defense Department approval was received, the agency began to disinter the remains. Challenges grew as most of the remains were buried at sea, cremated during the Enoura Maru’s voyage, or commingled with other remains.

“The remains were mixed up so part of what we need to do is figure out which bones belong together and represent one individual,” said LeGarde. “This project is going to be a big challenge.”

Fortunately, the agency has worked on projects like this one in the past, such as the USS Oklahoma Project that was recently completed after six years.

“The USS Oklahoma was another large, commingled human remains project, so I am fortunate to be able to take the lessons we learned from that project and apply [them] towards the Enoura Maru Project,” said LeGarde. “It has helped inform our DNA sampling strategy, data management, and workflow on a large complex project.”

In the winter of 1944, the Japanese Imperial Navy used cargo ships, known as “Hellships”, to carry and



transport over 20,000 allied POWs from various locations to Japan to be used as laborers. While aboard these Hellships, POWs suffered intense crowding, starvation, poor sanitation, and mistreatment from Japanese Soldiers.

Being that Hellships were typically unmarked, U.S. forces would attack and sink many, unaware of the thousands of POWs onboard who were left to fend for themselves. In situations where they were ordered to abandon ship, POWs would plunge into the freezing water and swim towards land. When Japanese soldiers deemed that they were swimming too far off course, they fired upon and killed many.

In one instance, survivors were herded onto tennis courts in Olongapo, Philippines and taken to the provincial jail where they were held for seven days. During this time, 15 wounded POWs were deemed unfit to continue traveling and subsequently executed. The remaining prisoners boarded the Enoura Maru to continue the voyage to Takao.

During the journey, sickness and starvation claimed the lives of many POWs, most of which were buried at sea.

As the numbers dwindled down, the prisoners who did not succumb to the horrendous conditions of the Hellships were placed aboard the Enoura Maru. A week later, U.S. aircraft attacked the ship, sinking it and killing over 300 in the explosion.

After the attack, the Japanese allowed the transfer of all the deceased to shore where there are reports of mass burials and cremations. Those who survived the attack boarded the Brazil Maru and continued the journey, many succumbing to their wounds just days later. When the Brazil Maru finally made its arrival to Moji, Japan, roughly 300 of the initial 1,619 remained.

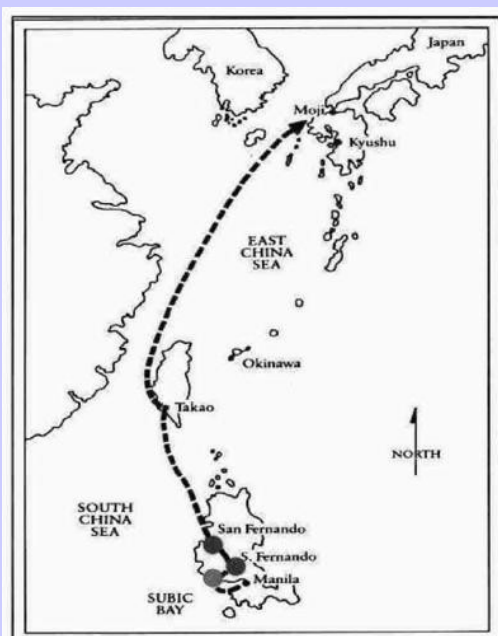
(Continued on page 9)



Hellship, Continued

“These guys held out for months against pretty tough odds and they did a lot of heroic acts in the process,” said Greg Kupsky, the historian lead for the project. “If we can bring some of them home, give them their names and identifications back, and send them home to their families that would be great.”

Due to the size and complexity of the Enoura Maru Project, the initial analyses and DNA testing will take several years to complete. While the project is not an easy one, the agency strives to provide the fullest possible accounting of missing and unaccounted-for U.S. service members for their families and for the nation.



The Course that many of the Hellships traveled

Submit Your DNA to Identify a KIA/MIA

Whenever our government classifies a member of the military as Missing in Action (MIA) or Killed in Action (KIA) the family is notified. However, it may be years or decades before recovery of any remains is achieved, if ever.

In 1991 the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory (AFDIL), a division of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System, was established as the only Department of Defense (DOD) forensic DNA testing laboratory for the identification of human remains.

Advances in science now makes it possible to identify human remains through the analysis of DNA. To assist AFDIL in the identification process families can submit their own DNA for matching with currently recovered remains, or the DNA will be stored in government labs specially designed to preserve it for future recoveries.

Each military department maintains a Service Casualty Office. Each office dedicates the following addresses and telephone numbers for family use:

U.S. Air Force

HQ AFPC/DPFCM
550 C Street West
JBSA-Randolph, TX 78150-4716
Tel: 1-(800) 531-4716

U.S. Army

Department of the Army
Attn Past Conflicts AHRC-PDC-R
1600 Spearhead Div. Ave. Dept. 450
Fort Knox, KY 40122-5405
Tel: 1 (800) 892-2490

U.S. Marine Corps

Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps
Manpower and Reserve Affairs (MFPC)
Personal and Family Readiness Division
2008 Elliot Road
Quantico, VA 22134-5103
Tel: 1 (800) 847-1597

U.S. Navy

Navy Personnel Command Casualty Assistance Division
5720 Integrity Drive
Millington, TN 38055-0000
Tel: 1 (800) 443-9208

Please contact the address below if you wish to provide information about an American missing in action from any conflict, or have an inquiry about MIAs:

Public Affairs Office

Washington, D.C.
2300 Defense Pentagon
Attn: External Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20301-2300

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Pact Act in Action!

Submitted by: By: Mark Mazurkewicz

The Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022, known as the **Honoring our PACT Act of 2022**, is an Act of Congress that spends \$797 billion to significantly improve healthcare access and funding for veterans who were exposed to toxic substances during military service! This recent release shows the impact that this program is having on addressing the health of our Veterans! .

Mail - Embargoed notification to VSOs - Press Release: Veter...

about:blank

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations
Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

EMBARGOED UNTIL RELEASED BY VA AT 11AM ON 9/14

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 14, 2023

Veterans and survivors have filed more than 1 million benefits claims under the PACT Act

VA has delivered more than \$2.2 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors since President Biden signed PACT into law

WASHINGTON — Today, VA announced that Veterans and their survivors have filed more than one million claims for toxic exposure-related benefits under the PACT Act since President Biden signed it into law Aug. 10, 2022. VA has processed more than 551,000 of these claims, granting 77.9% of them and awarding more than \$2.2 billion in earned benefits to Veterans and survivors. Supporting veterans and their families is a core pillar in President Biden's Unity Agenda for our nation, and today's announcement helps deliver on his promise to comprehensively address military related toxic exposure.

Thanks to the largest outreach campaign in VA history, Veterans and survivors are applying for their earned benefits at record rates. In this fiscal year alone, Veterans and survivors have submitted 2.29 million total claims (PACT and non-PACT) — 40.4% more year-to-date than last fiscal year, which was the previous all-time record. Veterans have also submitted more than 2.1 million "intents to file" during this fiscal year — 53.1% more than all of last fiscal year and also an all-time record.

The PACT Act is the biggest expansion of Veteran health care and benefits in decades. VA encourages all eligible Veterans and survivors to [file a claim](#) — or [submit their intent to file a claim](#) — for PACT Act-related benefits now.

"Thanks to President Biden, the heroes who fought for our country are now getting health care and compensation for the conditions that followed them home from war," said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. "We're proud that more than one million Veterans and survivors have applied for their hard-earned benefits to date, but this is just the beginning — and we won't rest until every Veteran and every survivor gets the VA health care and benefits they deserve."

Partly due to the PACT Act, VA is delivering more care and more benefits to more Veterans than ever before. Key results to date include:

- 1. Delivering benefits to Veterans and their survivors:** VA has processed 1.85 million total Veteran claims (PACT and non-PACT) thus far in this fiscal year — 15.7% more to date than last fiscal year and already surpassing last year's all-time record total of 1.7 million claims processed.
- 2. Increasing Veteran access to health care:** Since Aug. 10, 378,995 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care. This includes more than 158,691 enrollees from the PACT Act population (Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 era Veterans).

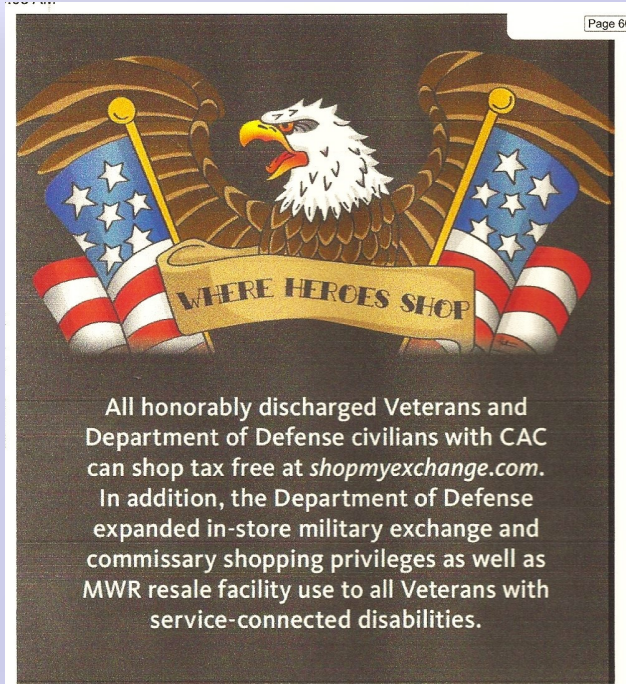
9/15/2023, 4:49 P



Let's Help the VA to make the Holidays special for our Heroes!

Both Ken List and Anna Abraham have lists of needs for the Veterans that they work with every day. Why don't we begin to gather items on the list and bring them to the October and November Meetings... Ken has a variety of patients with health needs. Anna and Tricia operate the Hospice and Paliative Care Programs. Their needs of these two groups vary... hence the difference in the lists!

Ken List's List	Anna Abraham and Tricia Stewart's List
• Bodywash • Lotion • Hats • Scarves • Gloves • Underware (mainly mens lg/exlg) • Sweat pants or pajama pants • Sweatshirts	• Bodywash • Lotion • Hats • Scarves • Gloves • Wash • Clothes • Poligrip • Denture cleaning tablets



Veteran's Day Deals! Check out the lists of Opportunities to Know How Much You Mean to Your Fellow Americans!

There are many ways to let someone know they are appreciated.... Check out these web-sites to see the food, services and vacations available to those who have served!

[2023 Veterans Day Deals, Discounts and Freebies | Military.com](https://www.military.com/veterans-day-deals)

[2023 Veterans Day Freebies, Retail Discounts, and Special Offers \(themilitarywallet.com\)](https://themilitarywallet.com)

[Veterans Day Free Meals, Discounts, Sales and Deals](#)



Lost in the Sky: A Families Commitment to Finding Answers!

By Traveler

It's Thanksgiving Day in 1967. The Mayercik family has gathered in New Jersey to celebrate together and give thanks for another year. The smell of freshly cooked food and the joyful sound of conversation and laughter fills the house as the family reflects on what they are grateful for. Between the bustling movement in the kitchen and the fellowship happening throughout the halls, there is a stifling knock at the door. Outside, two uniformed men stand, preparing to deliver news that will change the lives of this family forever. Maj. Ronald Mayercik was a navigator aboard an RF-4C Phantom II during the Vietnam War in 1967. He vanished, along with the aircraft's pilot, Col. Brenden Foley, after departing for a weather reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam. An aerial search and rescue mission was launched in an attempt to locate the aircraft but no sign of wreckage or the crew was ever found. Mayercik was never heard from again and to this day is listed as unaccounted for by the Department of Defense.

"There's no grave to go visit," said Traci Wood, niece of Mayercik. "There's no 'what happened to him?' or 'what did he go through?'"

For 56 years, the family of Mayercik has searched for answers. With no information, no clues, and no trace of the aircraft wreckage ever being located, they have desperately clung to the hope that someday, somehow, he will come home.

"They didn't even want to move," said Wood, about her grandparents. "They always said 'what if he comes back and we're not here?' so they hold out hope, still to this day."

Since the early 2000s, the family of Mayercik has relied on the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to provide answers and solve the mystery of his disappearance. They attend DPAA events regularly, including the annual Vietnam Government Brief, to receive updates and information on the search to bring him home.

"It's been a long time and [DPAA] is still going up there and excavating," said Wood. "He deserves to come back here and be buried on U.S. soil with his family."

William (Buddy) Newell, the research analyst assigned to Mayercik's case, has been involved with DPAA for years.

"I have a special relationship with this case," said Newell. "We will keep going [to the site] until we can find him and get an identification."

The first field investigation team that attempted to locate the crash site started their investigation in 1994 in Laos. It wasn't until November of 2000 that the investigation was relocated to Vietnam after the team received notification that a local had discovered Mayercik's identification tag near Hanoi, Vietnam.

"When you find ID tags you know that the body was nearby," said Newell. "They adjust whenever they go out and they do these excavations wherever they find these specific items."

Between the years of 2005 and 2013, excavation teams attempted to establish base camps on a mountain just Northwest of Hanoi, Vietnam to begin the search for possible remains, but due to inclement weather conditions in the area, these attempts were unsuccessful. In 2016, DPAA decided to coordinate with the Vietnamese, who were more familiar with the area and acclimated to the weather conditions, to begin a unilateral excavation in attempt to locate Mayercik.

"That's when we started finding material evidence that supported this location," Newell said. "We have a really good relationship with [Vietnam] and everything is just looking better."

Three generations have passed, all of them dedicated to keeping the memory of Mayercik alive. His bedroom nicknamed "Uncle Ronnie's room", by his nieces and nephews, became a place of fun and excitement where they would occasionally sleep, awaiting his return.

(Continued on page 13)



“He was almost like a legend in our family’s eyes,” said Wood. “I would hear stories from my mom and my grandparents.”

His picture, a large painting commissioned shortly after his disappearance, and a replica of the Phantom aircraft he disappeared in, hang in a special place in his childhood home, serving as reminders that although he is gone, his life, his sacrifice, and his memory will never be forgotten.

Mayercik’s family plans to attend the annual Vietnam Government Brief until he is found. DPAA will continue in their search to bring him and hundreds more home. The agency remains committed to providing the fullest possible account of missing and unaccounted-for U.S. service members for their families and for the nation.

Annual POW/MIA Recognition Day Poster Unveiled

By: SGT Ashleigh Maxwell
Submitted by: Traveler’

During a ceremony at the Pentagon, the 2023 POW/MIA Recognition Day poster was unveiled by distinguished guests such as Honorable Christine Wormuth, United States Secretary of the Army, Mr. Kelly McKeague, Director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, and Retired Air Force Col. Michael Brazelton, a former prisoner of war.

Each year before POW/MIA Recognition Day, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA), creates a poster commemorating the lives of United States service members still unaccounted for from past conflicts.

The poster features the words “Though not here, their sacrifice is not forgotten” and the Recognition Day will be September 15 this year.

“We know how much this matters because every month, there are families who do receive the news they have often been waiting decades to hear – that their loved one has finally been accounted for.” said Wormuth.

One of the families in attendance this year was the family of retired Col. Michael Brazelton, who survived more than six years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. Brazelton continues to support DPAA’s mission to bring home the Nation’s unaccounted for and serves as a reminder of the sacrifices that the Nation’s prisoners of war and missing in action have made.

“It’s good to be home and it’s still good to be home,” said Brazelton.

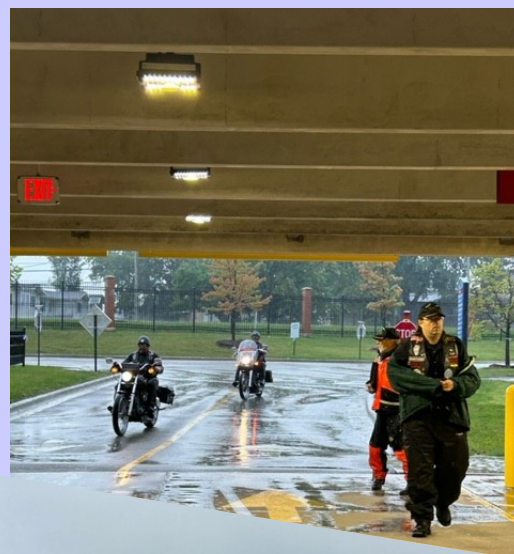
Today, approximately 82,000 are still unaccounted for from conflicts dating as far back as World War II. DPAA remains committed to providing the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation.

“To all of the veterans and family group representatives, thank you once again for the depth of your commitment to this cause, and for always standing with the men and women.



After Action Report Thunder Run, 2023 Rainy, but a Success!

Our Chapter Came together and made a soggy day a day filled with Honor and Remembrance! Our POW/MIA Heroes were at the heart of the day and brought sunshine in the rain!



Clouds still hung overhead, but the flag was flying and we carried on!



We thank the men and women who work to keep us safe!





The POW/MIA Remembrance Table at James A. Lovell Veteran's Hospital!



Once Again, Our Rolling Thunder Table Ceremony was a part of the Veteran's Hospital's Day of honor! It is always special to be a part of Honoring our POW/MIA Heroes!

And look who landed on the moon!
Our own Chuck Carlson!



Doc's Corner...

By: Mark Mazurkiewicz

Moving Forward at the VA Information from the VA from Doc!

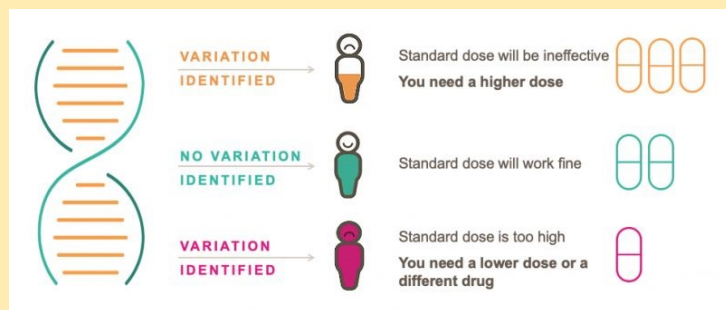
Doc attends the meetings held at James Lovell VA to bring back the information of the changes and developments happening. So many new opportunities for Veterans and for those who want to assist!



New Genetics Testing!

The PGX or Pharmacogenomic Testing is now available for all veterans!

- ✦ What is Pharmacogenetics? PGx uses information from a person's genes to understand how they respond to medicines. Genes are a part of our DNA that provide instructions on how your body develops and function. Everyone has small differences in their genes. Because of this, people may respond differently to medicines.
- ✦ What are the advantages of having information? It has been shown that knowing about your genes can affect the decisions that are made for medicines—what kind and how much! With this 'Personalized Medicine' can ensure that the effect of the medicines are maximized while the side-effects are minimized!
- ✦ Are there harms from PGx Testing? The risk is low. It is a blood draw so the risks are like the other tests that require blood draws. You may receive an unexpected result identifying a medical problem. And the medicine that is recommended by your PGx test may be more expensive if it is not preferred by the VA.
- ✦ What are the limitation of PGx testing? Genetics only tells us part of the story. Other things like age, overall health, other medicines you take, body size and reactions to other medicines all play a part in decisions that will be made.
- ✦ How do we perform PGx testing? Your provider will discuss and answer your questions about: 1) what the PGx test results may find. 2) what happens to your sample after testing. 3) your privacy. 4) your benefits limitations and risks. 5) The test requires one tube of blood. It can take up to two weeks for your healthcare team to get results and add them to your VA Medical record.
- ✦ YOUR PGx TEST RESULTS WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL WITHIN THE BA. It will only be shared with your permission or if there is a court order.
- ✦ Visit the following sites for more information:
 - ◆ National Institute of Health: <https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Pharmacogenomics>
 - ◆ VA PGx Website: <https://www.cancer.va.gov/phaser.asp>
 - ◆ FHCC Points of Contact:
 - ◆ Nicole C. Watkins—Nicole.watkins@va.gov
 - ◆ Dr. George C. Gettys—George.Gettys@VA.gov



Other Notes from the meeting that we can use to develop events!

- ✦ Masks are only required on the wards. No masks for activities
- ✦ If you would like to volunteer and haven't been involved recently... You will need to reapply or have your information reactivated. Also you will have to have the first two COVID vaccines.
- ✦ More people are needed for all areas of volunteerism at the hospital. Large needs to help with the DAV van to drive patients and also in the *My Healthy Vet* Program.
- ✦ Donations are needed... See the previous page for opportunities to give!

"To care for them who have borne the battle"

Abe Lincoln.



Military Celebrations for 3rd Quarter

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

October

October = Breast Cancer Awareness Month

- 8 Ms. Veteran America Pageant
- 9 Columbus Day



- 13 U.S. Navy Birthday
- 26 Day of the Deployed
- 27 Navy Day
- 31 Halloween



November

National Veterans & Military Family Month

Warrior Care Month

National Family Caregivers Month

1-5 National Veterans Small Business Week

- 5 End of Daylight Savings Time
- 10 Marine Corps Birthday



- 11 Veteran's Day
- 11 Armistice Remembrance Day

23 Thanksgiving Day

30 Giving Tuesday!



December

1 Civil Air Patrol (USAF) Auxiliary Birthday

7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day



7-15 Hannukkah



13 U.S. National Guard Birthday



18 National Wreaths Across America

25 Christmas Day



26- January 1 Kwanzaa



1 New Year's Eve



- 1 October Jurgen Lutz
- 8 October John Cummings
- 11 October Bozena Haszlkiewicz
- 12 October Chuck Schumann
- 26 October Jeff Kosuta
- 29 October Nick Bender
- 29 October Joyce Miller
- 30 October Gene Rigby

- 2 November Bill Fulton
- 11 November Dave Miller
- 18 November Doug Jackson
- 20 November Paul Hebein

- 5 December Jim Lasik
- 11 December Tony Yarbrough

Happy Birthday to
Our Great
Americans!



Happy Days to our Chapter Celebrities for October,
November, December

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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