FREE

VBCMagazine

Stories Unite Us | Since 2008

SANDRA ORTEGA
AIR FORCE TRAILBLAZER

SCUDS OVER RIYADH
REMEMBERING DESERT STORM

THE YELLOW RIBBON
A TWISTED HISTORY

ICE CREAM SOCIAL
ON THE DMZ, 1968

"IN MY HEART, I FORGAVE"
A SURVIVOR RECALLS THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH

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FALL 2022

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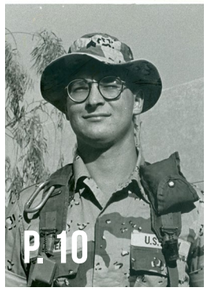

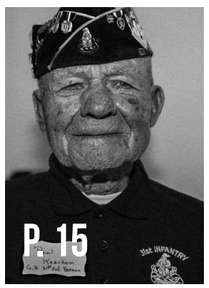

FEATURES

DEPARTMENTS

Cover: Sandra Ortega (Courtesy Dave Hernandez/Catholic Star Herald/Catholic Review)

VBC Magazine is published quarterly by The Veterans Breakfast Club, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that harnesses the power of storytelling in order to connect, educate, heal, and inspire.

200 Magnolia Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15228 (412) 623-9029 veteransbreakfastclub.org For more information, contact betty@veteransbreakfastclub.org

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thank you to those who have shared copies of *VBC Magazine* with others interested in veterans' stories. Because of you, we have added 719 recipients (I counted) to our magazine mailing list since we sent the Summer 2022 issue to the printer back in May. As I often say, next to word of mouth, *VBC Magazine* is the best advertising the Veterans Breakfast Club does for our mission of sharing veterans' stories from all eras, backgrounds, and branches of service. Word is spreading about our programs, and we're thrilled to have in-person events scheduled this fall in Lancaster, PA, Evanston, Il, Chicago, and Boston, in addition to the Pittsburgh region. If you'd like to talk about holding an in-person event in your area, let me know. Although we began in 2008 with a focus on World War II veterans, we now celebrate and honor everyone who's served by inviting them to join us at in-person and online events and share their stories through our Veterans History Project. You never know who you're going to meet or what you're going to hear. They may be *your* stories. But they're *our* history, and I can't think of a better time for our nation to be educated and inspired by the experiences, good and bad, of those who have served this country we love.

Todd

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Want to receive VBC Magazine in the mail? Let us know! Scan the QR code to sign up.

UPCOMING EVENTS
IN-PERSON, FACE-TO-FACE

For an updated in-person event schedule, scan this QR code!

All in-person events begin at 8:30am unless otherwise noted and include breakfast for $15pp. RSVP to betty@veteransbreakfastclub.org or 412-623-9029.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17: Woodcrest Villa, 2001 Harrisburg Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601 (follow signs to VIVA Centre).

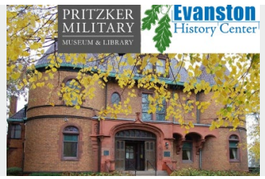
Free breakfast, courtesy of Ken Pederson (NMLS: 134943) of Fairway Independent Mortgage Corporation

Thank you, Ken Pederson!
NMLS: 134943
FAIRWAY INDEPENDENT MORTGAGE CORPORATION

TUESDAY, September 27: Christ United Methodist Church (44 Highland Rd, Bethel Park 15102)

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28:
Evanston History Center, 225 Greenwood St, Evanston, IL 60201.

Free breakfast, courtesy of the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and its sponsors.



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29: Pritzker Military Museum & Library, 104 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60603.

Free breakfast, courtesy of the Pritzker Military Museum & Library and its sponsors.

WEDNESDAY, October 5: Seven Oaks Country Club (132 Lisbon Rd, Beaver, 15009)

TUESDAY, October 11, 9:00AM: McKeesport Regional History and Heritage Center (1832 Arboretum Dr, McKeesport, PA 15132)

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 21, 6:30pm, USS Constitution Museum, Building 22, Charlestown Navy Yard, Charlestown, MA 02129

Free event, refreshments and veterans' stories

TUESDAY, October 25: Christ United Methodist Church (44 Highland Rd, Bethel Park 15102)

FRIDAY, November 18: Comfort Inn & Conference Center (699 Rodi Rd, Penn Hills, PA 15235)

WEDNESDAY, November 30: Christ Church at Grove Farm (249 Duff Rd, Sewickley, PA 15143)

WEDNESDAY, December 7: Seven Oaks Country Club (132 Lisbon Rd, Beaver, 15009)

SATURDAY, December 17: Christ United Methodist Church (44 Highland Rd, Bethel Park 15102)

ONLINE, VIRTUAL, ZOOM & SOCIAL MEDIA

For an updated online event schedule, scan this QR code!

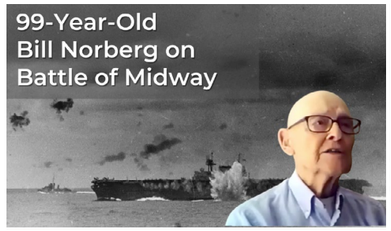
Every Monday, 3rd Tuesday, 2nd Thursday at 7:00pm ET
Great guests, remarkable stories, open conversation
Join live at Zoom: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6402618738
Watch live on YouTube: youtube.com/veteransbreakfastclub
Watch live on Facebook: facebook.com/veteransbreakfastclub

Mondays @ 7pm ET

3rd Tuesdays @ 7pm ET

2nd Thursdays @ 7pm ET

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

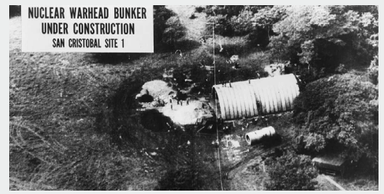


OUR TEAM

Todd DePastino, Executive Director
Shaun Hall, Director of Programming
Betty Karleski, Community Outreach & Communications

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

What Went Wrong in Afghanistan? – Monday, September 26 @ 7pm. Guests: Gen. Chris Stockel, Col. Chris Holshek, and Col. Hughes Turner



60th Anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis - Monday, October 17 @ 7pm ET

The Sullivan Brothers: 80th Anniversary of the USS Juneau's Sinking – Tuesday, November 15 @ 7:00pm ET

VETERANS BREAKFAST CLUB
VET-A-THON
Live-streamed around the clock & around the world on Nov 11

Vet-A-Thon
Friday, November 11, ALL DAY

The Son Tay Raid, 1970: "Successful Failure"-- Monday, November 21 @ 7pm ET

Holocaust Survivor and Ritchie Boy, Jack Boeki – Thursday, December 1 @ 7pm ET

Sandra Ortega 1958 (Courtesy Ortega Family)

FEATURE

"I WAS ON A MISSION"

Air Force Trailblazer, Sandra Ortega

The word "ebullient" comes to mind when I think of Dr. Sandra Ortega, an Air Force veteran who joined our VBC Happy Hour *for the first time back in May. Sandy's high-spirited approach to life no doubt saw her through the trials of serving as the first direct-commissioned Black woman officer in the United States Air Force. As an officer and, later, a civilian employee, Sandy blazed trails in the military community by promoting better family support, more drug and alcohol prevention counseling, and improved higher education and healthcare. Below, she shares her remarkable story of joining the USAF Officer Corps during the height of the Civil Rights Movement.*

On July 4, 1958, I landed at Lackland Air Force Base to begin six months at the Officer Basic Military Course (OBMC). If I made it, I'd become a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, the first Black woman to hold that rank.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower himself had selected me to serve in this pioneering role.

To this day, I have no idea how it happened.

I never had any thought of joining the military, and my family certainly didn't encourage it. I was a bookish twenty-year-old senior at Morgan State University, a historically black college in Baltimore, when Army ROTC commander, Colonel Willard Stewart and Chief Warrant Officer Goode came to our house to talk to my parents about it.

Mind you, I was never consulted, even though they were discussing my future.

I remember that first visit vividly. I was coming home from a day of classes. I had to take three buses to get to back to West Baltimore and our house by the railroad tracks on the corner. As I approached our block, I looked up and saw my mom, dad, and sister sitting on our porch with two Black men in uniform. I had no idea who the men were. I'd never seen them before. But they were talking about me.

"You will not use my daughter as a token Black female," my father said sternly. My dad was protective of his daughters, and he didn't like the idea of my being exploited by the military.

My mother, however, saw the Air Force as an opportunity. Eventually, she wore my father down. Colonel Stewart and Chief Warrant Officer Goode had to pay three separate visits before my dad relented.

"Ok," he said, "we'll give it a try."

Nobody asked me. No one said, "Sandy, do you want to join the Air Force?"

Not that I would have rejected it out of hand. But I knew nothing about the military, and nothing in my past prepared me for what I was getting into. And there were plenty of other young women who seemed far more capable and with far better grades than me.

In fact, though I was studious, I didn't do so well grade-point-average-wise. The college president, Dr. Martin D. Jenkins, had called me into his office after my first disappointing semester. He looked me in the eye and asked, "Why are you here?" The question cut to my core. Why was I there? I must have answered his query cogently because he ended the meeting by saying, "I'll see you next semester."

Sandra Ortega, 1958 (Courtesy Ortega Family)

Sandra Ortega (right) with classmates at the Air Force officer school at Lackland. (Courtesy Ortega Family)

Dr. Jenkins was on the team approached by the White House in 1957–the year of the Little Rock Nine and the first Civil Rights Act since Reconstruction–about selecting a Black woman for the Air Force Officer Corps. President Eisenhower had promised progress on racial equality. And the Air Force was the youngest and fastest-growing service branch. When the request for nominations came to Dr. Jenkins' desk, he, for some reason, suggested me.

Looking back, I'm grateful he did. Our family was proud, but poor. My father mowed lawns and drove a hearse for a living. My mother kept house for a Mrs. Brown, a white woman, for two dollars a day. My parents valued education highly as a path for advancement. But they didn't have money for college.

My schooling was almost snuffed out at age nine when I started having grand mal seizures -- epilepsy. The "colored" public school I attended in West Baltimore in the 1940s couldn't handle my condition, so I was expelled. Baltimore schools were strictly segregated. There was nowhere for me to go.

My parents petitioned the Oblate Sisters of Providence at St. Francis Academy on East Chase Street to take me. The Oblate Sisters were a Catholic religious order of Black women, the first in America. The nuns accepted me and gave me a great education. Tuition was three-dollars-a-month. My Black neighbors chipped in to pay for it.

As graduation approached, the sisters encouraged me to write to Morgan State and ask for a scholarship. I did just that. I told them I had no money, but if they would let me go to Morgan, I would make them proud. Two weeks later, I got my acceptance and scholarship letter.

Morgan State had a respected ROTC program–the "Bear Battalion." But women weren't a part of it and wouldn't be until 1972. I never stepped foot in the ROTC office, nor gave a thought to the military.

But, I have to admit, the prospect of an Air Force career was intriguing.

I've always been a dreamer, and my earliest dreams involved traveling the world. I recall lying in bed listening to the trains going by just outside my window and imagining myself aboard heading off somewhere.

At Morgan State, I majored in French and wanted to work abroad as an interpreter. But, of course, that was far-fetched.

Young people today should understand just how limited horizons were for African American women in the 1950s. The only realistic aspiration was to teach in Black elementary schools. Almost every other door was closed to me. I remember applying to an airline for a stewardess job and being told there were no positions for women like me.

So, even though you had dreams, you learned to whittle them down because our real-life opportunities were so limited.

Once my father agreed to the Air Force, I came under the keen oversight of Morgan State's ROTC command. I was assigned a driver who took me back and forth to Fort Holabird in southeast Baltimore for testing. "Make us proud," Colonel Stewart would say. The tests never had anything to do with the military. I wrote essays, took psychological batteries, and even translated some French. I never had a physical or otherwise trained for what I was about to experience. No one told me anything or gave me instructions.

"We can't tell you what it will be like because we don't know," Colonel Stewart said. "You're the first to go through it. All we tell you is to make us proud. This has nothing to do with you. This is about opening doors. This is a mission for racial opportunity." Those were his exact words.

Turns out, they were the best words he could have said. They helped get me through. When things got tough—and they were always tough--I knew that I was on a mission. I knew I had to succeed. It wasn't about me.

Landing San Antonio, Texas, in 1958 was like landing on Mars. I was used to segregation, but never like this. Signs everywhere declared, "Whites Only," "Colored Only," or the more indirect, "We Reserve The Right to Refuse Service to Anyone." Parks, restrooms, drinking fountains, schools, restaurants, buses, theaters were all segregated. There was even a sign on property owned by the Air Force at Medina Lake.

A shuttle bus picked me up and took me to the Personnel Office at Lackland AFB. A young Airman looked at me, eyes agog, and shuffled some papers.

"We weren't expecting a you, you," he said, emphasizing the first "you."

I knew what he meant. He'd never seen a woman of color on the base before.

He directed me to the OBMC Training Center at the base, where I joined a flight of twenty women, all white. They'd already been in training together, and I was added on. Our eight-week course covered administration, management, leadership, military justice, and general military training.

The other cadets were courteous, but distant. I was in the flight, but not of it. And, I was as alien to them as this whole world was to me.

For example, the women would ask me questions about my skin—"Do you tan?"—and even touch and rub my skin. They'd never been so close to a Black person before and were curious.

Other encounters were less innocuous. The first time I entered a swimming pool, mothers started screaming at their children to get out of the water. White officers, male ones, wouldn't talk to me. It was taboo. They simply ignored me as if I were not there.

Once a month we had a dance, a social event with men in officer training. We women would sit along one wall, and the guys on another. The music would start, and then the men would rise, walk across the room, and ask the women to dance. I was never asked. I sat there alone. None of the men would dare to be seen touching me or holding my hand.

I never got used to the crushing isolation, insults, and terrible loneliness, but I never showed it. I never complained. If you look at photographs of me from this period, I'm smiling through it all.

My job was to muscle through, to survive it. "You can't get discharged," I told myself through gritted teeth. Graduating with a commission was my controlling aim, my only responsibility. That was my mission. Nothing else mattered.

Commissioned Second Looey has 'beauty plus brains'

On June 19 the US Air Force added a pretty Morgan State College French major to the staff as 2nd lieutenant.

She is Miss Sandra Almeta Williams, 21, 2542 W. Mosher St., a 1957 Morgan graduate who says she has always had an urge to travel, see the world, make money and serve her country.

Since her college days came to an end, Lt. Williams has been scanning the work-a-day world for a job befitting a vivacious personality and she ruled out the teaching of French for which she had been trained.

Recalling information which came through ROTC acquaintances, the young woman decided to see what the Armed Forces offers..

After more than a year of preparation, her ideal job has varied experienc little word of a women who may to wander".

She says: "I w young women t opportunities through a ca Armed Forces.

"So few colle turn their thoug field which I hav more interesting I could have sele

Lt. Williams' Williams, is a while her mot iams is employ wood State Tra love in I Sam Taky Ghana, who i versity senior tivation.

2nd Lt. SANDRA A. WILLIAMS

Left: Newspaper clipping (Courtesy Ortega Family).
Right: Sandy being interviewed by Scott Masters' history class (Courtesy Scott Masters)

I did make it to graduation, and there was a party. A woman in my flight who lived nearby offered to host the celebration, and the Air Force approved it. The classmate approached me, all smiles, and said, "Sandy, I know you will understand, but you cannot come to my house for the graduation party. My mother said the neighbors would not understand."

I just smiled back and nodded. The words cut and hurt, but I was on a larger mission. I didn't want to get discharged or earn a reputation of being "hard to get along with."

A fresh set of butter bars on my shoulders, I headed to my first duty station, Hill Air Force Base in Utah. I'd never heard of Utah.

The head of Materiel Command at Hill AFB was Major General Pearl H. Robey. General Robey had a much-beloved aid, a two-striper named Julio, who was given the job of showing me around. Julio was a Cuban immigrant and didn't speak too much English. But he was sharp as a tack, and kind, and an outsider, like me. He took me to the base hospital, where I was supposed to report to the commander, a Major Williams from Mississippi.

I entered Major Williams' office, stood at attention, saluted, reported for duty. Major Williams remained visibly immersed in his paperwork. Without so much as looking up, he told me he didn't have a job for me. He said I should do downstairs to an office and wait for Airman McDonald to take a lunch break. When he did, I could use McDonald's chair.

This was the Air Force equivalent of Siberian exile. I was being parked downstairs until Williams could get rid of me.

After a few days of keeping Airman McDonald's seat warm at lunchtime, I hauled in an unused desk and chair from elsewhere and set about inventing a job for myself.

I made the rounds and talked with people in various departments. I discovered that the hospital's records were in shambles. So, I appointed myself chief of records and got to work. I began putting everything in order and started writing a history of the hospital, which I thought would be useful. I created a filing system and made sure all new records were filed appropriately.

Three months later, Major Williams, whom I neither seen nor spoken with since meeting him, wrote me an evaluation. In it, Williams referred to me as "shiftless"—a not-so-subtle epithet reserved for Black people. He said I should never have been given a commission and should be discharged immediately.

This was a nightmare. My worst--my only--fear was coming true.

Not knowing what to do, I called Julio, the Airman who had also, I later discovered, been sidelined without a job because of his immigrant status.

Julio responded immediately. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll call you right back."

Call back, he did. "General Robey and his wife have invited you to have dinner with them," he said. "I'll pick you up at six o'clock."

How was this possible? An enlisted Airman can just arrange a spontaneous dinner at the home of the base commander? Who was this guy? I wondered.

Sandra and Julio (Courtesy Ortega Family)

Sure enough, Julio picked me up and drove me to the base commander's residence. The general's wife answered the door and invited me in.

"The general will talk with you later," she said kindly, "let's sit down and eat first." She didn't normally make dinner, she said, but this night she cooked spaghetti.

After the meal, General Robey leaned back and said, "tell me about yourself."

I explained everything. Airman McDonald's desk and what I was trying to do at the hospital with the records. Then I mentioned the scathing evaluation from Major Williams, a man who knew nothing about what I did.

"That evaluation no longer exists," stated the general plainly. "I'm giving you another job, a proper one."

The next day began a whole new life for me in the Air Force. I reported to the 4754th Ammunition Squadron and became the Assistant Chief of Personnel and Administration. I was the first and only female in the 400-man squadron.

Everything changed after that. I thrived in the new job and would move on to bigger and better positions. The Air Force, which had seemed almost allergic to my presence, became a home.

Julio became my husband. And he stayed in the Air Force after I got out, retiring as a Chief Master Sergeant. And I stayed with the Air Force also as a civilian, heading various social and family welfare programs, including the Air Force International Spouse Support program in Germany, which I created.

My life has been a series of miracles made possible by the kindness of so many people who appeared at just the right time with just the right opportunity. My parents, my neighbors, the sisters at St. Francis, Colonel Stewart, and General Robey, among many others, including my beloved Julio. My experiences have taught me important lessons: be kind, be good, be inclusive, and don't give up. Take ownership of your mission, and the mission will take you far.

Watch our VBC Happy Hour with Sandy on our website or at https://youtu.be/s8NNwKJ8Ja4

An overhead view of an Iraqi Scud missile site following a strike by Allied aircraft during Operation Desert Storm. The photograph was taken from a fighter Squadron 32 (VF-32) F-14A Tomcat aircraft using the Tactical Air Reconnaissance Pod System (TARPS). (The U.S. National Archives)

SCUDS OVER RIYADH

Desert Storm, 1991

by Michael P. Mauer

Michael P. Mauer served as an Army photojournalist during Operation Desert Storm, and was awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service by Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf for his actions during the war. He's won numerous awards for his writing since, most recently the 2022 Veterans of Foreign Wars National Publications Contest for best feature article. Below, he tells the story of covering the First Gulf War as a military journalist.

When the sirens, klaxons and horns sounded, it meant you had a few minutes to take cover or find a good position to watch. The cloudless desert sky provided an excellent backdrop. Like a shooting star, it could easily be seen without binoculars. Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army was sending another of its much-vaunted Scud missiles to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Most people stateside during Operation Desert Storm received sanitized versions of Scud attacks. I had an unfiltered, front-row seat.

The assumption back home was that Scuds were vaporized by Patriot missiles which then, in turn, vaporized themselves.

The truth was a lot messier. Patriot-Scud collisions always caused collateral damage and a lot of noise.

A Scud weighed approximately two tons after its fuel was expended, and each Patriot weighed nearly one ton. Each Scud usually required a number of Patriots for a successful intercept. An attack by the Iraqis normally brought a heavy rain of shrapnel, a loud series of explosions, and an extensive cleanup.

Often, the Scud made the Patriots' job more difficult as the Iraqi missiles tended to break apart – separating the lethal warhead away from the main rocket body. Patriots would target the parts, and the unguided warhead would freefall – often exploding on contact.

During the first Gulf War, Scud warheads, debris and shrapnel rained on Riyadh, as well as other urban areas in Saudi Arabia, Israel, Bahrain and Qatar.

Sgt. Michael P. Mauer in Eskan Village near Riyadh during Operation Desert Storm. (Courtesy of Michael P. Mauer)

I still display part of a Scud on my living room wall as a souvenir of that pivotal time in my life.

* * *

I graduated college in Pittsburgh just as the steel industry was collapsing like an imploding relic. Companies weren't hiring. After stints in free-lance writing and working at a convenience store, I decided to enlist in the Army.

I got a good deal. I entered the Army as an E-3 – private first class. When I completed my initial training– thirteen weeks with cannons at Fort Sill, Oklahoma--I received a $5,000 bonus. Then, after my first few months with the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, a promotion to E-4, specialist.

I made rapid progress as an artilleryman, with more training at Jungle School in Panama and then orders to Baumholder, Germany.

Towards the end of my tour in Germany, I asked for and received a transfer to be on the staff of the weekly 8th Infantry Division newspaper, *The Champion Times.* It was granted. With my notebook and camera, I was out covering soldiers in the field – something my civilian counterparts did not do. I reenlisted and was accepted for training as a 46Q – public affairs specialist, photojournalist.

When I arrived at the Defense Information School (DINFOS) in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, I discovered I wasn't the only one who wanted to write for Uncle Sam. My class consisted of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines. All had received superior scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery exam and qualified for security clearances. Most had some type of post-secondary education in English or journalism. Several had bachelor's degrees, and a couple had done graduate work. That didn't keep the cadre from failing them if they didn't know how or couldn't learn to write.

That made the school challenging, and I enjoyed it. In addition to academics, soldiers there did field exercises and road marches. Guest lecturers during the 10 weeks I attended included Adrian Cronauer of *Good Morning, Vietnam* fame and journalist Bob Woodward, who wrote *All the President's Men.*

The goal of DINFOS was to turn out strong writers, of course. But there was a larger strategic purpose also. Good military journalism could initiate and control the news cycle, therefore funneling information to the public in a way that supported the mission.

"Maximum disclosure, minimum delay" was the motto. It compelled civilian editors to run our stories, which came out first, before those of regular news outlets.

Rapid fire news gathering and writing was demanding, and the drop-outs were many. As the student platoon sergeant for Company B, 2nd Battalion, Troop Brigade, I watched my ranks shrink at every formation. Casualties of misspelled proper names, poor grammar, or bad writing were shifted to other occupations. But I made it. I placed eighth of 24 graduates and was moved on to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland.

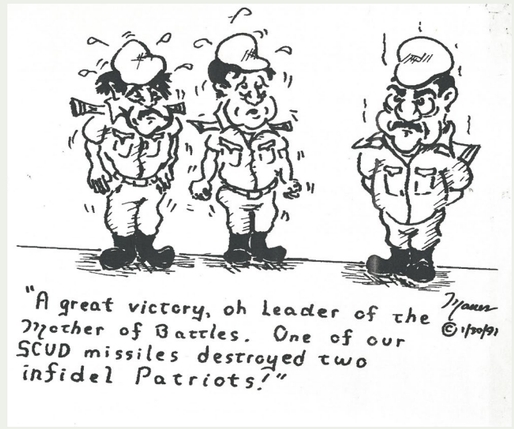
I was assigned as a writer to the United States Army Ordnance Center and School Public Affairs Office. By this time I was married and expecting my first baby. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, little Sarah was just nine months old. I got my orders to leave her in support of Operation Desert Shield.

After getting up to speed with operational security concerns at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, a one-man unit consisting of me arrived in Riyadh and reported for duty.

* * *

Although nearly two-and-a-half million people lived in Riyadh when Kuwait was invaded by Iraq, the population had plummeted during the six months leading up to the first Scud attacks. I saw the human exodus daily on rounds from my quarters in Eskan Village to the United States military and civilian media offices at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, about 12 miles away.

At first, the change was gradual. With thousands of troops arriving each day by October 1990, Riyadh was a bustling place. It was difficult to tell with all the military activity just how many civilians might be leaving or staying. But as the number of uniformed people grew, the gleaming, modern office buildings under the cloudless desert sky became office space for coalition forces. The displaced civilian population was moving somewhere else.



Scud cartoon by Sgt. Michael P. Mauer during Operation Desert Storm (Courtesy of Michael P. Mauer)

Before the Scuds came, the Saudi city was like a jewel in the desert. With its abundance of greenery, sleek highways, many automobiles and shops, Riyadh seemed quite cosmopolitan but not European or American. When I first arrived in country, many of us travelled around the city when not on duty and got to know it well. We were astounded to find that it had many of the modern chain restaurants that were popular in the United States. Pizza, ice cream, hamburgers and fried chicken were plentiful and easy to buy. The more adventuresome of us would try the *shawarmas* offered by local vendors, and haggle with shopkeepers in the large markets, or *souks.*

It was during such a trip that I was able to buy an Aladdin-style brass lamp and two small wooden camel figurines to send home to my wife and daughter. After several emotional outbursts and wild gesticulations, I was able to negotiate an initial 50 riyal price done to 10. No small accomplishment.

Later, between writing assignments and other duties, trips around Riyadh provided a needed diversion, and were remarkably safe. We didn't always have to be in uniform, and shuttle busses were available to help us move around. But as always with the military in deployment mode, there were some extra regulations to help us adhere to the status of forces agreement penned by the coalition hierarchy.

First, there was a strict prohibition against the consumption of alcohol. Any personnel visiting public areas were forbidden to mix military uniform apparel with civilian clothes. Eating in restaurants or shopping while in uniform was not allowed, but exceptions were made for those just picking up take out. Clothes were required to be loose-fitting and conservative. Shorts, gym outfits and tank tops could not be worn in public areas. This was considered to be anywhere outside of a United States military controlled compound.

As a nod to our host nation, servicemembers were told to avoid wearing traditional Arab attire such as *thobes* (ankle-length robes) and *ghutrahs* (headdresses). Female personnel could not wear bright-colored clothing and had to keep their upper arms and shoulders covered at all times while in public. *Abayas* (loose over-garments) were not required, but women in the United States military who wished to wear them received instruction on how to fit the garment correctly.

All shirts were required to have collars and sleeves. Male military personnel could not wear earrings. Any religious jewelry had to be worn out of sight – usually inside troops' shirts. I personally solved this issue by placing a small silver cross handed to me by a chaplain at Baltimore/Washington Thurgood Marshall Airport on my dog tag chain. It hung next to my P-38 can opener.

Most importantly, we were required to keep a low profile and not call attention to ourselves. We were on guard not to offend our host nation or attract notice of potential terrorists. So long as we kept our M-16 rifles broken down and carried in military-issue laundry bags, we were free to move around the city. For the most part, we minded regulations and things went smoothly. Many of the rules that could quickly land you in trouble, however, were particularly onerous to military photojournalists.

Sgt. Michael P. Mauer's access badge used during Desert Shield and Desert Storm (Courtesy of Michael P. Mauer)

For example, one of the biggest scares other than the persistent terrorist threat was running afoul of the *Mutaween*, or religious police from the country's Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Proper attire, respect for the local culture, customs and laws were drummed into us. Breaking the rules regarding gender separation, fraternization and photography got several into hot water with the local authorities. And many rules designed to reduce cultural friction were also filtered down through the chain of command.

A press release issued through the United States Central Command's Joint Information Bureau reminded female servicemembers that its September 20, 1990, policy regarding driving had not changed. Female Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines were prohibited from driving any civilian vehicles, to include rental vans, trucks, sports utility vehicles and staff cars. This edict included trips that could be considered as official duties. Women could drive military vehicles, but only under specific conditions. They had to be in complete military uniform to include desert camouflage shirts and headgear.

For those whose military occupational specialties required using cameras, such as mine, the rules were arguably more restrictive. American troops were advised through the CENTCOM News Service that they should use extreme caution when taking photographs in Riyadh, as well as throughout Saudi Arabia. The photography of military installations, holy places and local women was strictly prohibited. Also forbidden were pictures of strategic resources like civilian airports, oil fields and refineries. Palace gates - as well as public executions and mosques - were also banned from curious shutter bugs.

Not that some military personnel didn't try. Violating these rules did get a few into trouble with local police. In at least one instance, a coalition military officer took a seemingly innocent photo of a crowded downtown street. On his way home, he was confronted by local police and apprehended. His camera and film were both confiscated.

As Desert Shield and Desert Storm took place just before the rapid spread of cell phones and digital photography, we quickly noticed that the Saudis took their photography restrictions seriously. These rules impacted our duty assignments. We had difficulty finding local outlets to develop our film or sell the chemicals needed to develop it ourselves. Fortunately, many of the mobile public affairs detachments brought their own film processing equipment and materials. I had the privilege of going out on assignment with one of the best – the 14th Public Affairs Detachment out of Fort Carson, Colorado.

With the 14th PAD, I was able to travel out into the desert and cover troops that were newly arrived in country. I filed a story in early November 1990 about Co. D, 2nd Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 197th Infantry Brigade out of Fort Benning, for Army Central Public Affairs. Sweltering in the desert heat, the unit was conducting nuclear, biological and chemical training. This required wearing hot, bulky protective outfits, as well as M-17 gas masks. They also rehearsed the steps needed to decontaminate their vehicles and other equipment.

While in the field, I enjoyed my missions immensely. It felt good to be among fellow Soldiers telling their stories. And as a combat trained Soldier myself, I understood what they were experiencing.

My heart went out to these troops in the desert. Like the pictures taken by my Canon AE-1 35mm camera, my time with them was just a snapshot. I could take advantage of a hot shower, decent food and soft quarters when I wrote my articles and disseminated my media products back to the United States, Europe and in theater. They could not. As a former artilleryman, I knew all too well what it was like to be roasting hot - saddled with heavy equipment - and serving the whims of a weapons system that would also be my chariot home once the exercise was over.

By the time Bob Hope arrived in Eskan Village around Christmas 1990 with an entourage that included baseball great Johnny Bench, CENTCOM New Service was running smoothly. But at the end of the comedian's show, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, U.S. Central Command commander-in-chief, took the stage to wish the service members a Merry Christmas, then ordered us to avoid all market areas in Riyadh because the terrorist threat alert had been raised.

Things were now getting serious. In fact, less than a month after Hope's visit, more than a dozen Scud missiles would be destroyed by Patriot batteries within 20 miles of the stage at Eskan Village. United States troop strength would swell to more than 500,000, and Operation Desert Shield would turn into Operation Desert Storm.

* * *

On January 17, 1991, the balloon went up. Our shop immediately went from an 18-hour operational day to 24-hours. Coalition forces began pounding Iraqi positions from the air -- degrading that country's military. One of the more elusive targets proved to be Saddam Hussein's mobile Scud launchers.

Bob Hope, Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf and entourage in Eskan Village near Riyadh (Courtesy of Michael P. Mauer)

This became evident to us in Riyadh when within a 12-hour period during the night of January 21 – 22, at least six Iraqi Scud missiles were launched at Saudi Arabia. The first one came at about 10:30 p.m. local time. It landed in the water well away from us -- somewhere northwest of Jubial. Some of the ones in my shop with combat arms training thought this one might be a feint to test our ability to react and defend ourselves.

Unfortunately, we were right.

Early on January 22 at 3:45 a.m. local time, at least two Scud missiles were launched toward Riyadh. One of these was intercepted and destroyed by a Patriot missile crew assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery. The second Scud impacted in a civilian neighborhood near a coalition air base. Later at around 7:30 a.m., three more Scuds were launched at Saudi Arabia's eastern province. One missile was intercepted and destroyed. The other two impacted in unpopulated areas.

Iraq's first Scud attacks during Desert Storm on Saudi Arabia began a day earlier Jan. 20 when three of the missiles were launched at Dhahran. Army Patriot crews from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Air Defense Artillery claimed to have bagged these.

All of the warheads from Scuds used during Operation Desert Storm were thought to have been conventional. Chemical detectors would occasionally react and go off following Scud explosions, but retesting showed these to be false positives.

At least five of the Scuds that impacted in Riyadh delivered warheads that detonated and caused damage. As a trained artilleryman, I could tell whether the explosions were airbursts or had impacted. As most of the civilian population had moved, casualties reported across Saudi Arabia were light – approximately one killed and six dozen injured. Buildings damaged by Iraqi Scuds during Operation Desert Storm in Riyadh included those on the Islamic University campus, a girls' school and the Saudi Department of Interior. Thankfully, all of these areas were a few miles from where I was.

Not so fortunate were those killed by an Iraqi Scud missile attack that hit an Army barracks in Al Khobar, Saudi Arabia, on February 25, 1991. Twenty-eight United States personnel were killed, including more than a dozen reserve soldiers from the 14th Quartermaster Detachment based in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. This gave Pennsylvania the distinction of losing more service members during the first Gulf War than any other state. Approximately 100 more soldiers were wounded during this attack where the Patriot systems failed to intercept the incoming Scud.

Shortly afterward, the Scuds stopped falling.

Things in Riyadh began to return to normal although a significant United States military presence remained. An armistice was signed, prisoners were exchanged, and on March 15, 1991, I received orders to head back to Aberdeen Proving Ground.

My unit of one rotated back to the United States, courtesy of an Air Force C-141 Starlifter. Less than one year later, on March 1992, my second daughter, Rachel, was born.

Desert Shield and Desert Storm slipped into history. But it remains a defining chapter of my life.

Patriot missiles launched to intercept an Iraqi Scud missile over Tel Aviv, February 12, 1991 (ALPERT NATHAN, GPO)

SCUDS VS PATRIOTS

Desert Storm, 1991

by Todd DePastino

Scud missiles riveted the attention of cable news outlets during Operation Desert Storm in early 1991 when Iraq launched 88 of these notoriously inaccurate and unstable weapons at Saudi Arabia and Israel. At 8:30pm on February 25, a Scud struck a United States Army barracks in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, killing 28 members of the Pennsylvania National Guard.

Developed first by the Soviet Union in the 1950s as a kind of knock-off of the Nazi V-2 rocket, Scud missiles were sent around the world to Soviet allies during the Cold War, only to be further copied, modified and otherwise proliferated by regional powers like Iran and North Korea. For countries that couldn't afford an Air Force, Scuds were a cheap alternative.

Military personnel examine the tail section of a Scud missile shot down in the desert by an MIM-104 Patriot tactical air defense missile during Operation Desert Storm (DoD)

All Scuds are tactical ballistic missiles. That means they have short ranges (80–400 miles) and travel in arcs, powered for only part of their flights. Scuds stand about 37 feet tall, measure about three feet in diameter, and weigh between 10,000 – 14,000 pounds. They have simple engines that burn kerosene and nitric acid. Most are mobile and can be hauled by trucks.

Far from "smart," they're scattershot weapons. Designed to deliver biological, chemical and nuclear warheads, as well as conventional explosives, Scuds don't need to be precise to bring their deadly effect to bear.

The Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s saw widespread use of Scuds, as the two countries terrorized each other's capitals, Baghdad and Tehran, during the so-called "War of the Cities."

That war inspired Iraq to produce modified Scuds for greater range. These "Al Hussein" missiles had heavy warheads and motors and burned their fuel early in flight. This increased their instability, and Iraqi Scuds often broke up on descent, adding to the unpredictability of their flight paths.

Soviet-era SS-1 Scud missile on display at the National Museum of Military History, Bulgaria. (DAVID HOLT, CC BY-SA 2.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)

To combat Scud attacks, the US Army brought Patriot Anti-Ballistic Surface-to-Air Missiles to Saudi Arabia for Desert Storm. Patriots had been developed in the 1970s specifically to thwart aircraft but were modified in the 1980s to take on Scuds. Patriots had never been tested in combat until 1991.

During the war, Coalition forces claimed huge success in knocking Scuds off target and out of the sky. "Patriot is 41 for 42: 42 Scuds engaged, 41 intercepted," said President George H.W. Bush on February 15, 1991. That would have made the Patriot one of the most successful weapons in history. Although the success rate is still much debated, no post-war study has shown anything close to the accuracy claimed in the heat of battle.

Investigations conducted by the US House of Representatives and the US General Accounting Office found that while Patriots came close to most Scuds, they probably didn't achieve anything better than a nine percent kill rate. In addition, Patriots added to the debris field of the falling Scuds, occasionally compounding damage on the ground.

One thing is certain: Patriots failed to intercept the Scud that hit the Pennsylvania Guardsmen on February 25, 1991. A software error caused the Patriot Missile system's internal clock to drift by a third of a second, enough time to miss the Scud's approach by a third of a mile. The needed software update arrived to the Army the next day.

War, no matter how successful, is always messy. And there are always failures that demand accounting.

FEATURE

"IN MY HEART, I FORGAVE"

Survivor of the Bataan Death March Remembers

Paul Kerchum

Paul Kerchum, age 95, in 2015 (Airman 1st Class Emily A. Kenney/USAF)

Anyone who has joined us on VBC Happy Hour *knows Henry Schoepke, our much-loved teenager from Wisconsin. Henry is an avid student of history, a supporter of veterans, and an autograph collector. One of his many projects is to write thank you notes to 500 World War II veterans. So far, he's sent over 300. One of them was to Paul Kerchum, a 102-year-old survivor of the Bataan Death March. Paul recently received Henry's note and answered it with 17 handwritten pages sharing his story. We've excerpted the letter below. We've edited the letter for clarity and supplemented the story a bit with information from other interviews with Paul.*

I was born 25 January, 1920. In the community I lived in, it was customary to leave school when you reached the age of 16 and get a job and help support your family. When I reached the age of 16, I dropped out of school and worked for 2 years, then I decided to join the Navy and see the world.

The first thing the navy agent asked was "Do you have a high school diploma?" I said no. He asked me to go across the hall, they will take anybody. So I joined the Army.

My first enlistment was E Co 27th Infantry Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. When my 2 years overseas was over, I returned to the U.S. After 2 weeks I reenlisted and joined B Co, 31st Infantry stationed in the old Spanish walled city, Manila, September, 1940.

When WWII broke out, the Japanese gained complete control of the air and seas in just a few days. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the armed forces in the Philippines implemented War Plan Orange. This plan called for all the troops to enter the Bataan Peninsula and hold out for six months, when help would come from the States. The plan started off well with one exception--somebody forgot to bring the food.

Bataan is a peninsula 45 miles in length, and 45 miles at its widest point. Its terrain is mountainous jungle with rice and cane fields at lower areas. Bataan had the reputation of being one of the world's most malaria-infested areas.

So what did we have on Bataan? The Philippine Division, 14,400 strength, comprised of the American 31st Infantry, the only Americans on Bataan, at ½ strength, plus 3 Philippine scout regiments, and the 45th cavalry regiment, horse mounted with a mule train. When things got desperate on Bataan, we ate horses and mules.

The Philippine scouts were career, well trained, dedicated soldiers and performed exceedingly well during fighting. Weapons, WWI vintage, obsolete with one exception. The Philippine Division received the M1 Garand rifle 6 months before the war started.

Early January, 1942, the Japanese broke through the MLR, Main Line of Resistance, manned by the Philippine Army. The Philippine Division was opened to counterattack and tried to establish the original MLR. The battle that took place was the Battle of Abucay Hacienda. It was during this battle that I received my 1st wound from mortar shrapnel.

5 April, Easter Sunday, the Main Line of Resistance completely collapsed, and what followed was complete chaos. The objective was to end up at Mariveles, where the men could get to and continue to fight on Corregidor. 300 men from the American 31st Infantry did end up on Corregidor and continued to fight.

After 93 days of fighting on less than ½ rations, obsolete weapons, and overwhelming odds; General [Edward P.] King, the Commander of the Armed Forces on Bataan--after considerable soul searching, knowing the poor condition of his army, knowing that help was not coming from the States, and knowing the Japanese general, known as the Tiger of Malay and recent conqueror of Singapore, where 60,000 British soldiers surrendered, had just entered the Philippines--decided to surrender the Army on Bataan. He surrendered a completely exhausted, hungry, sick, disease ridden army suffering from malaria, dysentery, malnutrition, and other diseases. The men were not ready for the Bataan Death March.

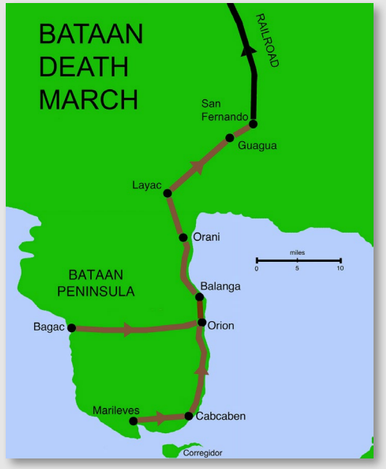
The Bataan Death March, 55 miles from Mariveles to the San Fernando rail head.

The men were shot, bayoneted, beheaded or beaten to death on that hot, dusty road. At San Fernando we were stuffed into freight cars, standing room only. After a 4-hour freight ride we were unloaded at the village of Capas and then 9 miles to the nearest POW camp, Camp O'Donnell, a former Philippine Army camp.

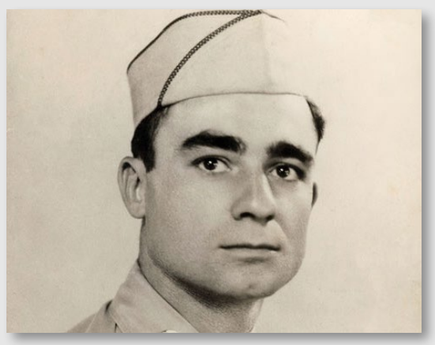
When our group entered Camp O'Donnell, a Japanese officer greeted us yelling, screaming. "You are not POWs but captives and you will be treated like captives." And some were.

1,500 Americans and a thousand Philippine soldiers died at Camp O'Donnell early June '42. I was in a group transported to the main POW camp, Cabanatuan. One day while we were there, we were chased out of our huts, forced to watch Pvt. [Irvin] Penvose, B Co. 31st Infantry, dig his own grave and be executed by firing squad.

Early on, work details were sent to Bataan, airfields, and other areas on salvage operations. Work details were also sent to Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and Manchuria to perform slave labor in mines, factories, and shipyards. Ships that sent men to those areas became known as hell ships. 5,080 Americans went to the bottom of the ocean when they were on hell ships, sunk by American submarines or American aircraft.



Map of Bataan Death March (USAF)



Paul Kerchum, 1946

Early October, 1943, I was part of a 500-man work detail sent to an area near the village of Las Piñas, 40 miles from Manila. There for the next 12 months we built an airfield. One day early November, 1944, we were at the end of the runway when one of the men began yelling and pointing towards Manila--American and Japanese aircraft [were] in aerial combat.

Later, we learned that that was the time General MacArthur returned to the Philippines. The next morning 1,100 of us were stuffed into the forward holds of the Japanese ship, the *Haro Maru*.

The ship was part of a 9-ship convoy with Japanese destroyers as escort, destination Japan. The convoy no sooner left Manila Bay that it was attacked by American submarines. The holds were covered, and they remained in complete darkness. It seems like endless days that I kept hearing the exploding depth charges from the destroyers.

We ran all over the South China Sea being chased by American submarines for 18 horrendous days and nights. On the eighteenth day we pulled into Hong Kong. When we docked, I happened to be by the ladder when a guard motioned for me to come up. I scrambled up the ladder, grabbed a water hose, poured water over my head, drank and drank, filled my two canteens, and hooked them back on my belt. Began filling canteens and water bottles as they were sent up from the hold. This went on for about 4 hours when suddenly the air raid sirens rang out.

Here come American planes looking for targets of opportunity. Back down to the hold and off we went.

We pulled into the port of Mogi on the northern tip of Kyushu, the 2nd largest Japanese island. We were ferried across the strait and unloaded on the largest Japanese island and home of Tokyo. We were stuffed into a train and headed north. This was late Nov. '44, and B-29s were bombing everything in sight. The train had to stop frequently for rail repairs. We finally reached Sendai and took a narrow gauge railroad way up the mountain to the village of Hosokura where we worked at the Mitsubishi mine No. 11. Every morning, a Japanese guard squad would escort us to the main tunnel and turn us over to civilian workers.

In the evening, they would escort us back to the camp, and we were on our own. One day a B-29 came over head, bombed the shelter, several buildings, and the narrow gauge railroad. Bombing the railroad was important, because it was the only way down to Sendai. One day, we were marched to the tunnel and machine guns were placed at each end of our group. A Japanese officer was on the phone. When he was finished he hung up the phone and said something to the Japanese Lt., and we were marched back up the hill.

The next day a B-29 came over and dropped food, clothing, medicine, and news that the war ended. However, we had to wait 30 days while the narrow gauge railroad was repaired.

Finally we went down to Sendai and got on a hospital ship, received showers, med shots, and for the first time in 4 years, I slept in a REAL bed! I began eating well and, soon enough, I was no longer a 75-pounder.

Next morning, we were put aboard a British destroyer and headed south, where we entered Tokyo Bay, the most beautiful site--battleships, cruisers, destroyers, hospital ships, and every type of naval craft. We were placed in a hangar at Atsugi Airfield, a former Japanese airfield, and there we were debriefed by American intelligence. Later we learned that 200 POWs on the Philippine island of Palawan were sprayed with gasoline, set on fire, and machine gunned. Ten POWs escaped and told the story!

Then, we were put aboard a B-24 and headed south. We landed in Okinawa and were put into tents. That night a typhoon hit Okinawa, and our tent blew away, and we were running around like naked jaybirds.

After order was restored, we were put on another B-24 and headed south. You can't imagine where we landed. Yes, Las Piñas airfield, the one we built for the Japanese.

After 6 days, one of the nurses asked, "when would you like to go back to the States?" I said, "Today."

She said I have an opening on a ship 2 days from now. So I got aboard a slow ship and eventually we reached San Francisco. There were about 50 people to welcome us--mostly newspaper people.

After a few days, we were put on a train and headed East. Once in a while the train would stop and let some of the men off. The plan was to let men off at hospitals or VAs near their homes.

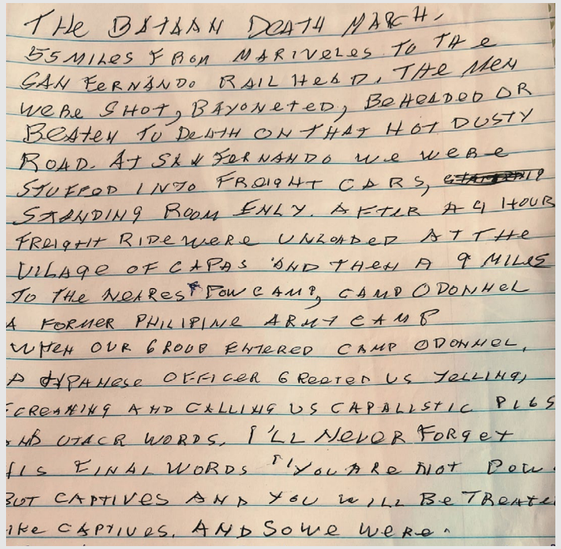
Eventually, our group was off the train at Staunton, VA. We entered a hospital. We were basket cases. We didn't pay attention to the nurses and often jumped over the fence and then to the nearest beer place. One day, I was placed on a train and headed north. I arrived at Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, at an Army camp where I was discharged and took a train home.

I wasn't too happy at home and decided to stay in the service.

I was inducted at Ft. Meade, Maryland. I heard about Route 66 and decided to hitchhike to March Air Force Base, California, my next duty station.

What followed [at March AFB] seems like a nightmare. We joined thirty 31st Infantry men there, and we were basket cases. We broke every rule and regulation on the base and even some of the regs at the local city of Riverside.

One day, most of us were reduced to privates. In order to make some money, I began working evenings at a beer garden. Every evening this good looking young lady came through the beer garden on her way. She worked in the cafeteria. One day, she was sent to the beer garden to get some food from the walk-in freezer. She walked in and I walked in behind her and closed the door. We talked for a bit, and I made a date. I visited her family, and it was not too long before Gloria and I got married.


THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH-
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FREIGHT RIDE WERE UNLOADED AT THE
VILLAGE OF CAPAS AND THEN 9 MILES
TO THE NEAREST POW CAMP, CAMP O'DONNEL
A FORMER PHILIPINE ARMY CAMP
WHEN OUR GROUP ENTERED CAMP O'DONNEL,
A JAPANESE OFFICER GREETED US YELLING,
SCREAMING AND CALLING US CAPALISTIC PIGS
AND OTHER WORDS. I'LL NEVER FORGET
HIS FINAL WORDS "YOU ARE NOT POW
BUT CAPTIVES AND YOU WILL BE TREATED
LIKE CAPTIVES. AND SOME WERE.

Paul Kerchum to Henry Schoepke, August 2022.

Looking back, it was obvious that we were suffering from PTSD, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. But Gloria stayed by my side, and together, we succeeded in conquering PTSD. When Gloria and I married, she put me on the right road

When the Korean War broke out, I received orders to go to Japan. I could have refused because POWs were exempt from going to Japan. However, I decided to go.

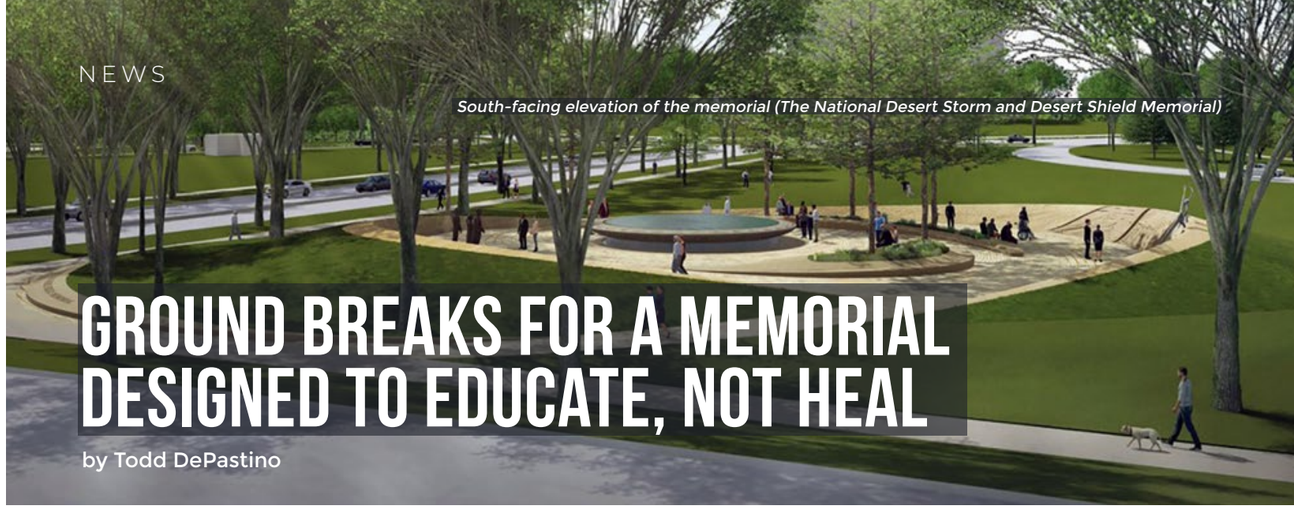
Everybody used to ask me, "Why did you go back to Japan?"

Gloria and I talked all about it. And I talked to a lot of the Japanese people. And in my heart, I forgave them. That was how Gloria influenced me.

We were married for 74 years and had two children. Gloria passed away Dec. 21, 2019 – a day does not pass that I fail to think about her.

I retired 1 August, 1966 in the grade of Chief Master Sergeant with 29 years of service, 8 in the Army and 21 Air Force, with the following awards and decorations:

Purple Heart, 2 Bronze Stars, Airforce Commendation Medal, POW Medal, American Defense Medal, Asiatic Pacific Medal with 2 battle stars, Philippine Defense Medal, Korean Service Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, Philippine Independence Medal, Air Force Longevity Ribbon, United Nations Ribbon, Victory Medal, 2 U.S. Presidential Unit Citations, 1 Philippine Presidential Unit Citation, 1 Korea Unit Presidential Unit Citation, and a combat badge.



South-facing elevation of the memorial (The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial)

GROUND BREAKS FOR A MEMORIAL DESIGNED TO EDUCATE, NOT HEAL

by Todd DePastino

Ground broke this summer for a National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial in Washington, DC, just off the National Mall. The moment was twelve years in the making, preceded by agonizing labors of design, site selection, official approval and, of course, fundraising. A pledge by the government of Kuwait to cover all remaining costs triggered the ceremony on July 14 at a site five hundred feet away from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Gulf War Marine veteran Scott Stump, CEO of the National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, said the park-like memorial will educate visitors about the 1990-1991 war. Unlike the mournful Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which emphasizes healing and reconciliation, the new memorial is intended to explain the war and honor the sacrifices of those who fought it.

Birds-eye rendering of the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm War Memorial (The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial)

In 2010, during the 20th anniversary of Operation Desert Shield, Stump realized his war was in danger of becoming a historical footnote. Sandwiched between Vietnam and the then-current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US-led effort to drive Iraqi invaders out of Kuwait was being forgotten.

The design process began with a simple survey distributed to Desert Storm and Desert Shield veterans asking what they believed was historically significant about the war, what about it should be memorialized for posterity, and what the memorial should look like.

South-facing view with Lincoln Memorial in the background (The National Desert Storm and Desert Shield Memorial)

Survey replies shaped the memorial's final design, which omits the names of the 96 Americans killed in action. Instead, the memorial reflects the war's desert environment, includes statues of soldiers wearing chemical warfare protective gear, and represents the war's signature "left hook" maneuver by ground troops—the drive by the US Army through the Saudi desert to cut off Iraqi forces and compel their quick capitulation.

Actual construction on the memorial will begin next year and will be completed for a dedication on November 11, 2024.

Watch our VBC Happy Hour *from February 2021 for the 30th anniversary of Operation Desert Storm at https://youtu.be/Kk6XmFBifaM (or go to veteransbreakfastclub.org/blog and scroll down). Memorial architect Randy Schumacher talks about the design process and symbolism of the memorial. Several veterans of Desert Storm, including Marines Brad Washabaugh and Leon Mickens, Army veterans Cee Freeman, Patrick Dubiel, and Rick Altman, and Navy veteran Chris Pirollo share their stories. And Gold Star Mother Christine Jensen remembers her son, Brian Simpson, who was killed by a Scud missile on February 25, 1991. You can view more about the memorial at the National Desert Shield and Desert Storm War Memorial website: ndswm.org.*

Operation Desert Storm briefing graphic (Library of Congress)

Vintage Desert Storm lapel pin

THE YELLOW RIBBON: A TWISTED HISTORY

by Todd DePastino

Folks old enough to remember Desert Shield and Storm will recall that when the war started, yellow ribbons sprouted like daffodils on front doors and mailboxes, lamp posts and traffic signs. They became a symbol of support for troops sent into harm's way and an expression of hope that they would all return home soon.

Where did this custom originate? And why did it go viral in 1990-91?

I asked those questions on one of our *VBC Happy Hours* last year and got some intriguing theories in response. Puritan Roundheads wore yellow sashes during the English Revolution of the 1640s, someone said. Maybe there's a connection? The US Cavalry wore yellow scarves, remarked another. Could that be the source?

The more I looked into it, the stranger and less-straightforward the history of the yellow ribbon appeared. The story, you might say, is deeply twisted.

Displaying a special item to remember a loved one far away goes back hundreds of years, but the first copyrighted song to specify a yellow ribbon was George A. Norton's "Round Her Neck She Wears a Yeller Ribbon (For Her Lover Who Is Far, Far Away)" published in 1917.

Norton's song was a good fit for World War I, when 2 million American men shipped overseas for war. The song features a soldier named Silas whose girl, named Susie, is left back home:

'Round her neck she wears a yeller ribbon,

She wears it in winter and the summer so they say,

If you ask her "Why the decoration?"

She'll say "It's fur my lover who is fur, fur away."

The song drew on a folk tradition that included such older ballads as "All Round My Hat" from 1838, which itself was a variation on a still older British canon. In "All Round My Hat," it's the man who longs for an absent woman. And he wears "a green villow" (sung for some reason, in a strange Germanic dialect) round his hat in remembrance.

College students sang off-color versions with lyrics that substituted a garter round the leg for ribbon round the neck. Some of these bawdy tunes featured a pregnant woman and her shotgun-toting father in search of the missing man.

Hollywood director John Ford revived this folklore for RKO Pictures in 1949 with *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon,* a hugely popular Western starring John Wayne. The Andrew Sisters recorded an updated version of the 1917 song for the movie.

That movie really should have been the high water mark of yellow ribbon imagery in American culture. But, somehow, through the mysterious alchemy of folklore, an item of song morphed into an actual real-life practice.

A key ingredient to this transformation was a fictional story told in a gruesome 1959 novel about a boy who kills a girl and eats her . . . yes, cannibalism. *Star Wormwood* by (former Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice) Curtis Bok contains this anecdote recalled third-hand about two men on a train:

A convict returning from five years' imprisonment in a distant prison . . . had written to [his family] to make a sign for him when he was released and came home. If they wanted him, they should put a white ribbon in the big apple tree which stood close to the railroad track at the bottom of the garden, and he would get off the train, but if they did not want him, they were to do nothing and he would stay on the train and seek a new life elsewhere. He said that they were nearing his home town and that he couldn't bear to look. His [train companion] said that he would look and took his place by the window to watch for the apple tree which the other had described to him.

In a minute he put a hand on his companion's arm. "There it is," he cried. "It's all right! The whole tree is white with ribbons."

This story got around—or, perhaps, had already been circulating by word of mouth before the novel was published—and was then told and re-told with slightly differing details.

In 1971, Pete Hamill crafted a new version of it for the New York Post. In it, he substituted a yellow handkerchief for the white ribbon and an oak tree for the apple tree. *Reader's Digest* reprinted Hamill's story in 1972, and ABC-TV rushed out a feature starring James Earl Jones as the ex-con.

The following year, Tony Orlando and Dawn released a smash hit with "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree." It's hard to exaggerate just how popular this song was. Radio stations played it several times a day, every day, for months. It topped the charts in eight countries. And it hit with multiple generations, not just youth. I distinctly remember older aunts and uncles singing it when I was kid.

Pete Hamill sued the songwriters, Irwin Levine and L. Russell Brown, for copyright infringement. To no avail. The story wasn't Hamill's. It belonged to our collective folkloric imagination.

It's one thing to sing about tying a yellow ribbon around a tree. It's another to actually do it.

This is where, in perfect 1970s fashion, Tony Orlando and Dawn collided with Watergate.

Inspired by the song, Gail Magruder decorated her front porch to celebrate her husband's return from prison. Some of you might remember her husband, Jeb Stuart Magruder, the Nixon campaign operative who helped to plan, execute, and cover up the Watergate break-in in 1972. News cameras captured the scene of Magruder's homecoming amidst a festoon of yellow ribbons on January 8, 1975.

One person watching the news that night was Penne Laingen, whose husband Bruce was a diplomat in the US Foreign Service. Four years later, President Jimmy Carter would appoint Bruce Laingen to be U.S. chargé d'affaires in Iran. Five months after his appointment, on November 4, 1979, student revolutionaries seized the U.S. embassy in Tehran and took fifty-two American hostages, including ranking diplomat Bruce Laingen.

Back in Washington, Bruce's wife Penne tied a yellow ribbon around an old oak tree in her front yard. "So I'm standing and waiting and praying," she told the *Washington Post,* "and one of these days Bruce is going to untie that yellow ribbon. It's going to be out there until he does."

Families of the fifty-two hostages formed an organization called FLAG (Family Liaison Action Group) to keep the crisis in public awareness. In cooperation with allies, including the AFL-CIO, Chambers of Commerce, Boy Scouts troops, and churches, FLAG chose the yellow ribbon as the symbol of their campaign. They distributed 10,000 yellow ribbon pins to prominent Americans around the country, including TV weather reporters. In 1981, the hostages were released after 444 days, and the yellow ribbon was cemented as the symbol of a nation's fidelity to those in harm's way far from home.

A yellow ribbon hangs between two cranes on the parade route during the National Victory Celebration parade in Washington, DC, August 6, 1991 (Cw02 Bailey/DoD)

Yellow Ribbon Ceremony for the 3rd Infantry Division's deployment at Victory Park in Hinesville, Georgia, 2009 (Spc. Michael Adams/US Army)

Ten years later, with the launch of Operation Desert Storm, Americans turned to the established folklore to express their support for those fighting the war. Yellow ribbons emerged in even greater numbers than they had during the Hostage Crisis.

An interesting thing about these yellow ribbons of 1991, however. They were tied in a traditional Christmas-bow style with a knot, two loops, and two hanging tails. These are not the ribbons we know of today.

Two more steps were needed for the ribbons to achieve their current, iconic single-loop profile.

The first came on June 7, 1991, at the Tony Awards on Broadway. Presenters and guests appeared wearing red, single-looped, inverted V ribbons to signify AIDS awareness. Fifteen members of the group Visual AIDS had handmade them, and the top of the inverted V was more knot than loop.

The final step came in 1992—which the *New York Times* declared "The Year of the Ribbon." Self magazine and the cosmetics company Estee Lauder teamed to publicize the pink ribbon for Breast Cancer Awareness. Estee Lauder gave away 1.5 million ribbons at their cosmetics counters that year. The ribbon was in the style of the inverted V, but with the top knot loosened into a loop.

That elegant single-loop design is now a staple of all sorts of awareness campaigns. You can find ribbons in dozens of colors for all sorts of illnesses, conditions, and causes, from Appendicitis (amber) to Zika (red) and from Anti-bullying (blue) to Worker Safety (green).

The yellow ribbon, however, will always remind me of Desert Storm, when the nation was eager to atone for the ignominious reception it gave to returning service members thirty years earlier.

Rick Altman in Vietnam, 1966 (Courtesy Rick Altman)

"THREE DECADES LATER, I STILL COUNT MYSELF LUCKY"

Rick Altman

Every February 25, I think of what might have been and am grateful.

I served with the Marines in Vietnam in 1966, came home, went to school, moved on with life. But I missed the military. Coming from a bad family of origin, the Marines became my family, with all the crazy uncles and cousins that go with it. I thought I could recover that family feeling by joining a Reserve unit.

Living in Greensburg, PA, I found the nearby 14th Quartermaster Detachment, a water purification unit under the 99th United States Army Reserve command. I presented myself to the Detachment's First Sergeant with all my documents. He rejected my application.

The First Sergeant was refreshingly honest about why he was rejecting me.

"You see," he said, "we already have a soldier who is just about ready for the slot you qualify for. He's been with us since Basic. If I gave you that slot, I would be disloyal to our guy. I can't do that."

I never learned that soldier's name.

I continued my search down the road and found another Reserve unit, a small detachment of the 416thEngineer Command, which accepted me readily. In January 1991, we got activated for Desert Storm.

I arrived in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, as part of an Engineer Team assigned to the 22nd Support Command. We lived at a place called the Al Khobar Towers troop area.

Rick Altman in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, 1991 (Courtesy Rick Altman)

Our area was broadly targeted by Iraqi Scud Missiles. We had several "Chemical Alert, Scud Warning" events in January and February. For the first alerts, we donned our full Mission Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) gear. It was a heavy, charcoal-lined, head-to-toe outfit that included a chemical hood and face mask. At least one senior officer experienced such claustrophobic attacks in the MOPP, he had to be returned stateside. After several false warnings, we went easy on the MOPP gear, only putting on the chem hood and mask when the siren sounded.

MOPP Gear 1991 (US Army)

On the evening of February 25, 1991, at around 8:30pm, the siren went off. Several of us put on our masks. After a few quiet minutes, we clambered on to a roof to check out what was happening. I saw a thin light trace an arc against the desert night. I guessed it was one of ours, a Patriot Missile sent to intercept an Iraqi Scud. About a klick away, a flash appeared followed by a muffled boom. A minute passed. Then, a large explosion shook our position. We knew something big had been hit. Ambulance sirens blared for hours.

I had seen such explosions before, artillery bombardments in Vietnam, for example. When it's far enough away, it's like watching fireworks. Only when you learn who's been hit does the grim reality sink in.

When I heard that the victims were from Western Pennsylvania, I stood in line for the satellite phone. I wanted to reassure my wife.

More details came in. The Scud has struck a hangar-like warehouse being used as a makeshift barracks by US troops. Twenty-eight American Reservists were killed, including thirteen from the 14th Quartermaster Detachment. At least 100 more were wounded.

Ever since that day, I've been haunted by how close I came to being in that barracks with the group from Greensburg. I count it as my second close call. In 1967, I turned down an assignment at the Saigon Embassy, which would get attacked by 19 Vietcong sappers in the Tet Offensive.

On February 25, I'll head to the 14th Quartermaster Detachment Memorial outside the US Army Reserve Center in Greensburg to pay my respects to the men and women who lost their lives that day almost thirty-two years ago.

IN GRATITUDE

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING FOR YOUR RECENT DONATIONS!

Penny Abbott - *In memory of Rich Norwood*
Beverly Albaugh
Ray Amelio
Anonymous
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Dan Arant
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Kelly Barber
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Gerald & Janet Cooper - In memory of Richard Norwood
Chuck & Mary Cullison - In memory of Jack Watson
"Dads R Us" - In memory of WWII Veteran Calvin Goss
DAV Chapter 76
John Delallo
Jerry DePastino - In Honor of RM2 John R. Byrne, US Navy, 1964-68, Vietnam
Ray & Karen DeSanto - In memory of WWII veteran Calvin Goss
Carmen DiGiacomo
Patricia Dimmock
Pete DiNardo
Don Ebert
Bill Ebitz
Earl Edwards
Rick & Donna Erisman - In Memory of US Park Rangers Bill Orlando and John Bailey and WWII US Army Veteran Walter Patton and US Marine Corps Veteran Leonard Bronder
Rick & Donna Erisman - In memory of Jack Watson
Jim Farrell
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Rosemary Gregg
Joan Gregory - In honor of Lt. Col. Russ Pilcher, 2nd in Command Guantanamo Bay
Ray Gross
Mary Ann Gross
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Judd Hanna
Fred Harke
Elizabeth Helm-Frazier
Bill Holt
Carol Hubbard - In memory of Jack Watson
Diane Huff
Helen Hughes-Smith - In memory of Vietnam Veteran Thomas Scott Smith
Jim Jamieson - In memory of Col. Richard Norwood, USAF
Jim Jamieson - In memory of Jack Watson, "A Great Hero"
Chuck Jenkins - In memory of L/cpl Gilbert Salazar, KIA, Sept. 4, 1967 Opr. Swift Semper Fi
Richard Jewell
Linda Johnson-Davis - In memory and honor of Howard and Martha Gruber
William & Vicki Kaminiski - In memory of WWII veteran Calvin Goss
Carolyn Kerr - In memory of Jack Watson
Robert Kissinger
Russell Knight
Greg & Lauretta Kobasa
Norma Jean Koman - In memory of Col. Rich Norwood
Doug Krall
Herbert Kramer
Carol Kunzler
George C. Kutcher, Jr. - In memory of James R. Reid, U.S.N.
Pat Larkman - In memory of Charles Reljac
Edward Lesko
Lois Liberman
Jean Link
Joe Mancuso
Margaret Marple
Mary Jane Matrazzo - In honor of our cousin, Captain James Puhala, (United States Army, 227th Aviation Battalion, Company D) for his 80th birthday!
Mike Mauer
Don & Linda McCaig - In memory of Jack Watson
Madeline McCormick
Gene McKeown
Bruce Metzler
Mary Kay Miller
Jessie Milligan - In memory of Jack Watson
Michael Musulin
Charlene Ness - In memory of Jack Watson, Semper Fi
NGB A1PO/A1PP - In memory of Richard Norwood / Lt Col Norwood
NGB A1PO/PP - In memory of Richard Norwood / Lt Col Norwood
Jake Notovitz
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Karl Voigt
Donald Walgrave
Donald Wall
Walmart
Jack Watson
Tom Wiley
Jim & Kristi Wiley In honor of Tom Wiley
Betsy Worrall - In memory of WWII Veteran Joe Capone
Charles Wright
Bill Zunic

HUMOR

ICE CREAM SOCIAL ON THE DMZ, 1968

by Ken Carlson

Colonel Kenneth G. Carlson graduated the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1966, launching a twenty-six year career in the Army. Among his honors are two Legions of Merit, two Bronze Stars (one for Valor), and a Purple Heart. The story below is selected from his interview with the West Point Center for Oral History. Colonel Carlson died on August 2, 2022.

In 1968, I arrived in Vietnam and was placed in command of A Troop, 4th Squadron, 12th Cavalry Regiment in Dong Ha, as close to the DMZ as you could get without being in North Vietnam. We had 318 men and 44 combat vehicles, not including the wheeled stuff.

They attached me to a Tank Battalion, but official orders didn't always match what happened on the ground, and my assignment unofficially changed about four days after I took command.

That's when a helicopter landed in our area with the Commander of the Third Marine Division, Major General Ray Davis.

Davis had received the Navy Cross in World War II and Medal of Honor in Korea. I think he also had a couple Silver Stars and Bronze Stars with V's for Valor. But I didn't know any of this at the time.

"Ken Carlson, I haven't met you yet but I've heard a lot about you," Davis said upon approach. "Now listen," he continued, "you've got a unit that moves faster with more firepower than anything I've got in my Division, and anything you've got in your Brigade."

He went on to say he wanted to call on A Troop in case of emergency. The term "9-1-1" didn't exist in 1968, but that's what he meant, a rapid response team with armor.

"You're going to be my fire truck. Whenever I call you, you turn on the red lights and just move like hell."

"Sir, how will I know what the mission is?" I asked.

"My operation shop will call you and tell you what needs to be done. But if you ever have a question, here's my card."

Davis reached into his fatigues and pulled out a business card. And on the back of it, he wrote his frequency and personal call sign, "*Sudden Death 66*."

"I normally only give this to Battalion Commanders, but I'm giving it to you. So you call me if there's a problem, okay?"

And with that, the General handed me a "Get Out of Jail Free Card." I could skip the Chain of Command and call a two-star directly if need be.

General Ray Davis, Vietnam, 1968

Our Troop did a lot of work along the DMZ. This was just after the Battle of Khe Sanh, where 20,000 North Vietnamese regulars laid siege to 6,000 Marines on a remote outpost atop a plateau that was a little more than a square mile large. The Marines were cut off from resupply and were living underground, like animals. Eventually the siege was broken and the base abandoned, and our job was to patrol down Highway 9 past the Khe Sanh plateau in a show of force to remind the enemy we were still around. We'd move all the way to the Laotian border and back.

On one comeback mission, I got a call from the Marine Headquarters that said, "Stop at Khe Sanh. We've got a mission for you."

Route Irish, 2004 (Doug Satterfield)

"What is the mission?" I asked.

"When the Marines evacuated, they left their mines unexploded, and so we want you to go out and blow up their mines."

I asked if there were any maps available to guide our disposal efforts.

"Marines don't make maps," was the reply.

We weren't engineers, I told HQ. How did they expect us to find the mines?

"Drive your combat vehicles around the perimeter of Khe Sanh and start exploding the mines."

That didn't sound like a good idea to me, but I agreed to try it.

Within minutes of starting the operation, mines blew the road wheels off two Armored Personnel Carriers. I decided to switch to heavier tanks. But then an anti-tank mine shattered the idle arm assembly of one of our M48 tanks.

"That's it," I ordered. "Cease work. I'm calling the Division." I called the Marine Colonel in charge of their operations shop.

"I'm not exploding any more mines on Khe Sanh," I told the Colonel. "I just medevaced one of my tank drivers. I'm not going to blow up my entire Cavalry Troop in order to clear these mines."

"This is a legal order, Captain," the Colonel responded.

"I'm not doing it," I said firmly.

With the conversation ending on a sour note, I decided to pull out my *Sudden Death 66* card.

"Sir, this is . . . " I stammered before General Davis interrupted, "Ken, how you doing?"

"Not very well, sir," I responded. "I've got an order from Ops. I was ordered to blow up perimeter mines at Khe Sanh by driving over them with my vehicles."

"Who is the stupid a-hole who told you to do that?" Davis demanded.

"Sir, I don't know the man personally, but it was somebody from your Operations shop. My tanks started hitting mines, so I told him I was stopping."

"Well, thank goodness you told him that. I'll fix it."

The general quickly changed the subject.

"I've got another mission for you. Collect up your guys and then head down Highway 9 until you get to these coordinates. Then, turn north to the DMZ. Don't cross the Ben Hai River. Stay in South Vietnam."

Davis continued, "There's a huge, dry rice paddy there, and I want you to set your Troop up in a perimeter around that paddy, vehicles facing out."

"Sir, what's the mission?" I asked.

"Just set up the perimeter. That's all I can tell you right now."

So, that's what we did. My lieutenant was perplexed. "Sir, what's the mission?"

"Stand by," I told him. "This is directly from *Sudden Death 66*, so we're doing it."

We made our way to the DMZ, found the rice paddy, just as described, and set up our armored perimeter. Then, a Marine CH-46 helicopter approached and landed in the middle of our circle. The back ramp dropped, and out came six men in cooks' whites, carrying large insulated aluminum Mermite containers. They set the metal cans on the dry paddy dike and waited patiently.

"Sir, what's going on?" asked my lieutenant over the radio.

"Stand by," I responded.

Out of the DMZ emerged a Marine Force Recon Team of fifteen. They hadn't bathed or shaved in a month. They were dirtier than dogs. The men walked into the paddy toward the dike and the Mermite containers. The men in cooks' white greeted the Marines and prepared ice cream sundaes for each of them. I mean, whipped cream and nuts with maraschino cherries on top – the works. And these filthy Marines stood there and devoured the ice cream.

After they were done, the Marines handed back their spoons and metal cups and disappeared back across the DMZ. The cooks packed everything up, boarded the helicopter, and took off.

"Sir, what did we just see?" asked my lieutenant.

"I think it was an ice cream social," I said.

A few minutes later, *Sudden Death 66* called me from the C-46 in flight.

"Ken," he said (*by the way, this is the way Marines talked on the radio. They didn't use call signs, just your name*), "I bet you're wondering what we're doing."

"Sir, we were curious," I said.

"Those Recon guys have been in the DMZ for a month," he explained, "and I figured they deserved an ice cream sundae."

"Sir, that is an excellent idea. We're glad we could see it."

Davis continued, "But in order to make that happen, I had to have absolute security of that LZ. I was one of the guys in the cooks' whites. The only way the Third Marine Amphibious Force would allow me to be that close to the DMZ, and in that much danger, was to have you guys there to provide absolute security. So, thank you."

"Semper Fi." That's all I could say. "Semper Fi, sir."

Everyone in A Troop agreed it was our best mission of the war.

VETERANS TREATMENT COURTS COME OF AGE

Veterans will talk with other veterans. Anyone who works with those who've served discovers that quickly.

Judge Robert Russell saw the bonds of service work magic one day in his Buffalo courtroom in 2007. A Vietnam veteran appeared before him for missing appointments and failing to keep in touch with his treatment team. The vet fixed his eyes to the floor, not responding to the Judge's questioning.

Russell turned to two court employees, both Vietnam veterans, and asked them to talk to the man to see if they could get anything out of him.

An hour later, the man returned to the courtroom, chin up, back straight, eyes looking forward.

"Are you ready to accept the support and treatment offered by this court," the Judge asked the man.

"Yes, sir," the man responded in a steady voice.

That moment inspired Judge Russell to create the nation's first Veterans Treatment Court (VTC), a program where offenders are matched with a team of fellow veterans who support and mentor them through the treatments they need and services they've earned.

Fourteen years later, there are over 600 VTCs nationwide, several in every state.

VTCs don't adjudicate guilt or innocence. Instead of having their cases wind through traditional criminal courts, accused offenders voluntarily submit to the VTC's treatment program and the pillars of support they offer. Each court has its own local rules, but most accept anyone who has served in any branch, regardless of discharge status. Any felony or misdemeanor charge will be considered, except for homicide and registerable sexual offenses.

The VTC focuses on addressing the veteran's unmet clinical needs, usually through mental health and drug and alcohol counseling. The special element of VTC is the intense involvement of volunteer Veteran Mentors, who give non-clinical support to veteran participants.

Veteran Mentors are people who have served in the military themselves. They've been trained by the court and are prepared to serve as a resource to VTC participants, providing advice, guidance, and coaching. Mentors encourage and motivate. They help participants make progress through four 90-day phases toward their treatment goals. Above all, Mentors remind participants they are not alone.

Over 100,000 veterans have passed through various VTCs in the past fourteen years. The vast majority came into the program with mental health or substance abuse issues. Most make it through the year-long program and graduate at a ceremony with their Mentors at their sides.

Studies show that VTC graduates have better outcomes than those who go through the traditional criminal court system. They're more likely to be employed and stably housed and less likely to end up back in court.

Judge Douglas Fahl, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Indiana National Guard, presides over VTC in Whitley County, Indiana (ING Sgt. Joshua Syberg).png

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Veterans Treatment Court in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The program has seen remarkable success and graduated dozens of veterans from its program.

Stephen J. Shaw became the court's Mentor Coordinator in 2020. His job is to recruit, train, and assign Mentors to veteran offenders. Recruitment is always the hardest part.

"We try to match them up with the same branch of service, but it's very difficult because we just don't have enough people," he says. "It's a constant issue. It's constant recruiting."

Like so many other veterans, Shaw became a Mentor to support his brothers and sisters in arms. "I thought I could contribute something," he says modestly.

The Veterans Treatment Court Mentor Coordinator Stephen J. Shaw (Courtesy Stephen J. Shaw)

Shaw himself served in the Marine Corps and then in the Pennsylvania National Guard, retiring after almost 25 years of service as a Command Sergeant Major (CSM).

That rank should tell you something about Shaw and his dedication to service. CSMs are the highest ranking enlisted members in the military, and there is only one per Army unit. The main job of the Command Sergeant Major is to listen and advise, problem solve and troubleshoot. They assess morale, clarify missions, and otherwise serve as the commander's eyes, ears, and chief influencer among enlisted members.

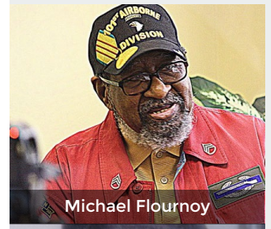
Those skills come into play as Mentor in VTC. Mentors need to be conscientious and perceptive. They need to communicate clearly and keep the treatment goals and requirements front and center. They hold their Mentees accountable and, in return, help their charges access housing, benefits, and positive social networks.

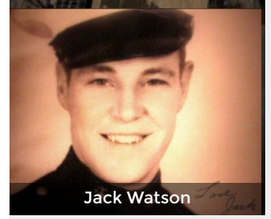
If you're a veteran with a desire to serve, consider becoming a Mentor in a VTC near you. If you live near Lancaster, you can reach Stephen Shaw at sstephensj@comcast.net or 717-808-3953

To learn more about Veterans Treatment Courts around the country, visit Justice for Vets at https://justiceforvets.org. To find courts in your state, search "Veterans Treatment Court" and your state's name. You'll find an official site like this one for Pennsylvania, with a list of court locations and contacts:

https://www.pacourts.us/judicial-administration/court-programs/veterans-court

TO THOSE WHO RECENTLY PASSED, WE SALUTE YOU.





Don Allen
Korea Army

Michael Flournoy
Vietnam Army

Bob Forney
Cold War Army

Don Gaus
Cold War Air Force

Paul "Moke" Goettler
WWII Army

Calvin Goss
WWII Army

George "Skip" Haskell
Vietnam Army

John Hunter
WWII Army

Jim Kehl
WWII Navy

Jay Londino
Cold War Army

Jim Moore
Vietnam Marines

Rich Norwood
Vietnam Air Force

Bob Newcomer
Korea Army

Carl Nicklas
Cold War Army

Larry Pusateri
Vietnam Army

Tom Riley
Korea Army

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WWII Army

Kathleen Short
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Veterans Breakfast Club

STORIES UNITE US

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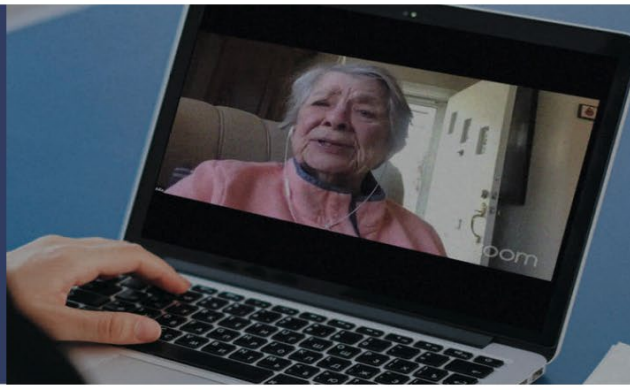

Sign up today to interview or be interviewed at veteransbreakfastclub.org/historyproject.