

The Brotherhood



Of Soldiers At War

By
C. Douglas Sterner

A Hall of Heroes E-Book

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The Brotherhood Of Soldiers at War

Inspirational TRUE Stories of Courage and Compassion

**By
C. Douglas Sterner**

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Preface

My dear wife Pam has often remarked that it is strange how a man can spend two or three years of his life in uniform, and then spend the rest of his life talking about it as if it were the single most important part of his life. This is especially true for those veterans who have served during time of war, more so if any part of that period was spent in actual armed conflict.

Military service breeds a unique brotherhood (and in today's world a sisterhood as well). The friendships forged in moments of danger often become lifetime memories that, when possible, transcend the years to become lifetime friendships.

Initially I prepared this series of stories for a special 12-day series in the two weeks prior to Veterans Day, 1999. My intent was to focus on brothers, both biological and fraternal, during time of war. In these pages you will read about actual brothers who served together, sometimes even died together. You will also meet men who were unrelated, sometimes even of different ethnic backgrounds, who found a common relationship in the uniform they wore.

It is often said of the Vietnam Veteran that we did not fight for a flag, a cause or an ideology, but for each other. In truth, this can probably be said of veterans from ANY war. In moments of extreme danger, there is little time to reason WHY you are where you are, or to ponder the politics of your conflict. In the heat of battle human nature allows for only one natural response, the struggle for survival. It is a tribute to the inner character of those who fight the wars that have kept America free, that men can rise above the concern for their OWN survival, to care enough for the survival of their brothers. In that unique characteristic lies the true *brotherhood of soldiers at war*.

For no individual are the words of the poet John Donne better defined than for the *brothers* that serve together in combat:

No man is an Iland, intire of itselfe; every man is a peece of the Continent, a part of the maine; if a Clod bee washed away by the Sea, Europe is the lesse, as well as if a Promontorie were, as well as if a Mannor of thy friends or of thine owne were; any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;

It tolls for thee.

Andy's Scar



Andy wasn't the toughest kid on the block...just the most persistent. One of his schoolmates had once said, "I could throw him three times out of four, but he would never stay thrown. He was dead game and never would give up."

It was a telling statement that characterized the life of a young boy who never gave up. By the time he was fourteen he was a war veteran who had been wounded in action, a former prisoner of war, and an orphan. Both brothers were dead and he was all that remained to carry on a family tradition. His soul bore many scars but no scar so prominently told the story of the boy who would never quit like the scar on his brow. It was Andy's badge of freedom.

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Robert shivered with the early spring chill as he huddled in a thicket deep in the South Carolina swamp. He was exhausted, he was scared, he was hungry, and he was tired of war. At only fifteen years of age he had seen enough death and suffering to last a lifetime. Only a year earlier the British soldiers had marched into the Waxhaw to defeat the patriot resistance. They had left behind 113 dead patriots, another 130 wounded. Robert, his mother, and his younger brother had worked for days to save the wounded in the old log meeting house that had been converted into a hospital. It was amazing that any of the patriot militia had survived. The British commander, Sir Banastre Tarleton, was known throughout the Carolinas as "The Butcher" for his savage, scorched-earth manner of making war. The battle in the Waxhaw came to be called a massacre. Indeed it had been.

A stir in the thicket reminded Robert that he was not alone. His younger brother huddled there as well, and Robert may have felt a paternal concern for the 13-year old. After all, at his own tender age, Robert was the "man of the family". Their father Andrew had died back in 1867, just a few days before Robert's youngest brother had been born. Their mother Elizabeth had named the infant Andrew, after his late father. Hugh had been the oldest of the three sons, two years older than Robert. But Hugh had been gone for almost a year, and he wouldn't be coming back. He had died shortly after the Battle of Stono Ferry the previous summer.

The boys were more however, than casualties of war. They were veterans of war. Both had fought the invading British and marauding Tories. Young Andrew had even been a part of Colonel William Richardson Davie's cavalry at the Battle of Hanging Rock the previous August. Now the two boys were on the run, hiding from the soldiers that had surprised the gathering of patriots the previous night. They were fortunate. More than a third of their small band of militia had been captured.

As morning dawned the two young soldiers set out in search of food. They approached the friendly home of Lieutenant Crawford after leaving their horses and muskets hidden in the thicket. As the Crawford family prepared a meal for the two hungry boys, local Tories found their horses and notified the British. Suddenly, without warning, the enemy swarmed upon the Crawford house. The doors were sealed and a violent search of the home began. The invaders held the two boys prisoner, then ransacked the house with total abandon. Glass was shattered, furniture destroyed, and the family's clothes were ripped and scattered about as the soldiers vented their hatred of the upstart American patriots. Then the dragoon commander walked up to the younger of his two prisoners. Looking down at the swamp mud he had tracked in he ordered, "Boy, clean my boots."

Young Andy drew himself up to his full adolescent height, looked the officer in the eyes and replied, "Sir, I am a prisoner of war, and claim to be treated as such." The refusal of the small boy so angered the commander he drew his sword and swung it at the upstart lad. Quickly Andy raised his arm to protect himself. The sword bit into flesh, cutting his forearm to the bone and then continuing to slash a long furrow across his forehead. Andy was fortunate he had not been decapitated.

Quickly the officer turned to elder boy. "Then YOU clean my boots!" When, like his younger brother, Robert refused to be humiliated, the sword sliced through air once again. The blow caught Robert on the head, causing a serious wound.

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Their wounds untreated, Robert and Andy were placed with 20 other prisoners and taken forty miles to the British prison camp at Camden. There they were housed with 250 other prisoners. Their prison was the most rudimentary. Beds were non-existent, food was almost as scarce, and the British jailers couldn't be bothered with such details as treating wounds or illness. Smallpox ravaged the prison population and young Andy's 14th birthday passed to the cries and pleadings of men who were beyond hope. Among them was his brother Robert. In addition to the infection that set in to his untreated head wound, Robert had contracted smallpox.

One small ray of hope appeared late in April when General Greene's forces camped on Hobkirk's Hill, within view of the prisoners. But hope vanished on April 25th when the British surprised the small force and over-ran the hill. Robert was by now on his deathbed, young Andy nearly as critical. Unless something happened, both boys, like their oldest brother Hugh, would be casualties of the war for Independence.

It was the arrival of their mother that saved the day. The British had arranged to exchange some of their prisoners for 13 British soldiers held by the Patriots. Elizabeth had learned the fate of her two remaining sons and come to Camden to check on their welfare. She was totally unprepared for what she found--two living skeletons, malnourished, sick, and suffering infection from the still untreated wounds inflicted by the dragoon officer's sword weeks earlier. She successfully argued for their release, and then began the journey home. Robert was so ill that he could not even ride home on horseback without his mother's support. Barefoot and with no jacket, Andy had walked the full 45 miles next to her side. Before the trip ended a violent rainstorm soaked the refugees. Perhaps it was the final blow to Robert's chances of survival. When the trio made it back to their home in Waxhaw, Elizabeth tucked the broken bodies of her two young sons into bed, and began to nurture them back to life. Despite her best efforts, two days later Robert died.

Young Andy fared only a little better. For weeks it appeared the 14-year old former POW would become the third of three sons to die for American Independence. Andy was delirious for weeks, an invalid for months, but slowly he began to regain strength. By fall the immediate danger had passed. Andy would survive.

With Andy out of danger, Elizabeth became concerned for other young boys suffering fates similar to her own sons'. A nephew was a prisoner of war near Charleston, and Elizabeth joined several Patriot women from Waxhaw in the 160-mile trip to their aid. The war was slowly turning in favor of the new United States of America, and as it entered its final stages it was evident many of these mis-treated, malnourished, disease-ridden prisoners would not live to see the victory they had paid so dearly for. Elizabeth and the other women gained entry to the prison ships where they did their best to nurse the ailing prisoners back to health. In the end, Elizabeth herself was afflicted with cholera. Shortly after General Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, Elizabeth died and was buried in an unmarked grave in Charleston. Her few possessions were sent back to Waxhaw, a message to Andy that his mother, like his brothers, had given her life in the battle for freedom.

With the surrender at Yorktown, Andy and his countrymen were free. But it was not without a great price. The soul of the fourteen-year-old boy who would never give up carried scars that could never be healed. Likewise the scar in his forehead, inflicted by the angry officer to whom the young American boy refused to bow, became a permanent reminder of that fateful

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day. For the rest of his life, Andy wore that scar with pride. Almost 50 years later an older Andy stood on the steps of the United States Capitol Building, his unruly hair swept back from his high brow, the white scar from a British officer's sword gleaming in the dim sunlight as he was sworn in as the 7th United States President. The son of Andrew and Elizabeth Jackson was indeed the boy who would never quit, and that scar was his own badge of freedom.



(I was) "Brought up under the tyranny of Britain--altho young (I) embarked in the struggle for our liberties, in which I lost everything that was dear to me...for which I have been amply repaid by living under the mild administration of a republican government. To maintain this, and the independent rights of our nation is a duty I have ever owed to my country, to myself, and to posterity. And, when I do all that I can to it support, I have **ONLY DONE MY DUTY.**"

Andrew Jackson
January 4, 1813

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The McGovern Brothers

Robert & Jerome

A Tradition of Giving Continues



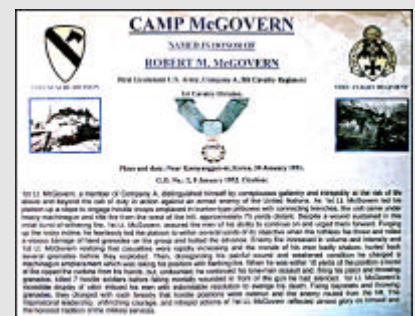
Sooner or later everyone needs a helping hand, a "big brother" or "big sister" to reach out in kindness and love and guide them through the trials of life. The town of Brcko in the northern part of war-torn Bosnia is home to many such boys and girls. It is a town rebuilding from the aftermath of tragedy late in April 1992 when Serb militias swept through the river port town murdering non-Serb residents and sending thousands more fleeing their homes to any place of refuge.

Evidence of the horror of 1992 and the years of fighting that followed is still seen throughout the city, but there is a ray of hope. American soldiers carefully patrol the streets from day to day. They are not there as combat soldiers, though at any moment they face the possibility of immediate danger. They are there as part of a peacekeeping force. As they go about their duties, their hearts break for the young children. They reach out a hand in friendship; give a hug here and a word of encouragement there. They minister to medical needs, hand out much needed school supplies sent to them by volunteers back home, and do their very best to be a "big brother" or "big sister" to the innocent victims of the Bosnian conflict. Then, at night, they return to their small military post on the outskirts of the city. As they pass through the gates they can't help but notice the sign declaring the name of their outpost, or the tradition their service to the children represents. The name itself reminds them of an American family which almost fifty years earlier sent two young soldiers much like themselves to defend the freedom and dignity of people in another war torn foreign country called Korea. The eldest brother was a First Cavalry trooper like themselves, a patriot with a heart for others. His name was Robert McGovern, a name almost forgotten by many who live in the Nation for which he served. His care for others, his courage on the battlefield of Korea, and the sacrifice he, his younger brother Jerome, and the entire McGovern family made for freedom is now rekindled at



Camp McGovern

Bosnia



Robert Milton McGovern

Robert McGovern looked every bit the part of an "All American" young man. Born in Washington, DC in 1928, he grew up in our Nation's Capitol in a close family with a modest but happy home in the Petworth neighborhood. In time the family of Mr. and Mrs. Halsey McGovern would grow to six, four boys and two girls. John was the oldest, three years Robert's senior. He was a World War II veteran who had served with the Army Air Force as a flight engineer on a B-24 bomber in the Pacific, while at home his younger brothers and sisters feared for his safety and prayed for his return. Sister Margaret Jane was a year older than Robert, and Jerome was little more than a year younger. Brother Charles and sister Elizabeth completed the large and loving family



The McGovern family insisted on a solid education for their children, and believed that such an education could be found at nearby St. John's College High School. Among the outstanding programs at the school was their Cadet Corps. The Drill Team was a tremendous source of pride for the school, marching in many Capitol activities including the 1917 Inaugural parade for President Woodrow Wilson. The oldest McGovern son graduated from St. John's in the spring of 1942. That same Fall Robert entered the school. Two years later Jerome followed in their footsteps. Both Robert and Jerome became part of the Cadet Corps, not only marching and drilling with pride but also showing an almost innate leadership quality. The two young men were brothers. They were also friends.

When Robert McGovern graduated from St. John's in 1946, he enlisted in the Army. After basic training the young Army private attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. Before his 20th birthday he was commissioned a second lieutenant and by 1949 he found himself stationed at Camp Crawford in Japan.

Robert McGovern was a good soldier, a fine officer, and an American patriot. These were character traits he had learned in his family and had seen reinforced at St. John's. Robert McGovern also had a deep Spiritual side. The Christian Brothers at St. John's instilled in all their students, a compassion for the needs of others and a responsibility to be their "brother's keeper". These lessons followed Lieutenant McGovern to Japan, a country still reeling from the after-effects of World War II. Robert's heart broke for the orphans around him, the innocent children who needed so much and had so little. He began volunteering his spare time to help at a local Franciscan orphanage in Sappora, but he could see his efforts alone would not be enough. Finally he wrote home:

"Since the occupation began these nuns have fallen heir to the babies of the Army. In touring the buildings I grew disgusted with the lack of help these people are receiving from Catholics Stateside. Thirty-eight babies are crowded into a 20 by 50 foot room, and one out of three dies from advanced malnutrition and high susceptibility to disease."

Back home in our Nation's Capitol, his words struck a nerve and moved hearts. When the words of his letter reached the Good Samaritan Society, packages began arriving in Japan. The orphanage received complete sets of inoculations for the children, powdered milk, bedding, clothing and more. Robert McGovern continued to share the conditions faced by the innocent children of Japan in letter after letter. Compassion poured out at home and spilled over to a neighboring orphanage in Osaka, Japan.



By the time 100 Christmas packages arrived in 1950, Robert McGovern was no longer in Japan to welcome the gifts for the children who had touched his heart. Instead, he was facing a hostile enemy in the bitterly cold mountains of Korea. In truth, Robert McGovern didn't become a hero in Korea that January day in 1951 that brought him our Nation's highest honor. To hundreds of Japanese children, Robert McGovern was a hero long before he arrived on the battlefield.

JEROME FRANCIS McGOVERN

Robert's younger brother Jerome graduated from St. John's in the Spring of 1948. Like the elder, he joined the army, enrolled in Officer's Candidate School, and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant at Fort Riley, Kansas while his brother was serving in Japan. Airborne training followed. Then, in the Summer of 1950, Jerome was sent to Japan to join his brother as a member of the 187th Airborne Regiment. It was an unexpected reunion; the first time the two brothers had been together since Robert had entered the service. The tranquillity of their time together didn't last long. On the early morning of June 25, 1950, nearly 100,000 members of the North Korean People's Army swarmed across the 38th parallel in an effort to crush the democratic Republic of South Korea.



In October the brothers parachuted with their regiment into the Kimpoo Airfield in North Korea. Their baptism of fire was almost immediate. A shortage of officers made the chances of serving close to each other impossible. First Lieutenant Robert McGovern was assigned to the 5th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. Second Lieutenant Jerome McGovern was assigned to the 9th Infantry Regiment, 2d Infantry Division. Within months each would prove his leadership skills, demonstrate his courage, and come to exemplify all things good they had learned at home and at St. Johns.

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Throughout the winter the two brothers were too busy leading their troops to maintain much contact. They wrote home frequently, but the bitter warfare and the coldest winter in 100 years made their first concern one of simple daily existence. As Christmas presents were arriving for the orphans in Japan, Robert McGovern was fighting for his life. A month later, on January 30, 1952, Lieutenant Robert McGovern deployed his platoon in a skirmish line at the base of a hill near Kamyangnan-ni. All seemed peaceful enough, but he cautiously urged his men upward. The tired soldiers slipped and slid on the snow-covered rocks, their breath coming in ragged gasps from the exertion. When they were within 75 yards of the summit they began to relax slightly. The hard climb was almost finished. Suddenly, from the top of the hill, a machine-gun began raining death upon the weary soldiers. From more than a dozen foxholes, Communist soldiers popped up with weapons blazing. A bullet ripped into Lieutenant McGovern's side. Quickly he fell behind a rock for cover and attempted to bandage the wound. The platoon sergeant crept to the wounded officer's position, checked him over and suggested he head downhill to receive treatment. But Lieutenant McGovern would not leave his men to face the enemy alone. Struggling against the pain, he assured his sergeant he would be okay. "Get the men ready," he ordered. "Next time there's a break in the fire, we're going up."

Slowly the enemy fire did begin to subside, and during the lull the brave lieutenant began to dodge from rock to rock, advancing on the enemy. Behind him his men watched in stunned amazement, slowly following and laying down covering fire. As the platoon neared the enemy, grenades began to rain down upon them. Quickly McGovern began to scoop them up before they could explode and toss them back at the enemy. Meanwhile, the enemy machine-gun added momentum to the death reaching out for Lieutenant McGovern's beleaguered platoon. Weak from loss of blood, the young hero stood to his feet and boldly charged the enemy position. When he was within ten yards a burst of fire tore his carbine from his grasp. Still he continued on, firing at the enemy with his pistol and throwing grenades. He killed seven of the enemy to silence the machine-gun, but it was not enough. Behind him his own soldiers watched in horror as the enemy numbers finally became too much. They cried out in agony as they watched the bullets slam their leader to the ground and riddle his body. Then they cried out in anger. The amazing courage of the lone lieutenant in his one-man assault provided their inspiration, his death their motivation. Determined to avenge his loss they fixed bayonets and charged the enemy, throwing grenades and attacking with such ferocity that the enemy position was over-ran and Lieutenant McGovern's men achieved their objective. Then, in sorrow, they gathered around the lifeless body of their leader.

Somewhere in Japan orphans wept. The children had lost a hero!

Second Lieutenant Jerome McGovern bundled himself from the cold a short distance north of where his older brother's body had fallen in the icy snow of a Korean mountainside less than a week before. He didn't know that Robert had fallen, given his life to spare his own soldiers the destruction of an enemy machine-gun. Jerome's mind turned briefly to home as he steadied his hand against the cold to pen a few lines to his parents. *"The Company Commander has said something is going to break in the next day or two, so I am going to turn in early....so I will be prepared for any eventuality. I hope it is good."* Later he would sign, seal, and mail it home.

Something did break on February 10th, just eleven days after the death of Robert McGovern. The younger brother was still unaware of the loss as he led his platoon in support of his Company's assault on Hill 442 near Kumwang-ni. The company had advanced almost 300

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yards when heavy mortar, automatic weapons, and small arms fire tore into their ranks. Second Lieutenant Jerome McGovern was among the wounded. Like his brother, however, Jerome would not leave his troops leaderless. Ignoring his own serious condition, he regrouped the men and organized a second assault. By his own example, leading them and fighting back despite the pain he suffered, encouraged the men. As they watched him charge fearlessly into the enemy position, they could not help but follow his gallant example. The 21-year old brother of Robert McGovern lead well, fought hard, and gave it all he had. Wounded a second time, when the smoke of battle cleared, Jerome McGovern had nothing left to give. In less than two weeks the lifeless body of a second McGovern stained the snow with its blood.

"Close in Life, the 2 McGovern Boys are Buried Side by Side"

So read the headline in the *Washington Post* on a chilly, November morning in Washington, DC. It had been almost a year since the death of the McGovern brothers. Finally their broken bodies had been returned home. Almost the entire Petworth community showed up for the funeral at St. Gabriel's Church where both boys had been baptized, made their first Holy Communion, and were confirmed. The Most Reverend John M. McNamara, auxiliary bishop of Washington eulogized them:

"As I look at the caskets of two young men who lie before this altar in the sleep of death, I am reminded of a lesson that was written deep in their hearts. He who loves God is a Christian; he who loves his country is a patriot. But he can be neither, who is wanting in the spirit of sacrifice."

"In translating these words into action on the field of battle in far-off Korea, Robert and Jerome McGovern gave a magnificent exemplification of the lesson which they learned in the classrooms of St. Gabriel's School and St. John's College. Of whom do we think, if not of them, when we hear the words as spoken by Christ--greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

A grieving family, classmates, neighbors, and a military detachment from the Third Infantry at Fort Myer followed the two flag-draped caskets across the river to Arlington National Cemetery. Officers of St. John's Cadet Corps formed a guard of honor, and sixteen cadets acted as pallbearers. In the place where America's warriors sleep, a firing team issued their final salute to the McGovern brothers. A bugler played "Taps" as the two brothers were slowly lowered into the ground, side by side. Above them a headstone noted their names, the brief spans of their life, and the simple words that summed up Robert and Jerome McGovern:

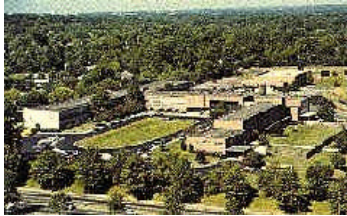
"To their conscience they were true

And had the genius to be men."



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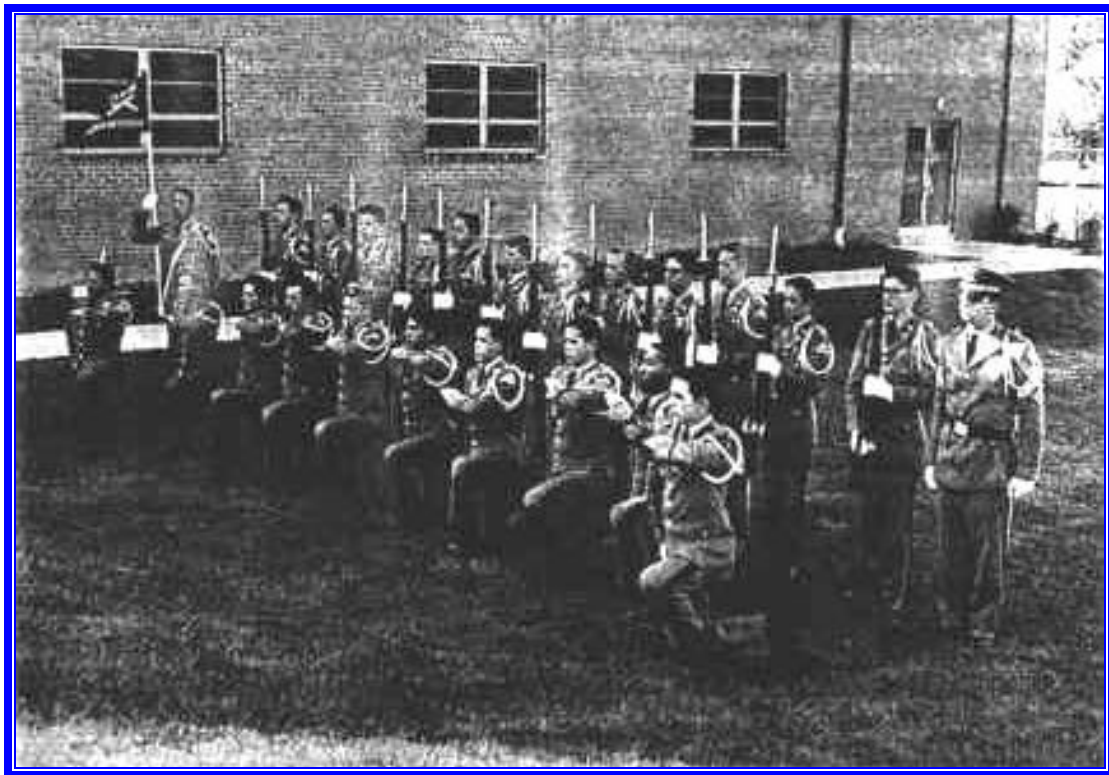
The following year the Army announced the award of the Medal of Honor to
Second
Lieutenant Jerome McGovern. For his own deeply personal reason, Halsey
citations and photos of the brothers, are on display at St. John's College High
School in Washington,



sits nestled on a well-
oldest Christian Brother's School in the United States, established in 1851.
Over the years its graduates
and business life of Washington, DC. None however, would leave the lasting
impact of two young men whose legacy is that they became soldiers....if

The pride of St. John's Cadet Corps is the rifle team, which parades the tradition of St. John's in
both National and local events in our Capitol City. The rifle team now maintains an additional tradition,
they are:

"The McGovern Rifles"



In the years that followed the death of Robert and Jerome McGovern, their surviving
brothers John and Charlie and sisters Elizabeth and Margaret Jane continued to keep Robert's
program of relief to the orphans of Japan alive and flourishing. In May of 1952 a groundbreaking
ceremony was held in Sapporo on Hokkaido Island, Japan. The new Tenshi-in Boys Home was
dedicated to the hero of Japan's orphans, the soldier who had given them the helping hand of a
"big brother", Robert McGovern.

Fifty Years Later

An article on Bosnia appeared in the Washington Post in March of 1997 that included a map with an area labeled "Camp Mc Govern". John Mc Govern wrote a letter of inquiry to the Department of the Army and never received a reply. Charles then contacted his congressman and was later informed, by the Army's Congressional Office, that indeed Camp Mc Govern had been named in honor of their brother, Bob. Charles then established contact, via the Internet, with Captain Elizabeth Hibner, the Public Affairs Officer for Camp Mc Govern. She was instrumental in providing the family with in depth information concerning the camp, its history, facilities, visiting VIP's and the fact that the soldiers had taken it upon themselves to collect and distribute donated school supplies to the Bosnian children living near the camp. Charlie relayed the story of the soldier's efforts to collect supplies to his family and friends on the Internet, resulting in many packages being sent for distribution. One example was the 7th grade students at the Huntington Elementary School, in Calvert County, Maryland, who collected and shipped 98 pounds of supplies and clothing.

Boxes of badly needed clothes, school supplies, and gifts have continued to make their way to Camp McGovern in Bosnia, just as they had when Robert McGovern appealed for help for the orphans of Japan more than fifty years earlier. Joining the effort is a student at the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business. Andrea McGovern Galo is the daughter of Charlie McGovern, niece of Jerome and Robert. After almost 50 years the McGovern tradition of giving not only continues, the torch is being passed to a new generation of McGoverns.

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Special Acknowledgment

STEVE VOGEL is a staff writer for the "Washington Post" and writes a column titled "Military Matters" which appears every other Thursday. Mr. Vogel brought the McGovern story back into the American memory with his article on January 7, 1999 and has written additional material since that date. It was Mr. Vogel's story on the McGovern Brothers that initially inspired us to prepare "The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War" series.

Not Without My Lieutenant

The True Story of Navy SEALs

Tom Norris

Mike Thornton

Chapter 1



Lieutenant Colonel Icel "Gene" Hambleton felt his body exploding away from the crippled EB-66 aircraft. Moments earlier the unarmed, electronic warfare plane had taken a direct hit from an enemy SAM (surface to air missile), and was going down. As he looked back in horror at the pilot preparing to eject, the aircraft suddenly exploded into thousands of pieces. Five fellow crewmembers were instantly killed, leaving the 53 year old Air Force officer the only survivor.

Heavy cloud cover masked the ground as Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton's parachute opened, but he had a pretty good idea what he would find below. Thirty thousand North Vietnamese soldiers, controlling the surrounding terrain, would be searching for survivors from the downed aircraft. A year earlier American and South Vietnamese forces had maintained a tenuous hold on the area just south of the DMZ, marked by the Cua Viet River. As the American forces had withdrawn, enemy soldiers had swarmed south. Now, with the Easter offensive of 1972, thirty thousand well supplied soldiers from the North, supported by artillery and armor, were pushing south in a pincer-movement to complete their goal of total domination of the Republic of South Vietnam. Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton would land somewhere in the heart of their massive force.

An immediate Search and Rescue (SAR) effort was mounted to recover the downed airman. Two Army helicopters rushing to his rescue were quickly shot down. The entire 4-man crew of *Blueghost 39* was lost; the second limped to an area of safety before making a controlled-crash-landing. That crew was rescued by a "*Jolly Green*" helicopter and flown to safety. But as night fell over the northern I Corps of South Vietnam, Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton was alone, on the ground, and completely surrounded by one of the largest enemy offensives of the Vietnam War. It was Easter Sunday, April 2, 1972.

As morning dawned on April 3rd, Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton's position had been marked within 30 feet by onboard LORAN (long-range navigation systems). The Air Force knew where the injured survivor the EB-66 was, but couldn't reach him because of the massive enemy force that surrounded him. Fellow pilots had circled above his position throughout the night. With the first rays of dawn, they began dropping mines around him. If they couldn't fly in to rescue him, they could at least keep the North Vietnamese from reaching him as well. As the dawn gave way to daylight and the cloud cover lifted, a new rescue effort was mounted.

Coast Guard Lieutenant Commander Jay Crowe, with additional aircraft cover, broke through the clouds and began a rapid descent towards the area where Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton waited. He was met by an immediate curtain of enemy fire, hurled against him with an intensity that defied belief. Enemy rounds literally shredded "*Jolly Green 65*", and it was only the courage and flying skill of the Coast Guard pilot that enabled the chopper to stay airborne long enough to return to base. "*Jolly Green 66*" then followed, breaking through the clouds to face ten enemy tanks and a withering fire. Lieutenant Colonel Bill Harris fought the controls to bring his rescue helicopter within one hundred yards of Hambleton, his gunners engaging the enemy on all sides.

"Where's the enemy fire coming from?" asked one of the pilots flying support for the effort.

"From EVERYWHERE!" Harris replied as bullets riddled his helicopter and shattered the cockpit. Somehow Harris managed to get his badly damaged aircraft to gain altitude, then limp back to safety.

The two *Jolly Greens* were fortunate. Before darkness fell on Monday another aircraft would take direct fire. This time two more American fliers went down. Captain William Henderson was piloting an OV-10 FAC (Forward Air Controller) in support of the rescue effort. In the cockpit behind him sat Lieutenant Mark Clark, grandson of the famous World War II general, scanning the ground through binoculars. Both managed to eject when a SAM destroyed their aircraft, landing in the same general vicinity as Hambleton. A "triple-play" rescue for all three fliers followed. On the ground in separate areas, the three airmen hid from the enemy, preparing to make the rush to safety as a new series of rescue aircraft began their approach. All watched in frustration as enemy fire shattered three aircraft, forcing them to pull back. Though destroyed beyond further use, all three helicopters managed to return home before night fell. On the ground, Hambleton, Henderson, and Clark prepared for the worst. In just over twenty-four hours of the rescue attempt, three aircraft had gone down, five more had been severely damaged, three American rescuers had died, and a fourth had been captured. Still, the three airmen remained on the ground, huddled in the darkness and completely surrounded.

During the night of April 3rd, Captain William Henderson was captured by the NVA (North Vietnamese Army). Meanwhile new urgency was added to the mission as the Air Force gleaned information on the identity of the first downed airman. Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton had served with the Strategic Air Command. He carried, in his memory, intimate details of American missile forces and targets that dared not fall into enemy hands. The effort to rescue Lieutenant Clark and Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton was destined to become the most intense, and costliest, rescue effort of the Vietnam war.

On April 4th the Air Force began launching a series of air strikes in and around the Cam Lo Bridge. On the ground, LTC Hambleton directed the fire. So thorough was the enemy penetration in the area, of the ten A-1s that engaged the enemy from the skies over the downed airman that day, eight received battle damage. One aircraft was totally destroyed. It became quickly apparent that the North Vietnamese were using Hambleton and Clark as bait, drawing in the rescue forces, and then systematically destroying them. It was dangerous work, but the American pilots refused to leave their comrades behind. Day after day they flew into the inferno.

On April 6th a total of 52 sets of American fighters and four B-52 bombers began pounding the area around Cam Lo. From their places of hiding the lone airmen on the ground watched the full force of American air power rain around them. Back at Da Nang *Jolly Green 67* was warming up for the "snatch". Captain Peter Chapman had volunteered to pilot the rescue, despite the fact he was "short", due to return home very soon. In addition to his co-pilot, four additional Americans finished the crew of *Jolly Green 67* as they lifted off to fly into the storm. Amid a smoke screen and intense rocket and machine-gun fire deployed by accompanying American aircraft, Captain Chapman began to drop his rescue helicopter near Hambleton. Enemy fire raked the chopper, smoke billowed, and Captain Chapman began to pull away. Smoke continued to billow, and then flames appeared. Pieces of the helicopter began to fall apart, the aircraft floundering in its attempts to flee the area. It rolled to its side, hitting the ground in an explosion of fire that instantly sealed the fate of six brave Americans.

On the ground Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton wept, not for himself, but for the men who had died coming to rescue him. For four days he had hidden in the midst of his enemies, wounded, hungry, scared, tired, and uncertain for any tomorrow. As he wept for the men who had died for him, he resolved in his heart to survive....to make their sacrifice count for something.

On April 7th an OV-10 flying in support of the continued rescue effort was shot down. Aboard were Air Force First Lieutenant Bruce Walker and Marine Corps First Lieutenant Larry Potts. The two additional downed airmen added to a tragic list of heroes lost in the effort. Walker managed an initial radio contact before he began his escape and evasion effort. There were later reports that Lieutenant Potts died in captivity. His remains were never recovered and he remains one of the Vietnam War's Missing in Action.

SAR Casualties

Blueghost 39

- *1st Lt. Byron Kulland
- *WO John Frink
- *Sp5c Ronald Paschall
- (POW) Sp5c Jose Astorga

Covey 282

- *(MIA) 1st Lt. Bruce Walker
- *(MIA) 1st Lt. Larry Potts

Jolly Green 67

- *Captain Peter H. Chapman, II
- *Captain John H. Call, III
- *TSgt James H. Alley
- *TSgt Allen J. Avery
- *TSgt Roy D. Prater
- *Sgt William R. Pearson

Nail 38

- (POW) Captain William Henderson
- *DENOTES KILLED IN ACTION

By April 9th the 7th Air Force was in dire straits with far too many battle-damaged aircraft. Five aircraft had been destroyed, nine Americans were dead, two had been captured, the fate of Potts and Walker was uncertain. In seven days the rescue effort had involved soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines from all branches of American military service, working feverishly against all odds. It was sufficient to them to understand that American fliers were in harms way. These heroes lived by the creed that "We don't leave anyone behind", and would risk their lives towards that end.

It mattered not that the rescue crews didn't personally know the men they risked their lives to snatch from the jaws of death. All that mattered was that they were Americans. The rescuers did come to know them by their radio call signs. Each American aircraft was assigned a unique "call sign", and each person on that aircraft was identified by an alpha number. First Lieutenant Bruce Walker was the pilot of "Covey-282" and as such his call sign was *Covey 282 Alpha*. His co-pilot, First Lieutenant Larry Potts was *Covey 282 Bravo*. Lieutenant Mark Clark was *Nail 38 Bravo*. His pilot, the captured Captain William Henderson - *Nail 38 Alpha*. The stricken EB-66 that had been first to go down had carried six men with call signs *Alpha* through *Foxtrot*. Only the second man on the roster had survived the enemy fire, the aircraft's 53-year old navigator.....

"BAT-21 Bravo"

By now it was obvious that *Nail-38 Bravo* and *Bat-21 Bravo* could not be rescued from the air. Any new rescue attempt would call for a covert, land-based movement. Marine Colonel Al Gray suggested such an alternative on the afternoon of April 8th. "I have a boat load of guys that would love to do something like that," he announced. With the agreement of the rescue planners, the call went out to assemble the commando team at once. It would call for a special kind of warrior.



Lieutenant (j.g.) Tom Norris

If the Air Force was expecting "RAMBO" to show up, they would have been disappointed when Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Norris arrived to join a five-man SOG Naval Advisory Detachment (NAD) Sea Commando team from Da Nang. One of the few remaining Navy SEALs in Vietnam, Norris was serving his second tour in Vietnam. Slight of stature, he didn't fit the profile we have come to associate with the military's elite. But like the fictional Rambo, Tom Norris was tough. Unlike Rambo, he was REAL. Above all, the 28-year-old warrior had HEART! As the mission unfolded for the SEAL and his five South Vietnamese "frog men", the mission essentials would necessitate all three characteristics.

Meanwhile the Air Force began the intricate process of preparing *Nail-38 Bravo* and *Bat-21 Bravo* for the newest rescue attempt. Lieutenant Clark was already near the Cam Lo River that flowed east into the Cua Viet so he remained hidden with instruction to move to the water on the night of April 10th. Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton was a mile away from the river and had to be guided through a heavily coded series of messages related in simile to a golf course, towards the river and past thousands of NVA soldiers.

From a small South Vietnamese (ARVN) outpost less than a mile away, Lieutenant Norris would take his team of five up the river to find and rescue first Clark, and then Hambleton. As darkness fell on April 10th the team set out, six men alone in the darkness against a force that had defied the might of American air power.

Initially the plan had been for the team to swim upriver, against the current, while Lieutenant Clark floated down stream to meet them. The SEAL advisor checked the current and found it too swift for his frogmen to swim against, and began an overland insertion along the banks of the river. Slowly the team moved west, passing columns of enemy tanks, trucks, and frequent patrols. It was slow, dangerous work that could turn deadly without warning. Rescue planners had known the journey would be a dangerous one, and had instructed Lieutenant Norris to proceed no further than one kilometer into the enemy infested river bottom. The courageous SEAL knew that wouldn't be close enough and moved eastward through the enemy, finally setting his team up to wait....TWO kilometers upriver.

Overhead the FAC pilot instructed Lieutenant Clark to slip into the river and float down until rescued by the commando team. Somewhere between 2 and 3 AM Norris noticed something moving down the river. It was Lieutenant Clark. Then, before Norris could begin the rescue, an enemy patrol appeared. He sat quietly at the water's edge until they passed, then slipped into the chilly river and floated down stream after the pilot. The water moved swiftly and Norris had lost track of Clark. Stealthily he emerged from the water and began a search of the banks, eventually returning all the way to his hidden team. He reported the situation to the rescue coordinators by radio, and then began moving his team east again. His team searched the banks on their withdrawal, while the Navy SEAL floated down the river. As dawn lit the dangerous skies, Lieutenant Norris rounded a bend in the river and noticed movement. It was the downed pilot, hiding along the banks of the river. Norris made contact, then led the airman to rendezvous with the rest of the team. Though they had found their quarry, they were still deep into an area filled with enemy soldiers. Slowly, carefully, they continued their escape and evasion, finally bringing Lieutenant Clark to safety. That afternoon he was taken by armored personnel carrier to the last outpost on the Cua Viet River at Dong Ha and flown to Da Nang. Tommy Norris and his team of South Vietnamese "frog men" remained at the distant ARVN outpost. Their mission wasn't complete. There was still an American pilot in harm's way.

Despite the overwhelming number of enemy the commando team had witnessed on their first incursion into enemy territory to rescue Lieutenant Clark, Tom Norris was prepared to do it all again on the night of April 11th to find and recover Hambleton. Enemy tanks had been reported at the Cam Lo Bridge, and strikes were ordered to destroy them before the team began their dangerous journey. This time the enemy responded in kind, raining death and destruction on

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the tiny ARVN outpost. Among the casualties were two of Norris' South Vietnamese SEALs. The following morning the wounded were evacuated, and Norris sat down with his remaining three team members to plan a renewed effort. They left the outpost after dark on the night of April 12th, this time moving nearly four kilometers into the massive enemy force to find *BAT-21 Bravo*. Two of Norris' team, upon seeing the force arrayed against them, became frightened and refused to continue. Only by convincing them that their only hope of returning to safety was to stay with the team, was he able to get them upriver to wait for Hambleton. As daylight began to break the skies they had to withdraw in frustration once again. After ten days on the ground, the 53-year old airman was weak and in the darkness directions were becoming confusing. Time was running out and little more could be done.

As Norris and his team tried to rest during the afternoon of the 13th, the FACs in the air above Hambleton continued to encourage the embattled airman to hang on. His survival for eleven days had tested the limits of human endurance, however, and his physical condition had rapidly deteriorated. If they couldn't reach him tonight, it would probably be the last chance. It was also becoming obvious that in his weakened condition, Hambleton couldn't come to the rescue team. If they were to accomplish the task, they would have to go to him.

By far the most daring effort yet, Norris could not risk taking the two team members who had faltered the night before. The last remaining member of the team, Petty Officer Nguyen Van Kiet, volunteered to stay with the brave SEAL advisor. The two men dressed as native fishermen and set out after dark once again. They worked their way up river to a bombed out village, where they found a small sampan. Hunched low in the small craft they paddled upriver. Along the banks they could hear the voices of enemy soldiers, the roar of tank engines, and the movements of a massive enemy force. Carefully they threaded their way past unseeing eyes to find *BAT-21 Bravo*. A brief lowering of fog gave them obscurity but also masked their progress. Without realizing it they had paddled all the way to the Cam Lo Bridge. Fortunately they escaped unnoticed, moved back down stream a short distance, and beached the small craft. Then they began the slow, dangerous work of searching the river for Hambleton. Finally they found him, the shell of a 53-year old man who had endured beyond human limitation for almost twelve days. He had lost 45 pounds, had steeled himself against the pain of a broken wrist for nearly two weeks, and evaded every effort expended by the enemy. But he was still alive.

Norris and Kiet slowly helped the near delirious airman back to the hidden sampan, laid him low in its bottom, and covered him with banana leaves. Slowly they began the long return home, past the enemy, and out of the jaws of death. By radio Norris notified the base that *BAT-21 Bravo* had been recovered. The rescue was not yet complete, however. Daylight was breaking and their thin disguise, as native fishermen, might not hold out. American aircraft were put on notice to stand by to lend fire support as the three moved toward safety on the surface of the fast moving river.

Suddenly the shouts of enemy soldiers could be heard, and along the banks of the river the pursuit began. Norris and Kiet paddled furiously, taking advantage of the current to move swiftly while also seeking to use the dense foliage along the banks to mask their desperate race against time. Gunfire erupted across the water and they pulled into a hidden bank to call for air support. A smoke screen billowed across the river as Norris and Kiet took to the water again, moving swiftly towards safety. As they neared the outpost the North Vietnamese crowded the north bank

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of the river, the South Vietnamese the south. As they fired back and forth at each other, Norris and Kiet helped Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton out of the sampan and began the dangerous last rush to the safety of a bunker. Hambleton could no longer walk, and South Vietnamese soldiers ran down the hill to help him to safety. When finally the three reached the bunker, Norris began administering first aid to Hambleton and preparing him for evacuation.

The saga of the rescue of *BAT-21 Bravo* was completed. The ordeal of Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton would be written about, even featured in a popular movie starring Gene Hackman as the downed navigator and Danny Glover as his friendly voice in the sky. (Retired, "Gene" Hambleton is a popular speaker who now makes his home in the state of Arizona.) No one played the part of Lieutenant Tom Norris. His courageous actions were unknown to none but a few people, classified as military secrets to protect the nature of such SAR actions on the ground.

Nguyen Van Kiet, the brave South Vietnamese SEAL, was subsequently awarded our Nation's second highest military award, the Navy Cross. It was the highest honor that could be presented to a member of a foreign military force. He was the only South Vietnamese warrior of the 14-year war to receive so high an honor.

Today his homeland has fallen to the Communist forces of North Vietnam, and he resides in the Pacific Northwest in the United States. He and Tom Norris still maintain contact and share a special friendship.



Lieutenant Norris and Nguyen Van Kiet



In 1997 the remains of the six crewmembers of Jolly Green 67 were recovered and returned to the United States. They were interred at Arlington National Cemetery on November 19th in an emotional tribute to heroes who gave their lives living up to their creed that "We don't leave anyone behind". Among those in attendance was Colonel Mark Clark.

Tommy Norris was submitted for the Medal of Honor for his own courageous role in the rescue of BAT-21, an honor he quickly refused on the basis that he had "simply been doing my job." For many years, despite the popular BAT-21 movie, Tom's role in the longest rescue effort

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in Air Force history could not be told. The details were classified. Lieutenant Norris only desire was to return to his activities as a Navy SEAL in South Vietnam. Before his tour of duty ended, another Navy SEAL would refuse to leave a brother behind, becoming the last Medal of Honor hero of the Vietnam War.

Perhaps Lieutenant Norris himself provided the finest closing chapter to the saga of *BAT-21 Bravo*, as well as the introduction to a whole new chapter in the saga of two Navy SEAL "brothers". After returning to safety with Lieutenant Colonel Hambleton, he was met by a CBS news reporter who looked at the tired SEAL who had just made three unbelievable trips into "hell on earth".

"It must have been rough out there," the reporter stated. "I bet you wouldn't do that again."

Tommy Norris looked the reporter in the eyes and sharply replied, "An American was down in enemy territory.

"Of course I'd do it again!"

Not Without My Lieutenant

The True Story of Navy SEALS

Tom Norris

Mike Thornton

Chapter 2



After the heroic rescue of *BAT-21 Bravo*, Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Norris returned to Da Nang to assist in planning the rescue of Lieutenant Bruce Walker, *Covey-282 Bravo*. On the night of April 17, 1972 Walker was attempting to escape and evade to a pick-up point under the watchful eyes of overhead Forward Air Controllers. Suddenly the enemy moved in, forcing the downed airman to race for cover. American aircraft tried to cover his flight for life, but the NVA moved in on him. It was the last that was ever seen or heard of the First Lieutenant. With contact lost, on April 20th the search was terminated and Walker designated MIA (Missing in Action). On the ground, one of the NVA pursuers had crept within six feet of the haggard pilot who had spent ten days eluding them. From less than 20 feet away the enemy soldier fired multiple rounds into the valiant Airman.

Lieutenant Tom Norris was content to slip into the background of the historic rescue effort of April 1972 and finish his tour training and running operations with the South Vietnamese LDNN (*Lien Doc Nguoi Nhia* - literally translated "soldiers who fight under the sea"). These Vietnamese "frogmen" were the native counterpart to the American Naval SEALs, operating frequently with American SEAL advisors and other times independently. Most were valiant warriors of immense courage who were willing to give their lives to preserve the fragile freedom of their homeland.

Slowly the American presence dwindled to three officers and nine enlisted SEALs, held in reserve for potential POW (Prisoner of War) rescue operations. The Americans occasionally operated in and around the DMZ on "sneak and peek" missions to surreptitiously observe the enemy and return with intelligence information. Most such reconnaissance teams consisted of one American SEAL officer who led the team, one enlisted American SEAL, and four LDNNs. Among the few American SEALs still serving in Vietnam by the fall of 1972 was Engineman First Class MICHAEL EDWIN THORNTON.



Engineman Michael Thornton

If an imperiled American in need of a "Rambo" kind of hero would have been initially disappointed by the arrival the short, slender Lieutenant Norris; they would have been overjoyed by the appearance of Mike Thornton. Big enough to play linebacker for any NFL team, the 23-year old SEAL was not only large and muscular, he was fearless. Arriving in Vietnam in January, 1970, by the fall of 1972 he was a seasoned veteran.

Mike was the "recruiting poster" kind of Navy SEAL. He had the appearance, the knowledge, and the experience to be among the best in arguably the world's finest elite covert fighting force. For almost two years he had been involved in numerous SEAL missions that, had they not been highly classified, would have marked him a hero. But Mike Thornton wasn't interested in being a hero anyway, he just wanted to do his job and be among the best. He did....and he WAS!

October 31, 1972

Six months after Navy SEAL Lieutenant Thomas R. Norris had penetrated a massive enemy force along the Cua Viet and Cam Lo Rivers just south of the DMZ to rescue two downed pilots, the enemy was in firm control of the area. Near the coast sat the Cua Viet River Base, once a center in American and ARVN defense of the Northern I Corps. Now it, as well as much of I Corps, was in enemy hands as the North Vietnamese continued to stage their invasion of the South. Information on NVA movement, plans, targets, and strength was needed. Reports from aircraft that from time to time dared to fly over the heavily armed enemy territory couldn't provide an accurate picture. To gather the necessary information, a small commando team would need to slip in among the enemy. The team would involve an inexperienced LDNN officer, two veteran LDNN frogmen, an American SEAL lieutenant, and Michael Thornton. It would be a dangerous, dramatic, Halloween night.....

It Would be a

Return to the DMZ!

A small raft bobbed silently on the swells of the ocean just off the coast of South Vietnam. Mike Thornton set himself to the task of paddling towards shore as his lieutenant, the only other American on the raft, directed the team towards their landing point. Slowly darkness engulfed the Vietnamese junk from which they had launched minutes earlier. Joining Thornton and his lieutenant in the small raft tediously moving towards the beach were three LDNNs, their South Vietnamese SEAL counterparts. It was just after four in the morning on October 31, 1972.

Lieutenant Tom Norris' heroic rescue effort had occurred near the team's landing point just six months earlier. Mike Thornton was privy to this information and knew that, though landing on the shores of South Vietnam, he would see no friendly faces. The five men were on their own. If they got in trouble there would be no air cover or support, only suppressive fire from a Navy destroyer miles off the coast.

The five men finally reached shallow water and stepped into the cool waters to tow the raft to the beach, where it was carefully hidden. Then they began the dangerous trek north towards the Cua Viet River and the old Naval base now commanded by the enemy. There was little cover. In the early morning darkness they silently moved from one sand dune to the next, careful to avoid detection by the numerous enemy encampments they passed. The hours dragged on but the SEALs were unable to find the river that should have been there. In fact, there were no identifiable landmarks. It quickly became apparent that the team was lost.

As streaks of early morning light crept towards them from the ocean, the SEAL lieutenant used silent hand signals to order the team back to the beach. By radio they were advised of their general location. The intent had been to insert the team south of the Cua Viet River so their northward movement would put them on a direct course with the river and the old Naval base. Instead, the Vietnamese junk that had landed them had ventured too far north, putting them ABOVE the river. Their northward movement had taken them away from their target and almost directly into the Demilitarized Zone.

Hearts pounding and with time running out as daylight dawned, the team released a silent sigh of relief when at last they saw the waves lapping against the beach where their raft was hidden. They were almost home. What could have been a terrible disaster was turning out okay.

Suddenly the sound of gunfire shattered the early morning quiet. The SEALs went to ground, returning the enemy's volley of leaden death with the staccato beat of their own weapons. They had been spotted and fired upon by two NVA soldiers, but as the sounds of battle echoed across the shores of South Vietnam, as many as fifty more enemy soldiers rushed their position to rain death on the isolated team. The team leader put his men into a small defensive position as the enemy probed to within 25 meters of his small force. One of the LDNNs was hit in the hip, and shrapnel from an enemy grenade pierced both of Mike Thornton's legs and opened wounds in his back. The lieutenant called for fire from the *USS Newport News*, but the Naval destroyer couldn't render effective cover fire. The enemy was so close to the embattled SEAL team, the huge guns of the ship lying offshore would be as deadly to the five commandos as it would be to the enemy.

For forty-five minutes the battle raged, five lone members of a Naval team struggling to survive against 10-1 odds, all the while knowing additional enemy troops would be arriving at any

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time. The team leader took a gamble. He radioed the *Newport News* with instructions to give him five minutes, and then rain their heavy five-inch shells on his position. He ordered Thornton and two of the LDNN to make a desperate race to the hidden raft while he and remaining LDNN covered their withdrawal. Fire erupted anew as the three men raced across the beach for the last sand dune and the hidden raft. The team leader and the LDNN met the volley with fire of their own, holding the enemy at bay to cover their teammates. Then, suddenly, the world went black for the SEAL lieutenant. His LDNN counterpart looked down at the gaping hole in the left side of the lieutenant's head, turned, and ran to join his living teammates. "Didi...didi, go, go!" he shouted as he finally reached the last sand dune.

"Where's my lieutenant?" Asked Thornton.

"DEAD!" shouted the LDNN. It was obvious the LDNN was convinced nothing more could be done as he urged immediate withdrawal.

"Not without my lieutenant," Thornton quickly informed them. No SEAL would ever be left behind by a brother. Thornton broke from cover, rushing across the sand dunes to his team leader's last known position. There he searched frantically for the lieutenant. Two enemy soldiers found the lieutenant's body at the same time Thornton did. Quickly the SEAL shot them both, and rushed to his "brother's" body. The head wound was serious, the skin laid back to reveal the white of his broken skull. The team leader wasn't moving. He was unconscious, but still alive.

The powerful Thornton lifted his lieutenant's limp body over his shoulder and began to run back across the open sand dunes. Bullets flew around him and Thornton fired his own weapon on the desperate race to the last sand dune. Unbelievably, neither he nor his wounded lieutenant was hit. When at last he reached the last dune, his LDNN team members looked to the towering figure for guidance. The NVA were moving towards them, trying to encircle the battle-scarred team. Thornton pointed his comrades to the waves breaking across the beach 250 yards away. As artillery from the *Newport News* crashed behind them and hot missiles from the automatic rifles of the pursuing enemy dug trenches in the sand, the team moved out. Thornton himself, by sheer force of will, covered the entire distance with his stricken lieutenant over his shoulders.

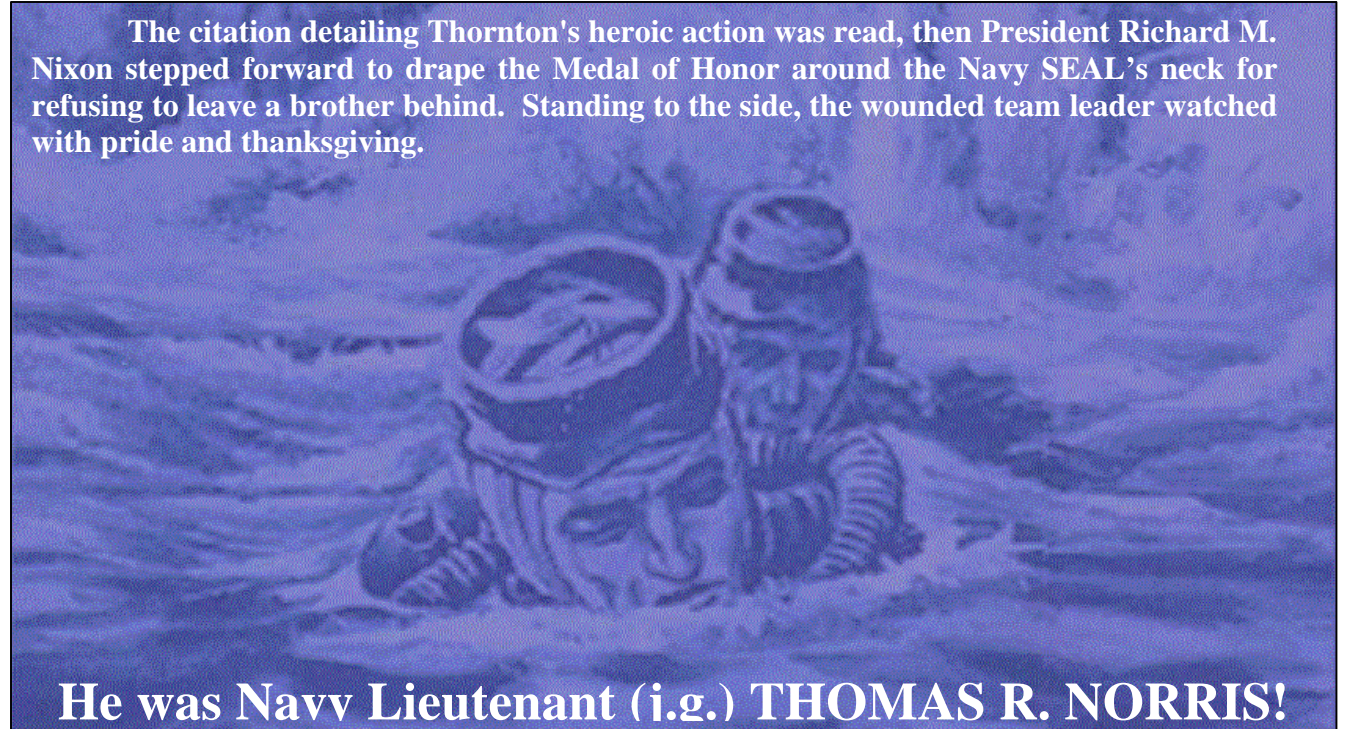
At last he felt the cool water of the ocean tugging at the cuffs of his fatigues. He plunged into the water dragging his lieutenant behind him and swimming desperately for safety. The NVA followed the fleeing team into the ocean and continued to fire at the men until they were beyond the range of their guns. Thornton then inflated his lieutenant's life vest, towing him further into the ocean and away from danger. For two hours they bobbed on the swells of the ocean, Thornton doing his best to keep his wounded team leader's head above water. At last they were spotted and picked up by the same junk that had inserted them earlier that morning. It was almost noon. The entire saga had transpired in less than eight hours.

For his refusal to leave the wounded lieutenant behind and his courage in returning under fire to recover the fellow SEAL, Mike Thornton was recommended for the Medal of Honor. His action was the LAST Medal of Honor action of the Vietnam War, and the last by any living American.

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Less than a year later, on October 15, 1973 Navy Lieutenant Michael Edwin Thornton was summoned to the White House to receive his award. At nearby Bethesda Naval Hospital the gravely wounded SEAL team leader was still recovering from his horrible wounds. His condition was so serious, his request to be released for Thornton's presentation was denied. "We had to kidnap him, right out of Bethesda," Thornton recently said. "But he was there!"

The citation detailing Thornton's heroic action was read, then President Richard M. Nixon stepped forward to drape the Medal of Honor around the Navy SEAL's neck for refusing to leave a brother behind. Standing to the side, the wounded team leader watched with pride and thanksgiving.



He was Navy Lieutenant (i.g.) THOMAS R. NORRIS!

Tommy Norris spent yet another year recovering from his wounds. On March 6, 1976 President Gerald R. Ford invited two former Prisoners of War to the White House to receive Medals of Honor. In addition to the awards to Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale and Air Force Colonel George E. "Bud" Day, a posthumous award was presented to the family of Air Force Captain Lance Peter Sijan who had died in a North Vietnamese prison camp.

Then the President turned his attention to the intrepid SEAL. Despite the Lieutenant's protests, his nomination for the Medal of Honor for his rescue of Lieutenant Mark Clark and Lieutenant Colonel Icel Hambleton had passed through channels. This time, standing to the side and watching the ceremony with a smile on his face and pride in his heart stood another NAVY seal hero. Mike Thornton wouldn't have missed this moment for the world!

Sources:

Thomas Norris (personal conversations)
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(Special Thanks to the U.S. Naval Special Warfare Archives for allowing the use of the above artwork, as well as their assistance in providing some of the photographs. Other photographs courtesy of Tom Norris and Mike Thornton.)

For Further Reading: **THE RESCUE OF BAT 21** by Darrel Whitcomb goes beyond the "Hollywood hype" of the movie to detail the effort to recover Lt. Clark and LTC Hambleton in an accurate and captivating story. Well researched, it includes maps and photos of most of the participants in the action. (It is also available in paperback and large print editions).

Meet Me On The Beach



The TRUE story of TWO Brothers

*Walter and Roland
Ehlers*



Growing up in Kansas during the depression wasn't easy. About the only things one could count on were family, friends, and faith. The Ehlers family didn't have a lot of personal possessions, but they learned to get by, trusting in each other and the faith that held them together.



Manhattan, Kansas (1940)

Young Walt Ehlers decided to join the Army and entered military service on October 4, 1940. His older brother Roland decided to join with him, and so it was that both men found themselves training for war in the Pacific when Pearl Harbor was attacked. Early in 1942 Walter and Roland shipped out with their division but not to the Pacific. Instead they were assigned to combat in North Africa. From North Africa to Sicily, through 3 major campaigns over almost 4 years, the two brothers remained together. Then, during the fighting in Sicily, Roland was wounded and sent back to Africa for treatment. Walter continued to serve until his unit was sent to England to train for a major offensive. While preparing for the invasion of Europe, Roland rejoined the unit...and his brother Walter. It was to be a short-lived reunion.



D-DAY - JUNE 6, 1945

As the men of the 1st Division were training for D-Day, the company commander called Roland and Walter in to meet with him. He told them that for the first time, they would be separated and placed in different units. He told the young soldiers there was only a fifty-per cent chance that they would survive the pending invasion, and that Walter would be transferred to Company L as a squad leader.



Walter went to his new unit and worked hard to prepare his men for the coming invasion. He and Roland managed to get together one last time in Southampton to talk about their family and wish each other luck. They both knew they would be participating in the impending landing. "We'll meet up on the beach," they promised, then went their separate ways to join 170,000 other soldiers as they loaded the ships that would take them across the channel to attack Normandy.

The First Division landed at Omaha beach. Walter's craft hit a sand bar and the men had to jump into water over their head to make their way to the beach. A few hundred yards further down the beach Roland's Company was also landing. There was no time to worry about each other, each brother having responsibilities of his own to attend. Walter began to lead his squad off the beach. They were taking fire from enemy bunkers on the bluffs overlooking the beach, and Walter knew the only chance of survival was to keep his men together and attack the high ground. He led them by his example. After a 6-hour battle to reach the hills, they finally broke through the German defenses. Walt's courage and leadership that day saved his platoon and earned him the Bronze Star Medal. Then, as night fell, he went looking for Roland.

In the darkness and devastation of D-Day at Omaha, it was difficult to find anyone, but at last Walter found Roland's Platoon Sergeant. He asked about Roland, and was told only that his

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brother was "Missing In Action". Worried, Staff Sergeant Walter Ehlers returned to his squad and the fighting that still lay ahead.

In the days that followed, the fighting moved inland as the brave soldiers who had landed at Normandy worked to dislodge the enemy from their fortifications among the hedgerows, dense thickets and rows of vegetation that separated farms across the country side. The fighting was bitter, dangerous, and very costly.



By June 9th Walt Ehlers' squad was far ahead of most other Allied troops, and Sgt. Ehlers himself was at the head of his men. In an early morning attack his company was pinned down in an open field by fire from machine-gun nests and two mortar pits. Without orders Sgt. Ehlers jumped to his feet and headed towards the first machine-gun nest. Suddenly a patrol of 4 enemies confronted him. Quickly the Sergeant killed all four, and then proceeded to advance on and single-handedly destroy the machine-gun nest and its crew of eight enemy. He called to his squad to move up and join him as he turned his attention towards the mortar pits that threatened to destroy the company. Before continuing the advance he gave an unusual order...."Fix bayonets". Later he recounted, "It had a psychological effect on the Germans. They looked horrified and started running." Ehlers knocked out that position, but his men started taking fire from yet another machine-gun nest. Again, at a point ahead of everyone else, Sergeant Ehlers advanced on and single-handedly knocked out that enemy position.

By the following day Sergeant Ehlers and his platoon were so far ahead of everyone else they were literally surrounded by Germans. The platoon was ordered to withdraw, and Sergeant Ehlers' squad assumed the responsibility of covering the withdrawal of the rest of the unit. Sergeant Ehlers and his BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) man stood back to back to draw enemy fire upon themselves and rain effective fire against the enemy to cover the safe withdrawal of the platoon. First the BAR man was shot and wounded, and then a rifle round struck Sergeant Ehlers in the back. Ehlers turned quickly and saw the sniper that had wounded him and was able to kill the enemy soldier. Then, despite his own wound, he carried the stricken BAR man from the battlefield before returning to recover the badly needed BAR.

The medics began treating Sergeant Ehlers' wound and quickly learned that the bullet had hit him in the side, glanced off a rib, and exited from his pack. Inside that pack was a picture of Walter and Roland Ehlers' mother, and the bullet had torn away the edges of the folder it was in.



Sergeant Ehlers refused to be evacuated. His wounds treated and bandaged, he returned to his squad. He later said he didn't want any of his men to be hurt or killed, and he felt his obligation was to be there to lead and protect them.

By July, after a month of fighting, Sergeant Ehler's squad was holed up in an abandoned farmhouse when he received an unusual visitor. It was the company commander from his brother Roland's company. He came bearing sad news. Roland had died at Omaha beach. As his landing craft approached, a mortar round had hit the ramp instantly killing the older brother. Walter was

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devastated. He saluted the officer and said, "Okay", then found a place of privacy to weep unashamed.

Over the coming weeks Sergeant Ehlers continued to do his job, leading his men. He was wounded three more times and sent to the hospital twice. Then he learned he was to receive the Medal of Honor. Lieutenant General John C. H. Lee presented it in the field in Paris on December 14, 1944. The young hero was flown home for celebrations in Manhattan, Kansas and Christmas with his family. But it bothered him to think of his men spending Christmas in the field, facing the dangers of a desperate enemy. He requested and received permission to return, finishing the war with the men of his battalion. Said Mr. Ehlers at a patriotic



"Liberty is worth fighting for, and sometimes worth dying for."



"I'm no Rambo. Because of my training, it was just automatic not to run but to attack."

"Roland and I were good buddies, he was always kind of looking out for me. He was MY hero."

Walter D. Ehlers



Walt Ehlers Visiting His Brother's Grave Site

No Man Should Die Alone!

Tom Hudner & Jesse LeRoy Brown



Eight thousand badly outnumbered Marines shivered in the sub-zero temperatures of the Chosin Reservoir in North Korea on December 4, 1950 as eight F4U-4 *Corsairs* left the deck of the carrier *USS Leyte*. Each of the eight heavily armed but outdated fighters was piloted by a Naval aviator, all rushing to defend their comrades on the ground. Most of the pilots were young, in their early twenties, but all were dedicated "brothers in arms" who would risk their lives for the soldiers on the ground, men they didn't even know, but defended because they were Americans at great risk.

Lieutenant Commander Richard Cevoli led his squadron inland, over the rugged mountains of North Korea just north of the Chosin Reservoir. The eight fighters skimmed 1,000 feet above the snow-covered terrain, eyes alert for the movement of enemy troops. It was a general support mission; one of many Naval pilots had been flying recently to give air cover to the withdrawing Marines below. Cevoli's pilots had been flying over Korea for only about two months, but in that short time they had become skilled combat veterans. They had also become close....like brothers.

Off in the distance flying "wing" for Ensign Jesse Brown was Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Hudner. Hudner was senior to Brown, but the Ensign had more experience. In the perilous skies over North Korea, rank didn't matter. It was experience that counted. The two pilots were good friends, though they had little more in common than a boyhood fascination with airplanes and a determination to some day soar above the clouds. Their dream had come true. That dream had also become a nightmare of death and destruction. On this day they would confront the nightmare once again, and Lieutenant Hudner would do all the wrong things.....

BECAUSE IT WAS RIGHT!

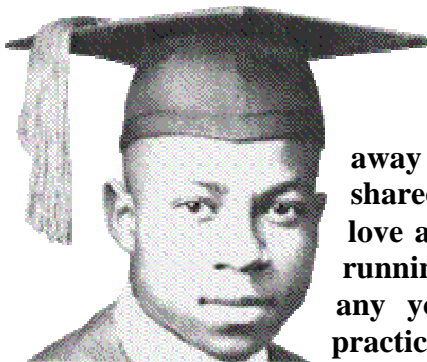
Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Hudner

Thomas Hudner was born in Massachusetts on August 31, 1924; the son of a successful Irish businessman. Though by no means rich, the family lived comfortably in their hometown of Fall River where Tom's father ran Hudner's Markets, a chain of grocery stores. In school Tom was a fair student whose primary interests were athletic. His grades were sufficient, however, to qualify him for the U.S. Naval Academy where he graduated in 1946. After serving time on the *USS Helena*, Tom finally made his dream of flying come true. He received the wings of a Naval aviator in August 1949, and in November he joined Fighter Squadron 32 aboard the *USS Leyte* in the Mediterranean.



One of the "old hands" Tom Hudner met upon joining Fighter Squadron 32 was Jesse LeRoy Brown. As Tom came to know Jesse, the two became good friends. Two years younger than Tom, Jesse had earned his wings a year earlier, in October 1948. Seven months before Thomas had joined the squadron, Jesse was commissioned an Ensign. But despite the boyhood dream of flying both young men shared, the two could not have been more different. It was this difference that generated Tom's immense respect for the junior officer, and that cemented a bond of brotherhood between the two.

Ensign Jesse LeRoy Brown



Jesse LeRoy Brown was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi...a world away from Tom's New England state. The son of a hard-working but poor sharecropper, he grew up in a home that offered little comfort other than love and dreams for the future. The Brown home didn't have electricity, running water, or even an indoor toilet. Racial prejudice stood as a wall to any young, black boy's dreams in a community that preached and practiced segregation of white citizens from its black residents.

As a boy, Jesse had watched airplanes fly over the cotton fields. He would look to the sky and say, "That's where I want to be." He refused to be denied this, or any of his other dreams, by a society that judged him by his color. He excelled as both an athlete and a student, graduating second in his high school class. Scholarships afforded him the opportunity of a college

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education...provided he was also willing to work full time. He began his college education at the age of 17. He had been told that the right thing to do would be to enroll in a black college. Instead, as a personal challenge, Jesse enrolled at Ohio State University. Less than 1% of the students there were black. Jesse had done the wrong thing....because it was RIGHT. To afford that education, he also worked a full night shift. Through his long days of study and the hard hours of his night shift loading boxcars, Jesse continued to dream of flying.

In 1946, the same year Tom Hudner was graduating from the Naval Academy, Jesse Brown enlisted in the Naval Reserve. The following year he was appointed a Midshipman. Undaunted by the kind of prejudice voiced by an ROTC instructor at Ohio State who told Jesse, "No nigger would ever sit his ass in a Navy cockpit", the courageous young pioneer was the only black American among the 600 cadets when at last he entered flight school in Pensacola, Florida. Despite continued prejudice, even outright harassment by some officers, on October 21, 1948 Jesse LeRoy Brown received his wings.

Jesse Brown had become the Navy's first black pilot.

Living with Jesse Brown on the USS *Leyte*, and flying with him from its decks, Thomas Hudner became privy to the more intimate details of Jesse's struggle to overcome racial prejudice and follow his dreams. The more he learned about the 23-year old pilot, what he had been through and how he had risen above it, the more his respect for the young man grew. He also found Jesse to be a devoted husband and father. Back home awaiting his return was his young wife Daisy and a year old daughter, Pamela. Jesse spoke of them often and wrote to them almost daily.



The *Leyte* was anchored off the coast of France on Sunday, June 25, 1950 when nearly 100,000 North Korean soldiers swarmed south to smother the free Republic of Korea. Shortly afterwards *Leyte* was ordered home for repairs before being dispatched to the Sea of Japan. The interlude afforded Jesse a five-day visit with his wife and daughter before facing the dangers of combat on foreign shores. Even the simple task of returning to his ship was marred by lingering racial prejudice. As the Navy's first black aviator traveled to Birmingham to catch his plane, he was almost denied a seat on the bus....because he was black.

After stops in San Diego, Hawaii, and Japan, the *USS Leyte* arrived off the coast of Korea in October 1950. The pilots of Fighter Squadron 32 were quickly thrown into the cauldron, flying missions over enemy controlled territory almost immediately. By the morning of December 4th as Lieutenant Commander Cevoli's Corsairs skimmed the mountains along the Chosin Reservoir, Jesse Brown was already flying his 20th combat mission. His wingman, Thomas Hudner, flew just a short distance away. Everything seemed to be going smoothly and the calmness of Ensign Brown's voice on the radio announcing he was losing power didn't register an immediate alarm. Then his voice came across the radio again and the other pilots in the formation knew something was seriously amiss when he said:



Lieutenant Hudner watched in fear and hope as Jesse Brown fought the controls of his *Corsair*. The engine was out; there was no power, and no place to run. The terrain was simply one mountain after another. As Ensign Brown's plane neared the side of the nearest mountain, the other pilots began a circling pattern. The mountains were swarming with camouflaged Chinese Communist soldiers, and if Jesse was able to land his crippled craft successfully they would need to move in swiftly to provide cover fire to protect him.

Flying into the wind, it was going to be a "wheels up, dead stick landing" on a near vertical, snow-covered mountain slope. The other pilots held their breath, then watched in horror as Jesse Brown's aircraft slammed hard against the mountain side. The impact created an immediate cloud of flying snow that momentarily masked the other pilots' view of the crash scene. Then, as the snow cleared, they could see Jesse Brown's shattered plane lying in ruins. The engine had been ripped away and the fuselage was ruptured at the cockpit, twisted at an almost 45 degree angle. Sunlight glinted off the glass of the closed cockpit and Jesse Brown's wing mates released a sigh of despair, fully aware that the Navy's first black pilot had died in the crash on a North Korean mountainside. Before turning away, they circled a second time. Suddenly Tom Hudner noticed something. The canopy was now OPEN! He descended for a closer look and there, sitting in the open cockpit, Jesse Brown waved back at his wingman. Somehow he had survived the impact.

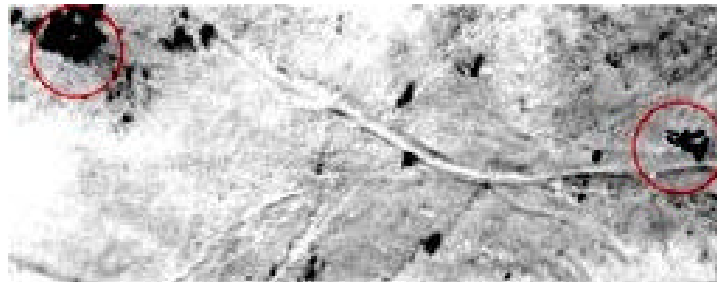
Lieutenant Commander Cevoli quickly broke away from the other fliers to gain altitude and radio for a rescue helicopter. The other pilots continued a low altitude circle of the downed airman to insure that the enemy didn't reach their comrade before the rescue crew. As they anxiously watched the surrounding terrain, they also kept an eye on Jesse Brown. Something was wrong. He was sitting up, waving from time to time, but he wasn't making any effort to get out of the ruptured cockpit. Thomas Hudner noticed smoke rising from the nose of the *Corsair*. The

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plane appeared to be on the verge of erupting into flames which, because of the direction of the wind, would quickly engulf the cockpit....and Jesse Brown. The fact that his friend hadn't got out of the plane meant one of two things. Either Jesse was too badly hurt to extricate himself, or he was somehow pinned in the wreckage. Without a second thought Lieutenant Hudner prepared to do the wrong thing, because it was the right thing to do.

"I'm going in," Tom radioed his commander, knowing that there was only one way to do that. Any landing would be disastrous, but Lieutenant Hudner had just decided to crash a perfectly good American fighter plane on a steep mountainside heavily controlled by the enemy. He didn't wait for an approval from anyone. He just did it!

The other pilots watched from their tight circles as Lieutenant Hudner headed his Corsair toward the steep mountain slope, searching for anything resembling a level area to land. Flying into the wind and up the slope in a carrier-like approach, he settled towards the ground. It would be a planned, wheels-up crash landing. Then he was down, about 100 yards slightly upslope from his friend. As he hit the rock-hard ground and bumped to a stop his first thought was, "What in the hell am I doing here!"



Then he was out of the cockpit and running to the side of his "brother".

Jesse Brown was in horrible pain. Tom could see it in his eyes and on his face. But Jesse remained calm, speaking to his wingman from time to time. Lieutenant Hudner could see that the brave Ensign was indeed trapped. The buckling cockpit had pinned him beneath the hard metal of the instrument panel. And Jesse was cold. He had been on the ground for almost half an hour, exposed to sub-freezing temperatures at more than a mile above sea level. In working to free himself from the wreckage he had removed his flight helmet exposing his head to the wintry blasts that hung over the mountain. He had also removed his gloves to release himself from his parachute harness. They dropped from his numb fingers. He had struggled to retrieve them but, pinned as he was, they were out of his reach. "By the time I got there," Hudner says, "his hands were like claws....totally frozen."

Lieutenant Hudner worked to release his friend from the metal tomb, but to no avail. The wreckage held him too tightly. The helicopter that would be coming to rescue the two men would be useless unless they could free the trapped man. He knew his radio was still operational, knew also that by turning on the battery to power it he risked igniting the fuel that leaked about the plane. So once again Lieutenant Hudner did the wrong thing....because it was the right thing to do. Returning to his own *Corsair* he powered the radio and told the rescue helicopter to bring an ax to chop the wreckage away and free Jesse, as well as a fire extinguisher.

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After sending the message, Tom Hudner returned to his friend's side. He had retrieved a wool scarf and cap that he had carried in his flight suit for emergencies, and now he gently lowered the cap over Jesse's head. "Wrapping the scarf around his frozen hands was more of a gesture than a remedy," Hudner says. "Everyone knows when limbs are already frozen that a wrap won't warm them back up. But it was all I could do."

Jesse was still conscious and spoke from time to time, but he spoke very slowly. It was apparent that his body was broken up inside, but Jesse never cried out or complained. Meanwhile Tom Hudner began to scoop up the cold snow and pile it near the spot where the smoke was coming from under the cowl. The smoke didn't diminish. After about half an hour both men could hear the throb of the rescue helicopter arriving, and then landing on the steep slope. Marine Lieutenant Charles Ward brought the fire extinguisher and ax to Tom Hudner. The extinguisher was small and quickly expended. Then the two men began frantically beating against the metal cockpit with the ax without any effect. It was getting dark and time was running out. Jesse spoke less and less frequently, more and more slowly, and began to fade in and out of consciousness as the two rescuers vainly attempted to free him. The ax simply bounced off the metal. Hudner and Ward made no headway.

As the sun set over the cold mountain, Lieutenant Ward informed Tom that his helicopter was not equipped to fly at night. They would have to give up soon, or at the very least fly out for additional help. Everything they had done was fruitless. Perhaps if they could fly back and get torches to cut the metal they might be able to save Jesse.

Lieutenant Hudner sensed Jesse was trying to say something and leaned closer to his friend. "If I don't make it," he whispered, "Please tell Daisy I love her."

Tom Hudner promised his friend that he would. Lieutenant Ward informed Tom it was time to go, that nothing more could be done. In the fading twilight Lieutenant Thomas Hudner peered once more into the shattered cockpit of the Corsair. Jesse no longer spoke. He was unconscious and fading fast. Tom Hudner had crashed his plane on a mountainside to rescue a friend, something the Navy would certainly frown on. In the end, it had been for naught. As the helicopter lifted off Thomas Hudner looked back one last time at the crash site and Jesse Brown sitting motionless in the open cockpit.

"One of the worst things when something has happened to you is the feeling that you're alone," Thomas Hudner later said. "Just being with him to give him as much comfort as we could was worth the effort." Tom Hudner is also quick to point out that he would have done the same for any of the other men in the squadron, and they for him. "I just happened to be the one that went in that day," he says. "If it hadn't been me, it would have been one of the others (pilots)."

In the days that followed it became impossible to recover either Jesse Brown's body or the two downed *Corsairs*. When Tom returned to his ship, he reported the circumstances to the ship's captain. Then, to prevent the Chinese from gaining access to the crash site, the captain dispatched a flight of aircraft to the mountainside where they dropped napalm on the two aircraft and Jesse's body. It was the most dignified burial the men of Fighter Squadron 32 could have afforded their brother. As the napalm blanketed the hillside, Jesse and his Corsair vanished into history, a hero that we cannot afford as a Nation to ever forget.

Jesse LeRoy Brown



13 Oct 1926 - 4 Dec 1950

Tom Hudner and Lieutenant Ward landed in Hagaru-ri at the foot of the Chosin reservoir through which thousands of Marines were withdrawing from an overwhelming Chinese force, then flew to Koto-ri where the weather held them for three days. When the weather lifted, Tom was flown back to the *USS Leyte*, where he was informed upon arrival that Captain Thomas Sisson wanted to see him on the bridge. Lieutenant Hudner approached uncertainly, convinced that he was about to be reprimanded for his actions. "There are still people who think I did the wrong thing," he told me recently. "They say I destroyed a perfectly good, multi-million dollar fighter plane for one man. But what is a life worth!"

Captain Sisson listened to the brave Lieutenant's account of that horrible day on the mountainside and understood. Sometimes it takes more courage to do that which you know is **RIGHT**, than to simply give in and do what others think is right. Captain Sisson recommended Navy Ensign Jesse Brown for one of our Nation's highest awards, the Distinguished Flying Cross. He also submitted Jesse's wingman and friend, Lieutenant (j.g.) Thomas Hudner, for the Medal of Honor.

Four months later on April 13, 1951, President Harry S Truman invited the Hudner family to the White House where he presented the Medal of Honor to Navy Lieutenant Thomas Hudner. It was a moment of great joy for the Hudner family.

Attending the ceremony and standing quietly to the side holding a large bouquet of roses was a young black lady. She smiled through her tears and shook hands with Lieutenant Hudner. He had delivered the message,

"Tell Daisy I love her."



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When Lieutenant Hudner returned home, Fall River proclaimed "Thomas Hudner Day" and hosted a wonderful celebration. The appreciative citizens presented the young pilot with a check for \$1,000, a considerable sum in 1951. Lieutenant Hudner didn't cash it. Instead he endorsed the back and sent it to Daisy Brown who had returned to school.



On March 18, 1972 the Navy christened a new member of its fleet:

USS Jesse L. Brown (DE-1089)

It was the first time in our Nation's history that a Naval vessel was named for a Black American. Both Daisy Brown and Thomas Hudner were there to remind us all, of the brave young pilot for whom it was named.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Shortly after posting this story in our website I received the following e-mail:

"As Jesse Leroy Brown's widow I'm so glad that you've called attention to his story and the valiant effort of Tom Hudner to save him. There's no better example of brotherhood, white and black, than what happened that terrible afternoon at Somong-ni. Thank you for telling this story of bravery."

Daisy Brown Thorne

Sources:

Thomas Hudner (Personal Interviews)

Above and Beyond, Boston Publishing

Korean War Heroes, by Edward F. Murphy

Family Feud



A Tale of Two Generals

**Douglas MacArthur
&
Jonathan Wainwright**



It has been said that "If you have ONE child you are a PARENT...TWO (or more) and you are a REFEREE." Sibling rivalries are common in any family, and the family of America's veterans is no different. The term "Brotherhood" does not indicate that all is peaceful and calm or that there is an absence of disagreement. Brothers have been known to argue, feud, and even fight each other. But brotherhood is a bond that is greater than the "family feuds" that erupt from time to time, and sooner or later brothers make up and get on with being brothers.

General George Armstrong Custer was so envious of his younger brother's TWO Medals of Honor, earned during the Civil War, that it caused some real tension. There are even reports that on at least one occasion when the younger showed up at a social event wearing BOTH medals, the two went outside and engaged in fisticuffs. But the sense of brotherhood between the two was stronger than their sibling rivalry. Thomas Custer always loved the older brother and the two served together through several campaigns in the West. Eventually, the two brothers died together at the infamous Battle of the Little Big Horn.

Douglas MacArthur and Jonathan Wainwright were as similar, yet as individually different, as any two "flesh and blood" brothers. Both were the sons of military families. MacArthur's father Arthur was the hero who received the Medal of Honor during the Civil War. Wainwright's father also was a career officer who had at one point even served under Arthur MacArthur's command.

Douglas MacArthur graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point at the head of his class in 1903. Three years later Jonathan Wainwright graduated from the same school with its highest honor, first captain of cadets. Both served in World War I, MacArthur leading the 84th Infantry Brigade and earning the Distinguished Service Medal and SIX Silver Stars. Wainwright saw less combat as a staff officer, though he became known for his frequent visits to the troops on the front lines. Wainwright also received the Distinguished Service Medal.

Both men were generals in the US Army and serving in the Philippines when Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941. The months that followed and the differences in personality between the two would strain their brotherhood. Both would emerge historic figures, Douglas MacArthur characterized by historian/author William Manchester as the "American Caesar", Jonathan Wainwright remembered by his troops as "The Last of the Fighting Generals".



General MacArthur looked up from his desk at the tall, hard-bitten Cavalry general. The latter had always looked thin, hence the nickname "Skinny", first used when he had been a West Point cadet. The moniker had followed him through a 40-year military career. General Wainwright looked especially skinny now, after months of reduced rations. General Wainwright was commander of the North Luzon force in the Philippine Islands. General MacArthur had summoned him to the island fortress at Corregidor for an important meeting. The battle was not going well on the most important of the Philippine Islands.

Things were about to get worse!

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The Philippine Islands consist of more than 7000 small islands in the South China Sea. In 1941 only a third of the islands were inhabited. The Island of Luzon in the north is the largest of the islands. Measuring a little over 40,000 square miles, it is about the same size as our state of Ohio. Manila Bay in the southwest part of the island is one of the world's finest harbors, bordered on the east by Manila, the Philippine Capitol City. Luzon had been "home" to General MacArthur off and on for many years, dating back to the days when his father had been military governor. As a promising West Point graduate, Douglas MacArthur's first assignment had been with an engineer unit in the Philippines, and it was here during his earliest tours of duty that he had first tasted combat.



As the Japanese began their aggression for control of the Pacific, the Philippine Islands were key to their plans. Eight hours after the surprise attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, they attacked and virtually destroyed the American Air Force at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Two days later they began landing troops on beaches in the northern part of the Island.

War Plan "Orange No. 3"

The Japanese threat to the Philippines had been recognized twenty years earlier, and a war plan for the defense of the Philippines was written in 1928. Known as "Orange No. 3" or "WPO-3", the defense of the islands called for a "tactical delay" of the invading enemy. Rather than battling the enemy throughout the island, if they could not defeat the invaders at their point of landing, the army would pull back to the peninsula of Bataan at the opening of Manila Bay. There they would delay the enemy for up to six months until reinforcements could be brought in to end the siege.



Mid-way in the opening of Manila Bay is the tadpole-shaped, rocky island of Corregidor. Less than 2 square miles in size, the island had been a fortress for many years. At the beginning of World War II it garrisoned soldiers to man artillery that could support the defense of Bataan should it ever be necessary to implement Orange No. 3. Initially, General MacArthur attempted to have his American soldiers and Philippine Scouts meet and defeat the invading Japanese as they landed on the island's northern beaches. Most of these were soldiers under the command of General Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright, at the age of 59 one of the oldest active generals in the United States army.

General Wainwright's Philippine Scouts fought courageously, but on December 22nd hope began to vanish. Japanese Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma waded ashore at Lingayen Gulf, just north of the Bataan Peninsula (indicated by the red starburst in the map above). Supported by 80 ships of the Japanese navy and 43,000 fresh troops, the Philippine Scouts were doomed.

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General MacArthur implemented Orange No. 3 and on December 26 he declared the Capitol of Manila to be an open city and abandoned it to the Japanese. As the American and Philippine forces began their withdrawal to Bataan, MacArthur set up his command post on the island of Corregidor. MacArthur moved his tactical operations into the quarter-mile long Malinta Tunnel. It was from there he began to direct the "delaying action" that would keep the enemy at bay until supplies and reinforcements could arrive from the United States. It was a wasted effort, for reinforcement of the valiant defenders wasn't even a part of the military war plan.

War Plan "ABC-1"

Ten months before the attack at Pearl Harbor, British and American military tacticians had established a war plan known as "ABC-1". The agreement between the two nations specified that, in the event that there would be hostilities on two fronts involving both the Germans and the Japanese, both Allied powers would concentrate most of their military resources on defending Europe. Of course, the brave men fighting hunger, disease and starvation in the dense jungles of the Philippines were not aware of ABC-1. For this reason they believed President Roosevelt when he gave his year-end speech promising "the entire resources of the United States" would be committed to defending the Philippine Islands.

Two days later the Japanese took control of Manila. Meanwhile, more than 80,000 American and Filipino soldiers had withdrawn to the 500 square mile Bataan peninsula to maintain the delaying defense called for in Orange No. 3. Across the island the Philippine Scouts, most of whom were not aware of ABC-1, continued to battle the enemy. It was a brave effort, many of them fighting with outdated World War I British Enfield rifles. Ammunition began to run out, food was in short supply, and disease depleted their ranks. But they, along with their brothers at Bataan, stubbornly held out while anxiously awaiting the resources of the United States promised by the President. Amazingly the soldiers stopped the Japanese advance at the Abucay line, and held it for 12 days. Then, on February 8th, General Homma received an infusion of fresh troops from Tokyo. For the Americans and Filipinos there were no fresh troops, no resupply. When Singapore fell on February 15, 1942 it was becoming apparent to the Philippine defenders that the United States would be sending no reinforcements. The soldiers who fought to preserve Philippine independence were expendable!

Meanwhile, General MacArthur had received word from Washington that he should hold out against the Japanese as long as possible, then capitulation was permissible. MacArthur was livid. He had no intention of surrendering to the Japanese, had resolved himself to die in the defense of the Philippines. On February 22, General MacArthur said goodbye to Philippine President Manuel Quezon. As the popular President reluctantly boarded the submarine *Swordfish* to be evacuated to Australia, he removed his signet ring and placed it on MacArthur's finger. "When they find your body," he told his old friend, "I want them to know that you fought for my country." Remaining on the island with the General was his wife and 3-year old son. In the hold of the *Swordfish* were their personal effects with instructions for them to be held until claimed by the MacArthur's legal heirs.

Even as the *Swordfish* slipped out of Manila Bay to preserve the Philippine Presidency, President Roosevelt was pondering the impact on the National morale should the most decorated

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hero of World War One be killed or captured by the Japanese. The following day the Commander In Chief ordered General MacArthur to escape to the southern island of Mindanao, then from there to find asylum in Australia. As a United States Army officer, it was an order he could not refuse. As a patriot who loved the Philippine Islands, it was also an order that went against everything in which he believed. Finally the 62-year old, 4-star general decided to resign. He would leave Corregidor, but not as a retreating general going to Australia. Instead, as a civilian, he would make the brief boat ride from "The Rock" to Bataan and enlist as a volunteer in its defense.

In the days that followed, MacArthur's chief of staff, Major General Richard K. Sutherland convinced the General that the President was right. He argued that there were rumors of a Philippine relief force being established in Australia, and posed the idea that the President had ordered MacArthur to Australia to build and lead that force in a return to the Islands to defeat the Japanese. The concept was reinforced by a telegram from Washington urging the General that "The situation in Australia indicates desirability of your early arrival there." MacArthur responded that he would, reluctantly, depart Corregidor on March 15th.

Meanwhile, the Japanese suspected that an attempt would be made to evacuate the Philippine commander from the area, and they too realized the propaganda potential for his death or capture. They increased their patrols in the South China Sea virtually unopposed, for the US Pacific Fleet was still rebuilding from the devastation at Pearl Harbor. A full Japanese destroyer division was dispatched towards Manila Bay to prevent any evacuation of the general. The timetable had to be accelerated, and the only craft available to transport MacArthur and his family from Corregidor were four aging PT boats under the leadership of Lieutenant John Bulkeley. (Lieutenant Bulkeley would later receive the Medal of Honor for his heroic defense of the Philippines from December 7, 1941 to April 10, 1942.) Bulkeley and his PT boats would break out of Luzon as the sun went down on March 11th, taking with them General MacArthur. The Naval officers at Corregidor who were aware of the plan believed the General had about 1 chance in 5 of getting out successfully, and alive.

From the devastating attack that destroyed Clark Air Field eight hours after Pearl Harbor until March 11th, General Douglas MacArthur had encouraged the valiant defenders that if they could just hold on, reinforcements would be coming from the United States. For 90 days Philippine Scouts and American soldiers, despite disease, a shortage of food, lack of ammunition, obsolete and malfunctioning military hardware, and hostile jungle terrain had battled the well supplied invading Japanese. Manila had been sacrificed and 68,000 Filipinos, supported by nearly 12,000 American soldiers, had fallen back to the peninsula of Bataan to stall the Japanese war plans to break and enslave the Philippine Islands.

It was becoming increasingly apparent that, despite the promises of the American President, there would be no relief force for the Philippine Islands. The freedom fighters were on their own. The revelation was further fostered by Japanese propaganda radio whose theme song taunted the defenders. The song was titled:

"I'm Waiting for Ships that Never Come In"

**We're the battling bastards of Bataan.
No Mama, no Papa, no Uncle Sam.
No aunts, no uncles,
no nephews, no nieces.
No rifles, no planes,
or artillery pieces.
And nobody gives a damn.**

American War Correspondent Frank Hewlett

March 11, 1942

"Jonathan, I want you to make it known throughout your command that I'm leaving over my repeated protests." General MacArthur said as he looked up at General Jonathan Wainwright. The tall, emaciated General the defenders of Bataan called "Skinny" promised that he would do just that. Douglas MacArthur had chosen his replacement in the Philippines. His Academy brother would assume command of all the Philippine troops upon MacArthur's departure. Wainwright would command from the Malinta Tunnel on Corregidor, while Major General Edward King would replace him as commander of the American Forces and Philippine Scouts defending Bataan. "Goodbye Jonathan," MacArthur continued. "When I get back, if you're still on Bataan, I'll make you a lieutenant general."

"I'll be on Bataan....if I'm still alive," Wainwright replied.

As darkness fell over the South China Sea, Lieutenant Bulkeley slipped out of Corregidor in PT-41 to make the dangerous journey through waters controlled by the Japanese. It was a daring mission to ferry an American legend and hero out of harm's way. Through 560 miles of dangerous ocean and a near brush with a Japanese destroyer, General MacArthur arrived safely on the southern island of Mindanao on the morning of Friday, the 13th of March. Four days later the General arrived in Australia. It was there that he issued the statement that contained one of his two most famous lines:

"The President of the United States ordered me to break through the Japanese lines for the purpose, as I understand it, of organizing the American offensive against Japan, a primary object of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through...and...

I Shall Return."

To the Filipino people, MacArthur was a hero. Through the dark years ahead they believed that, as he had promised, he would return. But the enemy powers sought to portray MacArthur differently. From Germany and Italy to Japan he was labeled in the media as a coward, a deserter, and the "fleeing general". MacArthur had been ordered out of Corregidor because the President was concerned about the negative impact his death or capture would have on the American public

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during the critical first year of the war. To counter the propaganda of the enemy, General George C. Marshall suggested awarding MacArthur the Medal of Honor. The President agreed, and the same award his father had received 80 years earlier was presented to General Douglas MacArthur in Australia on June 30, 1942. (Arthur and Douglas MacArthur became the only father and son in history to both receive the Medal of Honor. In January 2000 a belated Medal of Honor was awarded to Theodore Roosevelt for his heroism in Cuba, adding him and his son Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. to this exclusive twosome.)

It is difficult to argue with those who point out that Douglas MacArthur's Medal of Honor was a political move. It is far less difficult to argue the point that it was not deserved. Since his first engagement with Philippine Outlaws after graduating from West Point, MacArthur had proved himself a man of courage. Acts of personal valor in both the Mexican Campaign (Vera Cruz) and during World War I could easily have resulted in a Medal of Honor award. Those historians who would negate his World War II award because it was a political award must also realize that the fact he had not previously been awarded the Medal for other actions was, in MacArthur's mind, political as well.

Back on the Philippine Island of Leyte, the situation continued to deteriorate. The Japanese, despite isolated pockets of resistance by Philippine Scouts scattered throughout the jungles, controlled the island. Their massive army, consisting of two full divisions of well trained combat soldiers supported by two tank regiments, three engineer regiments and several powerful artillery and anti-aircraft batteries, were virtually invincible. The Philippine defenders at Bataan were surrounded and without any support other than artillery fire from Corregidor. General King and his men were combat weary, demoralized by broken promises of resupply, and weakened by malnutrition and disease. Food was so short that the soldiers were reduced to one-fourth the recommended combat ration. Malnutrition made the soldiers even more susceptible to disease, and General King's medical units had virtually no medicines to treat the dying. Disease, exhaustion and malnutrition were beginning to accomplish what tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers had tried for 90 days to achieve. The soldiers on Bataan had survived and resisted far beyond any expectation of human endurance.

The situation at Corregidor was no better. Here too, the soldiers were weary, wounded, malnourished and diseased. From the Malinta Tunnel General Wainwright did his best to direct the tactical aspects of the resistance. Unlike MacArthur, who had only once left the tunnel to visit troops on Bataan, "Skinny" made frequent visits to the peninsula to check on the status of his men...and to fight Japanese. In the months preceding his promotion to command of all forces in the Philippines, Wainwright had not only commanded the Philippine Scouts in I Corps, he had fought with them. On more than one occasion he had come under direct fire from enemy soldiers, watched men next to him die, and returned fire on the enemy. He was a unique kind of commander, perhaps indeed, the "Last of the Fighting Generals".

On April 9, 1942 the Japanese landed 50,000 fresh combat troops on the Island. Wainwright issued orders to General King to resist by all means. General King responded that he and his staff had determined his force was reduced to 30% of their efficiency. General

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Wainwright continued to order not only resistance, but ordered a counter-attack to repel the new Japanese offensive. It was not to be. With less than two days rations remaining, his troops paralyzed by exhaustion and disease, further resistance to the fresh Japanese offensive would have resulted in the slaughter of his beleaguered command. On April 9th General King surrendered, and Bataan fell to the Japanese.

The Bataan Death March

Most of the Philippine defenders were located near the southern Bataan city of Mariveles. Here the Japanese assembled their prisoners for the 55-mile march from Mariveles to the rail town of San Fernando. As many as 100 prisoners were loaded into box cars measuring 8 x 40 feet, and taken 24 miles to Capas, Tarlac. The deadly trip culminated with the 6-mile march to the infamous Camp O'Donnell.



Hands bound, wounds untreated, sick and malnourished to the point where many could not even stand, the trek became known as the "Bataan Death March". More than 76,000 Philippine defenders, including 12,000 American soldiers, became prisoners with the surrender on April 9th. On the death march to Camp O'Donnell the Japanese beheaded many who became too weak to continue the trip. Other prisoners were used for bayonet practice, or pushed to their deaths from cliffs to amuse their captors with their screams. Young Philippine girls were pulled to the side of the road and repeatedly raped. Heartbroken mothers were known to spread human feces on their daughter's faces to make them less desirable to the enemy.

Actually, there was not one Death March, but a series of death marches that began with the surrender on April 9th and continued until April 24th. During the period there was a steady stream of American and Philippine P.O.W.s making the 5-10 day trip to Camp O'Donnell. Of the 80,000 defenders of Bataan, it is estimated that as many as 20,000...one in four...died on the infamous death march. (In the two months that followed it is estimated that as many as 1,500 Americans and 25,000 more Filipinos died at Camp O'Donnell.)

With Bataan now under Japanese control, the enemy turned his full attention to "The Rock". General Wainwright and his 26,000 troops at Corregidor were the last organized resistance on Luzon. In all, more than 400 fighter plane and bombing attacks were launched against the 2-square-mile island. For almost a month, while the Japanese continued their wholesale slaughter of Bataan's valiant defenders during their infamous death march, Corregidor held. By May 6th the Philippine defenders had continued to fight the delaying action called for in Orange No. 3 for the full six-month period determined necessary for resupply and reinforcement. The defenders had done their part, but now they knew there would be no resupply or reinforcement.

For long days and lonely nights, General Jonathan Wainwright struggled to determine in his mind the best course of action. He was proud of his men and they had come to love, admire, and obey him. Finally, on the morning of May 6th he notified them of his decision. "With broken

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heart and with head bowed in sadness, but not in shame," he told his soldiers, "today I must arrange terms for the surrender." At 10:15 A.M. he sent the last message from Corregidor to President Roosevelt. He told the President:

"There is a limit of human endurance and that limit has long since been passed. With out prospect of relief, I feel it is my duty to my Country, and to my gallant troops, to end this useless effusion of blood and human sacrifice. With profound regret and continued pride in my gallant troops, I go to meet the Japanese commander.

Goodbye, Mr. President."

At exactly noon on May 6, 1942, General Jonathan M. Wainwright surrendered to Japanese General Homma. A historian of the Civil War, Wainwright later said of that moment, "Suddenly, I knew how Lee felt after Appomattox."

The defenders from Corregidor were not marched north through Bataan. Instead the Japanese shipped them across the bay to Manila where they were paraded in disgrace as a display of the Japanese superiority. As a final humiliation for General Wainwright, he was forced to march through his defeated soldiers. Despite their wounds, their illness, their broken spirit and shattered bodies, as the General passed among their ranks they struggled to their feet. It was their last show of respect for the last of the fighting generals.

In Australia, General MacArthur was furious. In his own mind he had initially resolved to die fighting to defend the Philippines. The man he had selected to complete that mission when he had been ordered to leave Corregidor had let him down. On July 30, 1942 General George C. Marshall proposed that a Medal of Honor be awarded to the last of the fighting generals. It prompted an act of resistance to a Medal of Honor award, unprecedented in the Medal's history. General MacArthur wrote, in part:

"The citation proposed does not represent the truth....As a relative matter award of the Medal of Honor to General Wainwright would be a grave injustice to a number of general officers of practically equally responsible positions who not only distinguished themselves by fully as great personal gallantry thereby earning the DSC but exhibited powers of leadership and inspiration to a degree greatly superior to that of General Wainwright thereby contributing much more to the stability of the command and to the successful conduct of the campaign. It would be a grave mistake which later on might well lead to embarrassing repercussions to make this award."

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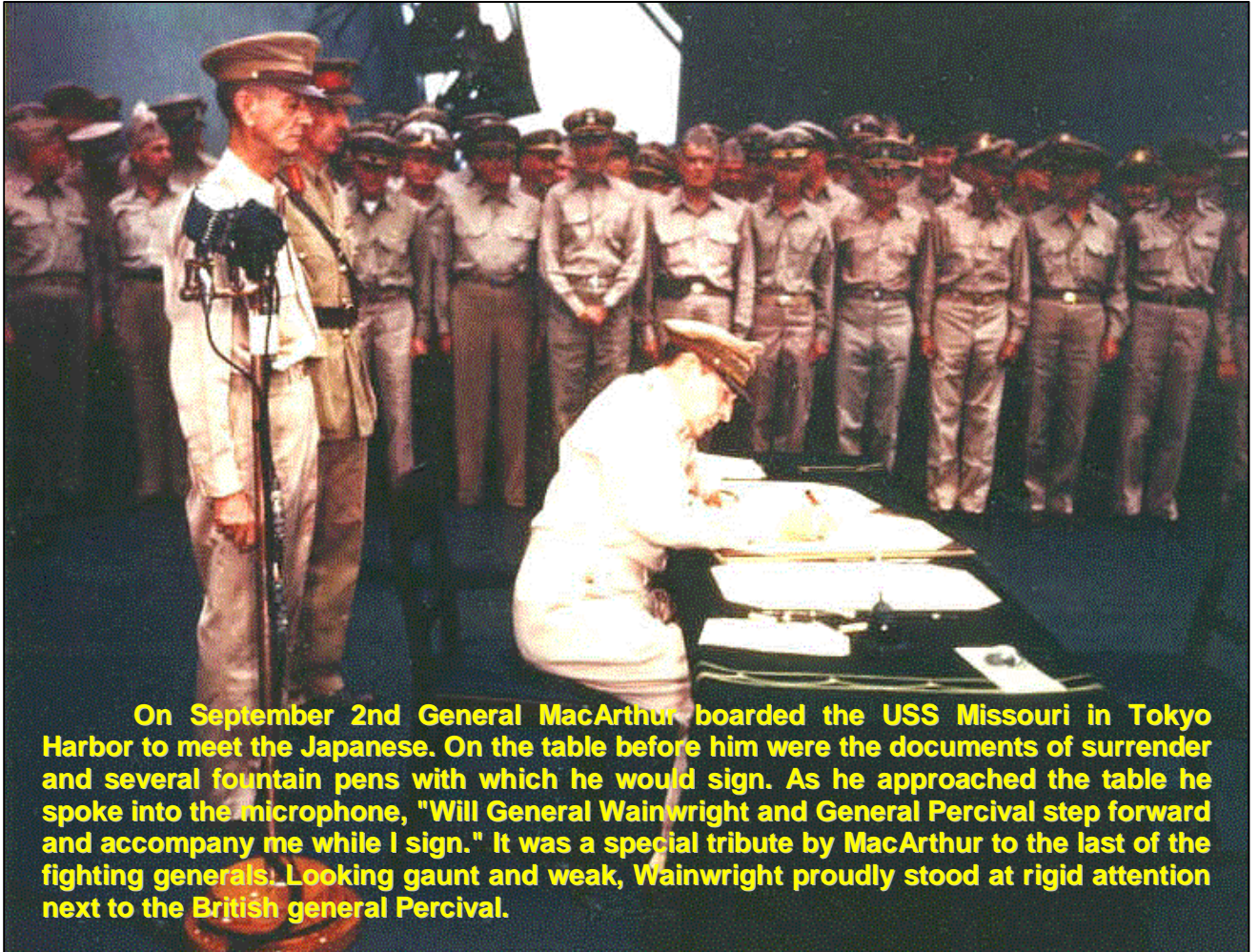
MacArthur's vehement opposition to Wainwright's proposed award both surprised and stunned General Marshall. He withdrew the recommendation, and while General MacArthur prepared to keep his promise to return to the Philippines, General Wainwright was left to suffer alone in a Japanese prison camp.

During his more than three years of captivity, General Wainwright suffered deprivation, humiliation, abuse and torture at the hands of the Japanese. In his own mind he feared the moment of his return, sure that he would be considered a coward and a traitor for his surrender at Corregidor. He knew nothing of the award that had been proposed, then shelved because of MacArthur's scathing objections. Throughout the period he struggled to survive. General Jonathan Mayhew Wainwright was the highest-ranking American prisoner of war in World War II, and celebrating his 60th birthday in a POW camp in Manchuria. He was also one of the oldest.

On October 25, 1944 General Douglas MacArthur waded ashore at Leyte to announce, "People of the Philippines, I have returned." Almost a year of bitter fighting remained for Allied forces in the Pacific. Then, on August 6, 1945 the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 14 the Japanese announced that they would surrender. The final documents of surrender would be signed in Tokyo Harbor on September 2nd. General MacArthur would preside over the historic event and sign on behalf of the President of the United States.



On August 19 General Wainwright learned that the war had ended. He would finally be going home. He was flown first to Yokohama, where he arrived looking tired and gaunt on August 31st. Despite his earlier disappointment at the surrender at Corregidor, it was General Douglas MacArthur who met him. The two embraced as cameras caught the historic moment.



On September 2nd General MacArthur boarded the USS Missouri in Tokyo Harbor to meet the Japanese. On the table before him were the documents of surrender and several fountain pens with which he would sign. As he approached the table he spoke into the microphone, "Will General Wainwright and General Percival step forward and accompany me while I sign." It was a special tribute by MacArthur to the last of the fighting generals. Looking gaunt and weak, Wainwright proudly stood at rigid attention next to the British general Percival.

When the moment arrived to counter-sign the historic documents, MacArthur picked up the first fountain pen and scribbled his signature. Then he turned and handed that first pen to General Jonathan Wainwright.

Skinny later said it was a "wholly unexpected and very great gift."





Promoted to Lieutenant General, Jonathan Wainwright returned home not to the shame he expected as the commander who had surrendered at Corregidor. Instead he was welcomed with cheers, ticker-tape parades, and an outpouring of love and affection. President Truman sent word that he wanted to meet with the general.



Wainwright and his wife flew into Washington, DC on the morning of September 10th. They were met by General Marshall, who escorted them to the White House. There they visited briefly with President Truman in the Oval Office. Suddenly, as if it were an afterthought, the President told General Wainwright, "Let's step outside in the Rose Garden to continue this conversation." The two stood and the President took the General by the arm to escort him outside. General Wainwright was surprised to find the Rose Garden filled with military officials, press reporters, and spectators. His first thought was that the President wanted him to give a speech.

The speech that day was to be the President's, however. As President Truman stepped to the microphone and began to read, it dawned on General Wainwright what was about to happen. When the President had read the citation he turned to the last of the fighting generals and placed the Medal of Honor around his neck. On September 5, General Marshall had revived his recommendation, and the President quickly approved the award. This time there were no objections.



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The True Story of The

Four Chaplains

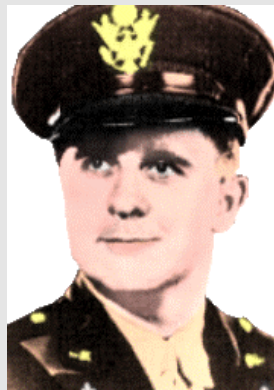
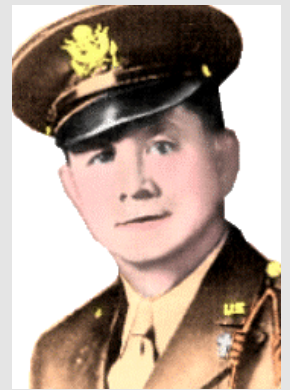
**Rabbi Alexander Goode
Rev. George L. Fox
Rev. Clark V. Poling
Father John P. Washington**



Brotherhood has nothing to do with the similarities between men. Even among twins, no two brothers are exactly alike. These differences can create challenges to family harmony, incite jealousy, and lead to sibling rivalries. At the same time, it is these differences that make a family stronger, better rounded, and best equipped to face the challenges of life. In time of crisis as a family pulls together, these differences make it possible to approach a problem from different perspectives and find solutions for the common good. There is strength in diversity. Perhaps a family should rejoice more in the differences between brothers and sisters than in the things they share in common.

In November 1942 four young men "found each other" while attending Chaplain's School at Harvard University. They had enough in common to bond them together. At age 42, George Fox was the "older brother". The youngest was 30-year old Clark Poling, and less than three years separated him from the other two, Alexander Goode and John Washington. A common cause brought them together, the desire to render service to their Nation during the critical years of World War II.

Between the early days of May to late July, the four had entered military service from different areas of the country. Reverend Fox enlisted in the Army from Vermont the same day his 18-year old son Wyatt enlisted in the Marine Corps. During World War I, though only 17 years old, Fox had convinced the Army he was actually 18 and enlisted as a medical corps assistant. His courage on the battlefield earned him the Silver Star, the Croix de Guerre, and the Purple Heart. When World War II broke out he said, *"I've got to go. I know from experience what our boys are about to face. They need me."* This time, however, he didn't enlist to heal the wounds of the body. As a minister he was joining the Chaplains Corps to heal the wounds of the soul.



Reverend Clark V. Poling was from Ohio and pastoring in New York when World War II threatened world freedom. He determined to enter the Army, but not as a Chaplain. *"I'm not going to hide behind the church in some safe office out of the firing line,"* he told his father when he informed him of his plans to serve his country. His father, Reverend Daniel Poling knew something of war, having served as a Chaplain himself during World War I. He told his son, *"Don't you know that chaplains have the highest mortality rate of all? As a chaplain you'll have the best chance in the world to be killed. You just can't carry a gun to kill anyone yourself."* With new appreciation for the role of the Chaplains Corps, Clark Poling accepted a commission and followed in his father's footsteps.

Like Clark Poling, Alexander Goode had followed the steps of his own father in ministry. His first years of service were in Marion, Indiana; then he moved on to York, Pennsylvania. While studying and preparing to minister to the needs of others, "Alex" had joined the National Guard. Ten months before Pearl Harbor he sought an assignment in the Navy's Chaplains Corps, but wasn't initially accepted. When war was declared, he wanted more than ever to serve the needs of those who went in harm's way to defend freedom and human dignity. He chose to do so as a U.S. Army Chaplain.



A quick look at the be-speckled, mild mannered John P. Washington, would have left one with the impression that he was not the sort of man to go to war and become a hero. His love of music and his beautiful voice belied the toughness inside. One of nine children in an Irish immigrant family living in the toughest part of Newark, New Jersey, he had learned through sheer determination to hold his own in any fight. By the time he was a teenager he was the leader of the South Twelfth Street Gang. Then God called him to ministry, returning him to the streets of New Jersey to organize sports teams, play ball with young boys who needed a strong friend to look up to, and inspire others with his beautiful hymns of praise and thanksgiving.

Upon meeting at the Chaplains' school, the four men quickly became friends. One of Clark Poling's cousins later said, *"They were all very sociable guys, who seemed to have initiated interfaith activities even before the war. They hit it off well at chaplains' school. Sharing their faith was not just a first-time deal for them. They were really very close. They had prayed together a number of times before that final crisis."* (Reverend David Poling)

The observation pointed out by Clark's cousin is of note, for the men of whom he spoke were unique. Their close bond might easily have marked them as "The Four Chaplains" long before a fateful night three months after they first met, when their actions would forever make the title synonymous with the names of George L. Fox, Alexander D. Goode, Clark V. Poling, and John P. Washington. The differences in their backgrounds and personalities could have been easily outweighed by their common calling to ministry, had it not been for one major difference:

Reverend Fox was a
Methodist Minister

Reverend Poling was a
Dutch Reformed Minister

Father Washington was a
Catholic Priest

Rabbi Goode was Jewish



In a world where differences have all too often created conflict and separated brothers, the Four Chaplains found a special kind of unity, and in that unity they found strength. Despite the differences, they became "brothers" for they had one unseen characteristic in common that overshadowed everything else. They were brothers because:

They All Four Shared the same Father!



U.S.A.T. Dorchester

The *U.S.A.T. Dorchester* was an aging, luxury coastal liner that was no longer luxurious. In the nearly four years from December 7, 1941 to September 2, 1945 more than 16 million American men and women were called upon to defend human dignity and freedom on two fronts, in Europe and the Pacific. Moving so large a force to the battlefields was a monumental effort, and every available ship was being pressed into service. Some of these were converted into vessels of war, others to carrying critical supplies to the men and women in the field. The *Dorchester* was designated to be a transport ship. All non-critical amenities were removed and cots were crammed into every available space. The intent was to get as many young fighting men as possible on each voyage. When the soldiers boarded in New York on January 23, 1943 the *Dorchester* certainly was filled to capacity. In addition to the Merchant Marine crew and a few civilians, young soldiers filled every available space. There were 902 lives about to be cast to the mercy of the frigid North Atlantic.



As the *Dorchester* left New York for an Army base in Greenland, many dangers lay ahead. The sea itself was always dangerous, especially in this area known for ice flows, raging waters, and gale-force winds. The greatest danger, however, was the ever-present threat of German submarines, which had recently been sinking Allied ships at the rate of 100 every month. The *Dorchester* would be sailing through an area that had become infamous as "Torpedo Junction".

Most of the men who boarded for the trip were young, frightened soldiers. Many were going to sea for the first time and suffered seasickness for days. They were packed head to toe below deck, a steaming human sea of fear and uncertainty. Even if they survived the eventual Atlantic crossing, they had nothing to look forward to--only the prospects of being thrown into the cauldron of war on foreign shores. They were men in need of a strong shoulder to lean on, a firm voice to encourage them, and a ray of hope in a world of despair. In their midst moved four men, Army Chaplains, called to put aside their own fears and uncertainties to minister to the needs of others.

Perhaps Chaplain Fox thought of his own 18-year old son, serving in the Marine Corps, as he walked among the young soldiers on the *Dorchester* giving strength and Spiritual hope to those he could. Before leaving he had said goodbye to his wife and 7-year-old daughter Mary Elizabeth. It was Chaplain Fox's second war, for the "war to end all wars" HADN'T!

In other parts of the ship Father Washington likewise did his best to soothe the fears of those about him. As a Catholic Priest he was single and hadn't left behind a wife or children, but there were eight brothers and sisters at home to fear for him and pray for his safety. Now his closest brothers were the other three Chaplains on the *Dorchester*. They leaned on each other for strength as they tried daily to mete that strength out to others. Surely as he prayed for his makeshift parish, Father Washington also whispered a prayer for Chaplain Fox, Chaplain Poling and Rabbi Goode. Not only had Chaplain Fox left a son and daughter behind, Rabbi Goode had left behind a loving wife and 3-year-old daughter. Chaplain Poling's son Corky was still an infant,

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and within a month or two his wife would be giving birth to their second child. In time of war, perhaps being single had its advantages.

With so many men crammed into such a small space, all of them so much in need of the ray of hope Spiritual guidance could afford, differences ceased to be important. All of the soldiers shared the same level of misery and fear, whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jew. The title "Rabbi", "Father", or "Reverend" was of little consequence when a man needed a CHAPLAIN. A prayer from Rabbi Goode could give strength to the Catholic soldier as quickly as a hymn from the beautiful voice of Father Washington could warm the heart of a Protestant. The Jewish soldier facing an uncertain future on foreign shores could draw on the strength of a Protestant to help him face tomorrow. When sinking in the quicksand of life one doesn't ask for the credentials of he who offers the hand of hope. One simply thanks God that the helping hand is there.

The crossing was filled with long hours of boredom and misery. Outside, the chilly Arctic winds and cold ocean spray coated the *Dorchester's* deck with ice. Below deck the soldiers' quarters were hot from too many bodies, crammed into too small a place, for too many days in a row. Finally, on February 2nd, the *Dorchester* was within 150 miles of Greenland. It would have generated a great sense of relief among the young soldiers crowded in the ship's berths, had not the welcomed news been tempered by other news of grave concern. One of the *Dorchester's* three Coast Guard escorts had received sonar readings during the day, indicating the presence of an enemy submarine in "Torpedo Junction".

Hans Danielson, the *Dorchester's* captain, listened to the news with great concern. His cargo of human lives had been at sea for ten days, and was finally nearing its destination. If he could make it through the night, air cover would arrive with daylight to safely guide his ship home. The problem would be surviving the night. Aware of the potential for disaster, he instructed the soldiers to sleep in their clothes and life jackets....just in case. Below deck however, it was hot and sweaty as too many bodies lay down, closely packed in the cramped quarters. Many of the men, confident that tomorrow would dawn without incident, elected to sleep in their underwear. The life jackets were also hot and bulky; so many men set them aside as an unnecessary inconvenience.

Outside it was another cold, windy night as the midnight hour signaled the passing of February 2nd and the beginning of a new day. In the distance a cold, metal arm broke the surface of the stormy seas. At the end of that arm, a German U-Boat (submarine) captain monitored the slowly passing troop transport. Shortly before one in the morning he gave the command to fire.

Quiet moments passed as silent death reached out for the men of the *Dorchester*, then the flash of a blinding explosion and the roar of massive destruction shattered the early morning. The "hit" had been dead on, tossing men from their cots with the force of its explosion. A second torpedo followed the first, instantly killing 100 men in the hull of the ship. An explosion in the engine room knocked out power, and darkness engulfed the frightened men below deck as water rushed through gaping wounds in the *Dorchester's* hull. The ship tilted at an unnatural angle as it began to sink rapidly, and piles of clothing and life jackets were tossed about in the darkness.

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where no one would ever find them. Wounded men cried out in pain, frightened survivors screamed in terror, and all groped frantically in the darkness for exits they couldn't find. Somewhere in that living hell, four voices of calm began to speak words of comfort, seeking to bring order to panic and bedlam. Slowly soldiers began to find their way to the deck of the ship, many still in their underwear, where they were confronted by the cold winds blowing down from the arctic. Petty Officer John J. Mahoney, reeling from the cold, headed back towards his cabin. "Where are you going?" a voice of calm in the sea of distressed asked?

"To get my gloves," Mahoney replied.

"Here, take these," said Rabbi Goode as he handed a pair of gloves to the young officer who would never have survived the trip to his cabin and then back to safety.

"I can't take your gloves," Mahoney replied.

"Never mind," the Rabbi responded. "I have two pairs." Mahoney slipped the gloves over his hands and returned to the frigid deck, never stopping to ponder until later when he had reached safety, that there was no way Rabbi Goode would have been carrying a spare set of gloves. As that thought finally dawned on him he came to a new understanding of what was transpiring in the mind of the fearless Chaplain. Somehow, Rabbi Goode suspected that he would never leave the *Dorchester* alive.

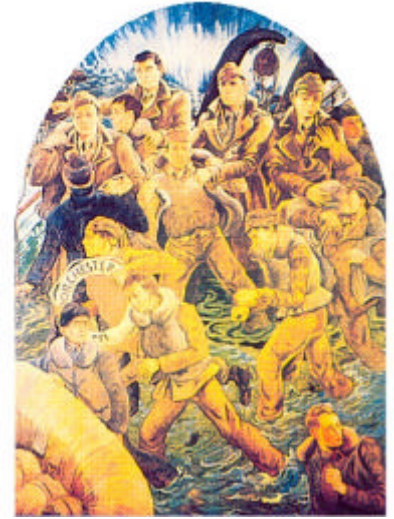
Before boarding the *Dorchester* back in January, Reverend Poling had asked his father to pray for him, "*Not for my safe return, that wouldn't be fair. Just pray that I shall do my duty...never be a coward...and have the strength, courage and understanding of men. Just pray that I shall be adequate.*" He probably never dreamed that his prayer request would be answered so fully. As he guided the frightened soldiers to their only hope of safety from the rapidly sinking transport, he spoke calm words of encouragement, urging them not to give up. In the dark hull of the *Dorchester*, he was more than adequate. He was a hero.

Likewise Reverend Fox and Father Washington stood out within the confines of an unimaginable hell. Wounded and dying soldiers were ushered into eternity to the sounds of comforting words from men of God more intent on the needs of others, than in their own safety and survival. Somehow, by their valiant efforts, the Chaplains succeeded in getting many of the soldiers out of the hold and onto the *Dorchester's* slippery deck.

In the chaos around them, lifeboats floated away before men could board them. Others capsized as panic continued to shadow reason and soldiers loaded the small craft beyond limit. The strength, calm, and organization of the Chaplains had been critical in the dark hull. Now, on deck, they found that their mission had not been fully accomplished. They organized the effort, directed men to safety, and left them with parting words of encouragement. In little more than twenty minutes, the *Dorchester* was almost gone. Icy waves broke over the railing, tossing men into the sea, many of them without life jackets. In the last moments of the transport's existence, the Chaplains were too occupied opening lockers to pass out life jackets to note the threat to their own lives.

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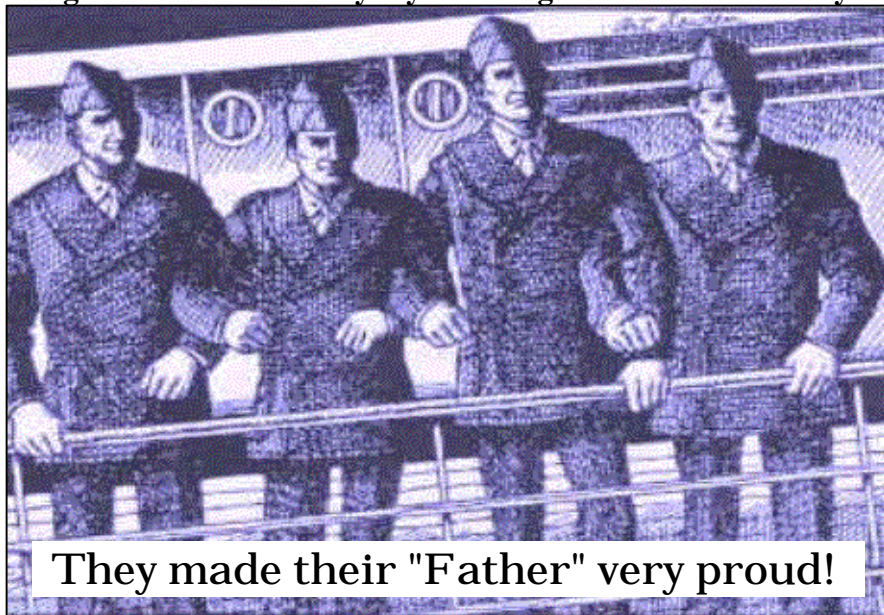
In less than half an hour, water was beginning to flow across the deck of the sinking *Dorchester*. Working against time the Chaplains continued to pass out the life vests from the lockers as the soldiers pressed forward in a ragged line. And then....the lockers were all empty...the life jackets gone. Those still pressing in line began to realize they were doomed, that there was no hope. And then something amazing happened, something those who were there would never forget. All Four Chaplains began taking their own life jackets off....and putting them on the men around them. Together they sacrificed their last shred of hope for survival, to insure the survival of other men.... most of them total strangers. Then time ran out. The Chaplains had done all they could for those who would survive, and nothing more could be done for the remaining...including themselves.



Those who had been fortunate enough to reach lifeboats struggled to distance themselves from the sinking ship; lest they be pulled beneath the ocean swells by the chasm created as the transport slipped into a watery grave. Amid the screams of pain and horror that permeated the cold dark night, they heard the strong voices of the Chaplains. "Shma Yisroel Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echod." "Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done."

Looking back they saw the slanting deck of the *Dorchester*, its demise almost complete. Braced against the railings were the Four Chaplains...praying...singing, giving strength to others by their final valiant declaration of faith. Their arms were linked together as they braced against the railing and leaned into each other for support, Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling, and Father Washington. Said one of the survivors, "It was the finest thing I have ever seen this side of heaven."

And then, only 27 minutes after the first torpedo struck, the last vestige of the *U.S.A.T. Dorchester* disappeared beneath the cold North Atlantic waters. In its death throes it reached out to claim any survivors nearby, taking with it to its grave the four ministers of different faiths who learned to find strength in their diversity by focusing on the Father they shared. On that day.....



They made their "Father" very proud!



Of the 920 men who left New York on the *U.S.A.T. Dorchester* on January 23rd, only 230 were plucked from the icy waters by rescue craft. In addition to the Four Chaplains, 668 other men went to a watery grave with the ship. Had it not been for the Chaplains, the number of dead would certainly have been much higher.

On May 28, 1948 the United States Postal Service issued a special stamp to commemorate the brotherhood, service, and sacrifice of the Four Chaplains.



On July 14, 1960 by Act of Congress (Public Law 86-656, 86th Congress), the United States Congress authorized the "Four Chaplains Medal". The Star of David, Tablets of Moses, and Christian Cross are shown in relief on the back of the medal, along with the inscribed names of all four heroic Chaplains.



THE CHAPEL OF THE FOUR CHAPLAINS became one of the most enduring tributes to Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling, and Father Washington. Time has dimmed the memory of the four great men, and with that fading memory the chapel itself has slipped into the background of the American conscience.



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"This inter-faith shrine...will stand through long generations to teach Americans that as men can die heroically as brothers, so they should live together in mutual faith and good will."

President Harry S Truman

On February 3, 1951 a unique inter-faith chapel was dedicated at Temple University in Philadelphia. President Harry S Truman, and Reverend Daniel A. Poling, Clark Poling's father, dedicated the Chapel of the Four Chaplains. Reverend Poling, along with members of the other Chaplains' families was largely responsible for the monumental effort that went into getting the Chapel Completed.

Over the years, these surviving family members have worked long and hard at keeping the story of four valiant men of God alive. Though Rabbi Goode's daughter Rosalie Goode Fried never really got to know her father (she was only 3 years old at the time of his death), she spent much of her life calling to mind the sacrifice, service, and inter-faith camaraderie of the four men.

President Truman's hopes that the Chapel of the Four Chaplains would "stand through long generations" may have been somewhat optimistic. Less than 50 years after the dedication of the Chapel, many Americans have never heard the story of the Four Chaplains. At a time when our Nation cries out for heroes and role models of strength, character, and inspiration, the passing of time and fading memories obscure those very heroes we need so badly.

Over the last couple of years Reverend David Fox, the minister grandson of Chaplain George Fox, along with Rabbi Goode's daughter Rosalie Goode Fried, put together a foundation to create a permanent memorial to the Four Chaplains. In February 1999 Mrs. Fried died in an automobile accident, but the project goes forward. Though the original Chapel of the Four Chaplains no longer exists to provide an inspirational, inter-faith shrine; the work of the Chapel of the Four Chaplains continues. It hosts an Annual Awards Banquet every February to honor Americans of patriotism, character, and sacrifice. It provides guidelines for Four Chaplains Services, which are held annually by many churches and synagogues. It provides, at a small cost, Four Chaplains memorabilia, photos, and posters. It also sponsors an annual Scholarship Essay and Lifesaver Contest for youth and twice a year it publishes a large newsletter. In addition, from its temporary offices at a mall in Pennsylvania, the staff dreams and plans for a new Chapel of the Four Chaplains, which they hope to see built in the coming years.



Sources and Credits:

Chapel of the Four Chaplains

Florida Atlantic University Libraries (Jewish Heroes and Heroines in America)

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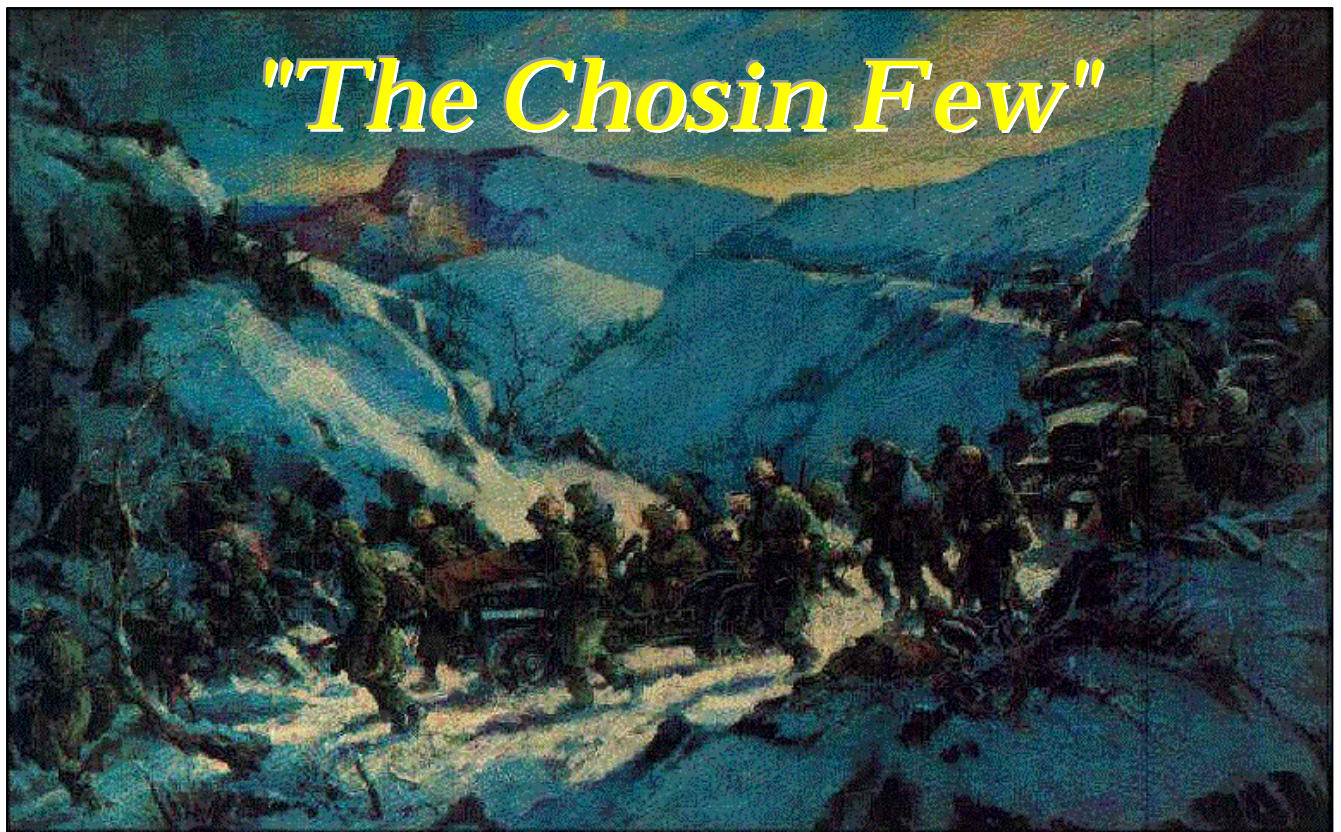
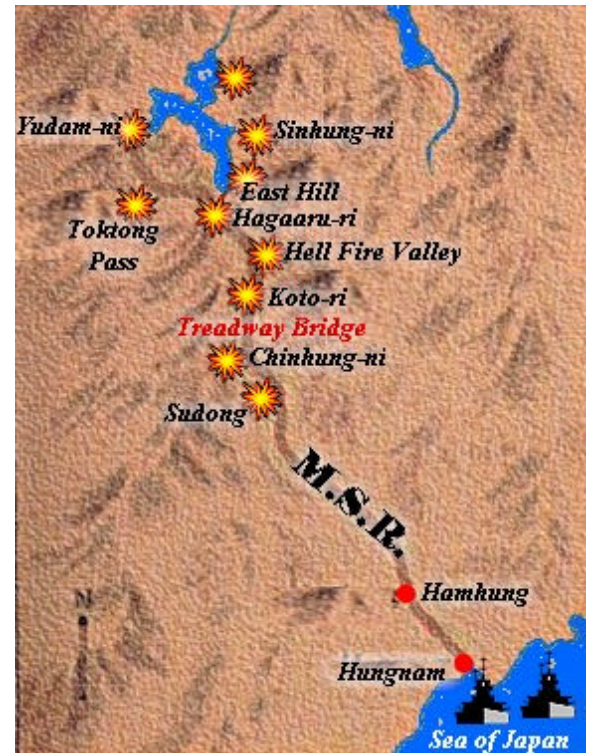
Special acknowledgment also to SEYMOUR "Sy" BRODY for his assistance

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"THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE FROZEN CHOSIN"

In November 1950 eight thousand fighters, most of them United States Marines, struggled to survive the coldest winter in 100 years in North Korea. Surrounded by 120,000 Chinese soldiers, their only lifeline was a 15'-wide, steep mountain road they called the M.S.R. (Main Supply Route) that led to the port city of Hungnam. From Yudam-ni at the northwest corner of the Chanjin Reservoir, the MSR was a dangerous, 78-mile journey to the Sea of Japan. The trip was made far more difficult by the massive enemy force surrounding it. The withdrawal, the longest in American military history, would take 13 days and cost many lives. Those who didn't understand what was happening called it a "retreat", while one American general simply said, "We're attacking in a different direction." How you assess what happened over those two freezing weeks in North Korea depends on your perspective.

It is adversity that demands valor; trial that demonstrates the highest levels of brotherhood. The Marines at the Chanjin Reservoir, identified on Japanese maps as the CHOSIN Reservoir, pulled together to insure the success of the withdrawal. What many people might have considered to be the darkest two weeks in Marine Corps history may have in fact; become the Marine Corp's DEFINING MOMENT. With their backs to the wall, the men of the 1st Marine Division pulled together to accomplish the impossible. Their teamwork cemented a band of brothers who came to call themselves:



Theirs Not To Reason Why

The war in Korea began early on the morning of Sunday, June 25, 1950 when nearly one hundred thousand soldiers from the North crossed the 38th parallel that divided South Korea from the Communist North Korea. Unprepared and overwhelmed, the Army of the Republic of Korea was almost destroyed and the South's capitol city of Seoul fell to the invaders within days. Six days later soldiers of the American 24th Infantry arrived to assist the Republic of Korea (ROK) Army in the defense of their homeland, but it was too little, too late. By early fall the future of South Korea was uncertain.

On September 15th United Nations forces, led by General Douglas MacArthur and consisting primarily of United States soldiers and Marines, made the daring landing at Inchon and the tide of battle began to turn. Within weeks it was the North Korean army that was almost destroyed, giving up the cities they had taken earlier and falling back in full retreat behind the 38th parallel. The victory had been swift and decisive, returning control of South Korea to its rightful owners. General MacArthur wanted to follow with steps to insure their future as well.

The divided peninsula of Korea rests between the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea. It's only neighbor sits along the northeast boundary of North Korea. That border is the Yalu River, and that neighbor is the Chinese Manchuria. Fearful of an American sweep into the North following the successful landing at Inchon, the Chinese government issued a warning that if General MacArthur sent his troops north of the 38th parallel, soldiers of the Chinese Army would meet them. Military planners doubted that the threat was real, and sent the Allied forces north to "neutralize" the forces of North Korea and insure that a repeat of the June 25th invasion would not occur. On October 9, 1950 the first elements of American military units crossed the 38th parallel to take the battle home to the North Koreans. Five days later two Chinese Armies consisting of 12 Divisions (120,000 soldiers) crossed the Yalu River undetected.

For weeks the Chinese soldiers moved into the rugged mountains of North Korea, traveling only under cover of night and camouflaging their positions during the day. As MacArthur's forces moved north in a two-prong front, the 8th Army moving toward the Yalu River from the western side of the peninsula and the 10th Army on the eastern coast, the Americans didn't realize a well hidden, massive force was waiting to pounce on them. On October 25th the hidden enemy attacked, surprising forces of the ROK army. In three days they destroyed four ROK regiments. Still, American war planners were hesitant to believe the Chinese Force was more than just a few scattered units of North Korean soldiers, and committed the men of the 8th and 10th Armies to an offensive campaign to end the war and, as General MacArthur promised, get American soldiers.....

"Home by Christmas".

While the 8th Army was moving up the western edge of North Korea, on the east coast. The port city of Wonsan was taken, followed by the city of Hungnam. From there, members of the 1st Marine Division would move northwest on the MSR to the vital Chosin Reservoir. The village of Koto-ri was almost mid-way from Hungnam to the north edge of the reservoir, and the 4,200 Marines of the 1st Marine Regiment set up there. The 1st Marine Division Headquarters was established at Hagaru-ri, a small village at the southern tip of the reservoir. By November 27th 3,000 Americans inhabited Hagaru-ri, most of them engineers, clerks, and supply personnel.



The combat troops, warriors of the 5th and 7th Marine Regiments moved 12 miles northwest to the village of Yudam-ni. From here they were to travel west, crossing the rugged mountains to link up with the 8th Army. That was the plan, but the plan hadn't factored in two unexpected obstacles:

- ◆ **Between 120,000 and 150,000 well hidden Chinese Communist soldiers, and**
- ◆ **The worst winter weather conditions in 100 years.**

One can only guess how cold it became in the high Taebaek mountains around the Chosin Reservoir during the winter of 1950. At one regimental headquarters the thermometer fell to minus 54 degrees. American Marines shivered in their foxholes, while vehicle drivers were forced to run their engines 24-hour a day. If the engine were shut down, chances were high that it couldn't be restarted. A rare hot meal could quickly freeze in the time it took a Marine to move from the serving line to a place where he could sit down to eat it. Then, to add to the misery, the Chinese launched their surprise attack.

The "Home by Christmas" offensive officially began on November 24th, the day after Thanksgiving. In the west the 8th Army began their push to the Yalu, only to be surprised by an unbelievable swarm of hidden Communist soldiers. Within days the CCF (Chinese Communist Forces) destroyed the ROK II Corps, leaving the 8th without flanking cover or general support. The badly battered 8th Army was ordered to fall back on November 19th; a 275-mile withdrawal that in six weeks cost 10,000 casualties.

On the eastern slope of the Taebaek Mountains most of the Marines were unaware of what was happening in the west, or just how badly outnumbered and surrounded they were. The first indication came on the morning of November 27th as two companies of the 5th Marines began the push from Yudam-ni westward. Before noon they ran into an enemy roadblock. Unaware of the numbers of enemy around them, the Marines engaged the Chinese, destroying the roadblock. Then enemy fire began to rain on them from all directions. The Marines knew they were in for a fight, one that lasted for nearly four hours. Then, when the firing subsided, the Marines attempted to dig in. The intensity of the battle convinced them that they were facing more than straggling units of North Korean soldiers. They knew the enemy would attack again, in force, under the cover of darkness. They did!

"The American Marine First Division has the highest combat effectiveness in the American armed forces. It seems not enough for our four divisions to surround and annihilate its two regiments. (You) should have one or two more divisions as a reserve force."

Mao Zedong's orders to Chinese General Song Shilun

As night fell on November 27, tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers came out of hiding, attacking American soldiers and Marines at all points around the Chosin Reservoir. The two companies dug in to the west of Yudam-ni were shivering from the cold in makeshift foxholes when the overwhelming force attacked. In the darkness the Chinese swarmed the hill, coming within yards of the embattled Marines to toss grenades among them with deadly effectiveness.

In one sector of the American perimeter, protected by two machine-guns, the horde quickly overran one of the key defensive positions. When a grenade landed near the only remaining machine-gun, Staff Sergeant Robert Kennemore recognized the danger to nearby soldiers, as well as the gun emplacement. Quickly he stomped his foot on the grenade to push it into the snow, the subsequent blast throwing his body into the air.

The Marines somehow held through the night, but their heavy losses were quickly visible in the breaking daylight. For S/Sgt Kennemore the cold may have been a lifesaver. He was found, the stumps of his legs frozen in blood-caked snow, but still alive. Many other young Marines were not so fortunate.



It was only the beginning.

From November 27th to December 10th, American soldiers and Marines would find themselves in a battle unlike any other in history. Survival would call for leadership, teamwork, and immense courage. From it was born a brotherhood perhaps unmatched by veterans of any other battle. During the horrible 14 days that followed "LIFE" magazine photographer David Duncan, himself a Marine Corps veteran of World War II, captured many heart-rending images. None, perhaps, was quite as poignant as the one at left. Even more telling was the three simple words spoken by this Marine.



Upon capturing the image with his camera, David Duncan couldn't help asking the Marine, "What would you like for Christmas?"

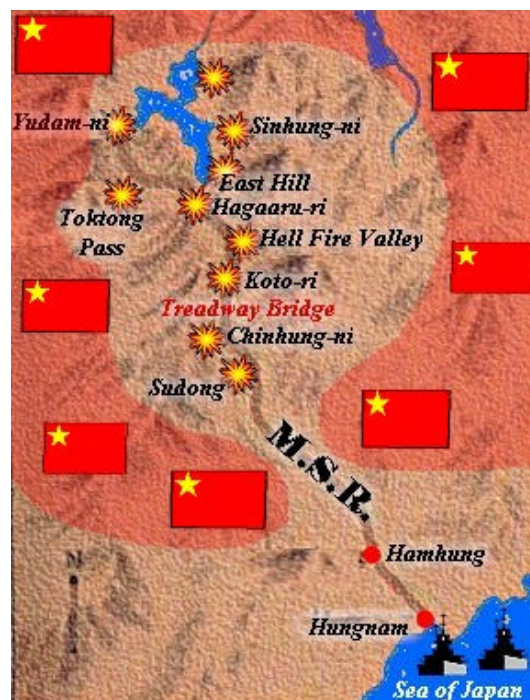
His simple answer echoed the hope of so many young Marines facing a hopeless situation at the Chosin Reservoir.

He replied:

"Give Me Tomorrow."

The hope for any tomorrows lay in the Marines' ability to support each other. Eight thousand troops from the 5th and 7th Marines were at the northwest corner of the Chosin Reservoir at Yudam-ni. Their only hope of support was provided by 3,000 clerks and supply personnel 14 miles south at Hagaru-ri. The lifeline was the MSR, winding its way through the snow-covered mountains. If the MSR fell to the Chinese, the 5th and 7th Marines would be cut off....trapped.

To prevent this, Company F (Fox), 2d Battalion, 1st Marine Division was sent to the high mountains of the 3-mile long Toktong Pass, almost mid-way between Yudam-ni and Hagaru-ri.



Monday, November 27th

Captain Bill Barber had only been in Korea for a month, but he was no "rookie company commander". He had proved his leadership abilities and courage five years earlier at Iwo Jima, where he was awarded the Silver Star. On November 27th Captain Barber and his 240 Marines were moved by truck to the Toktong Pass, where Barber found a high ridge overlooking the MSR. As night fell his Marines tried desperately to break through the frozen ground to dig foxholes. Their position, dubbed "Fox Hill", was going to be home for a while.



At 2:30 in the morning on November 28th, while Staff Sergeant Kennemore lay bleeding in the snow miles north of Barber's company, the Chinese swarmed Fox Hill. Swooping in from their hidden positions in the mountains, the Communist soldiers surrounded Barber's Marines. Wave after wave came at Barber throughout the early morning, threatening to over run Fox Hill, but the Marines held. Many had been roused from their sleeping bags by the surprise onslaught, and fought for hours in their bare feet. Wounded Marines ignored serious injuries to continue the fight.

One of them, Private Hector Cafferata, fought a lone battle to keep the fanatical Communists from over-running his position. As daylight dawned, an enemy grenade landed in a shallow trench where the more seriously wounded had been moved. Cafferata rushed forward and grabbed the grenade, lobbing it away to save the wounded Marines. The heroic action cost him serious wounds to his hand and arms, but even those wounds weren't enough to stop Cafferata. He continued to resist, continued to battle the enemy, until wounded by a sniper bullet.



Daylight signaled the potential for the Marines to receive air support, and the Chinese pulled back. In the first night on Fox Hill, 20 men from Barber's company were killed; one out of five was wounded. The withdrawing Chinese left 450 dead on the rocky slopes of Fox Hill. But they would return.

As the Chinese soldiers were simultaneously attacking Yudam-ni and Fox Hill near the Toktong Pass, other CCF elements unleashed early morning assaults throughout the entire region. On the eastern side of the Chosin Reservoir, Army Lieutenant Colonel Don Faith watched as his 3,000-man force crawled into their sleeping bags to escape the sub-zero Korean night. Most of Faith's force, dubbed "Taskforce Faith", consisted of soldiers from the Army's 1st Battalion, 32d Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division. As they settled in for the night, they had no idea they were surrounded by an overwhelming number of enemy. As they slept, the enemy slipped quietly across the snow and into their midst. By the time the sleeping soldiers were awakened to the attacking horde, many of their comrades had been quietly overcome and killed and the Chinese were inside the perimeter. A fierce battle, often hand-to-hand, raged on until the sun began to rise.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

Lieutenant Colonel Faith's leadership that first night was essential to maintaining order and organizing the resistance that allowed his task force to survive. The following day Faith reported that his soldiers had been attacked by two Chinese divisions. His task force had been ordered to advance to the Yalu River, but now Faith was concerned that his troops might not survive the force mustered around him at the Chosin Reservoir. General Almond flew in during the day to review the situation with Ltc Faith and quickly dispelled any mention of Chinese soldiers in the area, much less two divisions. He ordered Faith to continue his mission, pinned a Silver Star to Faith's jacket, and then flew back out. As the general's helicopter disappeared in the distance leaving Lieutenant Colonel Faith with a sense of impending disaster, the disgusted leader took the medal from his jacket and threw it into the snow.



Wednesday, November 29th

Lieutenant Colonel Faith expected the worst as night fell on November 28th, but his force was spared that night. Captain Bill Barber's wasn't. The Chinese wanted to control the Toktong Pass, isolating the Marines at Yudam-ni for annihilation. To do that they had to dislodge what remained of Barber's company. A mortar barrage softened up the defenses at Fox Hill. Then the CCF attacked at 2 o'clock in the morning, breaking into the small perimeter and engaging Barber's valiant Marines in desperate, personal combat. Barber rallied his men, shouting orders in the darkness and moving from position to position encouraging his men and engaging the enemy. When enemy fire ripped into Captain Barber's leg he quickly stuffed a handkerchief into the wound to stem the flow of blood. Then he continued to hobble from position to position, alternating between encouraging his Marines to resist, and continuing to rain devastating fire on the encroaching enemy.

Meanwhile, back at Hagaru-ri, engineers, clerks, and other support personnel suddenly found themselves operating as infantry. The CCF had begun a series of nightly probes and attacks on the small headquarters garrison, and survival demanded that every man, even the wounded, fight for their lives. Shortly after midnight signaled the beginning of the new day, the CCF had taken control of much of East Hill just outside Hagaru-ri. The high hill was critical to the defense of Hagaru-ri, but defense of the hill had fallen to soldiers more accustomed to building things or moving material, than firing rifles and throwing grenades. Many had fought bravely, dying on the slopes of East Hill. Others fled back down the hill in terror. Somehow, East Hill had to be wrested back from the CCF. At Hagaru-ri Major Reginald Myers was dispatched to organize the broken remnants of Americans that were falling back in panic.



The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

Myers wasn't polite about forcing reluctant clerks back towards the hill they had abandoned in panic. He gathered the rag-tag force around him with threats and sheer command leadership, finally managing to put together a force of 300 men. At their head he led the way back to East Hill, urging his force forward through the early morning darkness and falling snow. As enemy fire raked into his force, Myers watched man after man fall at his side. So thin was his force, he couldn't spare stretcher-bearers to carry the wounded back down the hill. They had to lie where they fell.

As morning broke the winter skies, Myers and his force had almost reached the crest of East Hill. Though down to less than a hundred men, Myers urged them to attack, leading the way himself. The enemy was too well entrenched. Finally Major Myers pulled his few survivors back into a defensive line and used the dawn of the new day to call air strikes in on the CCF holding the hill's summit. He had been promised that reinforcements were coming from Koto-ri, if he could just hold on through the day. Myers wasn't sure his meager force could repel another enemy attack, but had little choice. He and his men dug in to wait for "the cavalry" to arrive and save the day.

The "Cavalry" was Task Force Drysdale, a 250-man element of the 41st Royal Marine Commandos under British Lieutenant Colonel Donald Drysdale based back at Koto-ri. Task Force Drysdale, supported by Company G, 3 Battalion, 1st Marines, 1st Marine Division planned to leave Koto-ri on the morning of the 29th to fight their way into Hagaru-ri to reinforce the headquarters there. What the task force hadn't anticipated was that first; they would have to fight their way OUT OF Koto-ri. Leaving shortly after morning broke the skies, by noon they had only advanced two miles. It had been a bitterly fought advance that had cost many lives and gained little ground.

Company G's commanding officer, Captain Carl L. Sitter finally fought his way to link up with Ltc Drysdale, where the two held council. They decided the ridge-by-ridge battle to reach Hagaru-ri would only result in meaningless slaughter of their men. More than 150 vehicles had left Koto-ri with the task force, supported by more than two-dozen tanks.

Drysdale and Sitter loaded their Marines on the vehicles and, with the tanks leading the way, proceeded forward on the MSR while the CCF lined the ridges on both sides to rain deadly fire on them. The task force pushed ahead gaining a mile an hour, Marines dying with every yard. Captain Sitter's jeep was destroyed, the driver killed, but the company commander managed to survive. It was fortunate for the column, for as the afternoon wore on Lieutenant Colonel Drysdale was seriously wounded and command of the column fell to Sitter.



Sitter did his best to organize the task force, fighting each roadblock that arose and skirmishing with enemy soldiers on all sides. At one roadblock the enemy was close enough to

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

throw a grenade into a truck filled with American Marines. Marine Private First Class William Baugh recognized the danger, knew that in seconds the grenade would explode to kill or seriously wound every man in the vehicle. He also realized a shouted warning wouldn't be enough, couldn't give his brother time to escape the deadly orb. So PFC William Baugh did the only thing that could be done to save his friends, throwing his own body on the grenade to absorb the full blast and spare his comrades. Seriously wounded, he died during the night.



The twelve-mile trip to Hagaru-ri took 12 hours. When finally the column had fought their way in to reinforce the battered command post a few hours before midnight, only 160 of Sitter's 270-man Company G remained to crawl exhausted into their sleeping bags. A few hours after midnight the wounded Drysdale arrived with the remainder of his Royal Marines. His unit had been cut in half by the desperate attempt to break through the Chinese and reach Koto-ri.

At Fox Hill, Captain Barber's beleaguered Marines faced a third straight night of horror as the enemy came again. Captain Barber ignored the pain from the bullet wound in his leg to hobble from position to position to encourage his warriors. Less than 90 men remained of his 240-man company, but Barber wouldn't let them go down without a fight. As the Communists swarmed Fox Hill that night he shouted orders, urged his men to resist, and continued to fight the waves of enemy soldiers. When an enemy bullet shattered his remaining good leg, Barber called for a stretcher. Unable to walk among his men any longer, he ordered the stretcher bearers to carry him to the most tenuous positions in the battle, where he continued to lead his men.... prostrate on the stretcher. There was no "QUIT" in Captain Bill Barber, and his own tenacity and courage gave his embattled Marines new hope. Against overwhelming odds, for the third night in a row, they held Fox Hill.

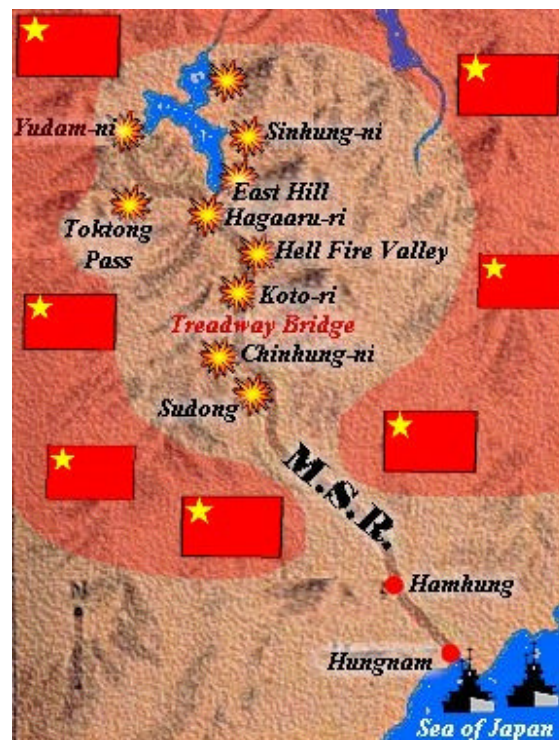
East of the Chosin Reservoir, Task Force Faith was hit again. The day before Lieutenant Colonel Faith had learned how serious the battle had become at Hagaru-ri and knew that there would be no relief for his battered force. Task Force Faith was on its own. After four hours of battle, shortly after 2 A.M. on November 30th, Lieutenant Colonel Faith ordered a withdrawal to the south. More than one hundred wounded were loaded on the remaining vehicles as he assembled what remained of his 3,000 man force in a ragged column attempting to break through to safety in the darkness, while surrounded and taking fire from all directions.

In just three days the battle at the Chosin Reservoir had turned into a massacre. Like the infamous "Charge of the Light Brigade", American soldiers and Marines had found themselves in "the jaws of death" because someone (in military planning) had blundered...refused to believe that the Chinese could have secretly moved so vast a force into North Korea.

For the soldiers and Marines at the Chosin, it didn't matter who was at fault. They had been ordered in, and they had followed their orders. Now, it was time to pull together to make the best of their bad situation. The Chinese attacked with one mission, not to just defeat the Americans or send them out of North Korea in retreat...but to completely annihilate the FIRST MARINE DIVISION.

BREAK OUT FROM THE FROZEN CHOSIN

It was now apparent that the soldiers and Marines at the Chosin were facing an enemy that had surrounded them and that outnumbered them more than 10 to 1. With the 8th Army facing a similar opposing force in the West, the drive to the Yalu halted and a withdrawal was finally ordered. Hagaru-ri would do its best to hold while the 5th and 7th Marines withdrew from Yudam-ni. Then they would continue together with the forces from Hagaru-ri on the 12-mile stretch of the MSR to Koto-ri. From there the combined forces would move on to evacuation ships waiting in the Sea of Japan at Hungnam.



Back home the news media began referring to the withdrawal as a "RETREAT", something no Marine, much less any survivor of the battle at the Chosin Reservoir would ever utter. A retreating force usually withdraws in panic, soldiers running in all directions without order, seeking to save themselves. That didn't happen at the Chosin. Instead of running from the enemy, soldiers and Marines had repeatedly fought their way INTO the trap, with full knowledge of what lay ahead. On Fox Hill Bill Barber had placed his company in the middle of the opposing force, simply because he knew how critical it was to keep the MSR opened. In the east the column from Task Force Faith was fighting its way back towards the embattled soldiers at Hagaru-ri. From Koto-ri, Task Force Drysdale had jumped "from the frying pan into the fire". Rather than withdrawing to Hungnam, the Marines in Captain Sitter's company had literally fought their way into the surrounded camp at Hagaru-ri. Before the Marines could fight their way out, they had to FIGHT THEIR WAY IN...to link up with their surrounded comrades.

At Hagaru-ri General O.P. Smith quickly pointed out that the Marines weren't retreating, they were simply:

"A ttack ing in a D ifferent D irection "

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond G. Davis assembled his 800 men for a dangerous trip. It wasn't a withdrawal. They were going to fight their way into the middle of the mountains where the CCF forces waited in their hidden sanctuary. High above Toktong Pass, Bill Barber and the remnants of his valiant Marines were cut off, surrounded, and taking new casualties nightly. If there were going to be a withdrawal, no one, including Bill Barber, would be left behind. So, with pride in the Corps and determination to accomplish what seemed impossible, he began moving his weary Marines over the frigid slopes of the high Korean mountains.



Even as Captain Sitter's tired Marines were bedding down after their 12-hour battle to reach Hagaru-ri, Davis' Marines were preparing for a cold night in the North Korean mountains. No one knew if Barber could hold out one more night, but Davis would do his best to break through to pick up whatever "pieces" remained of Fox Company.

Meanwhile Task Force Faith continued to move slowly towards relief, facing constant enemy roadblocks and attacking fire. When Lieutenant Colonel Faith ordered the withdrawal at 2:00 A.M., the ragged column had begun to assemble for the trek to safety. What remained of Task Force Faith was held together only by sheer "guts" and the valiant leadership of the commander for whom the force was named.

With daylight on the morning of November 30th, it seemed that every Marine was both trapped and surrounded, or fighting his way into that trap to rescue his brothers.

At Hagaru-ri the exhausted Captain Sitter was awakened with new orders.

"Take EAST HILL!"

After a 12-hour fight the day before in a battle that had almost cut Company G in half, it was a formidable order. But Captain Sitter knew that somewhere out there on East Hill, surrounded and fighting for survival, was Major Reginald Myers. He roused his exhausted Marines from their sleeping bags and moved out with the dawn. Somewhere around noon his force found what remained of Myer's rag-tag force and linked up with them. Then, under the direction of Myers and Sitter, the soldiers and Marines continued their assault on the enemy.



By nightfall, Sitter believed he could control enough of East Hill to keep the Chinese from mounting a successful attack on Hagaru-ri. His Marines dug in for the night, prepared to hold out against whatever the enemy threw at them. They were the last line of defense for Hagaru-ri, already stretched thin and surviving only on "grit and determination". The enemy came, not just in force, but in waves. The continuous attacks through the night quickly depleted the dug-in Marines ammunition. Sitter sent an element down the hill for more, then continued to fight through the night. Wounded repeatedly, Marine Captain Carl Sitter was determined to preserve what remained of Company G, and keep control of East Hill as well. It was an impossible task, but somehow, he got it done. Daylight found his valiant force had done the unthinkable.

It was the morning of December 1st, and Sitter would hold out for four more days before being relieved. When he finally prepared to leave Hagaru-ri, only 96 men remained to move out to safety with him.

Amazingly, Barber too, had survived a fourth straight night of attacks at Fox Hill. Davis continued to lead his rescue force through the mountains, engaging the enemy throughout the day. By nightfall he was close, but not close enough. Barber would have to hang on for one more night.

After fighting through the night, Task Force Faith was almost decimated. The battle didn't end with the dawning of daylight that first day in December. Roadblocks met the column at every turn. From the mountains on either side of the battered soldiers, Chinese Communist Forces fired indiscriminate death on Task Force Faith. It was especially dangerous for the wounded, lying unprotected in the few remaining vehicles and unable to move to cover when a new volley of lead rained in. At one roadblock Faith called for air support. Errant napalm fell on some of the American soldiers creating panic and death. As the column struggled for any sanctuary, Faith was wounded, and died that night. In full-scale panic his force disintegrated and ran into the mountains. Over the following days some stragglers managed to find their way to Hagaru-ri...in all, perhaps 500 of them. Five out of every six men in Task Force Faith was either killed or captured. Those captured were never heard from again.

Late in the afternoon on 1 December 1950, because enemy aggressors at Yudam-ni surrounded his company, they Marines were ordered to move toward Hagaru-ri. By the time they reached Hill 1520 (Hill number shows elevation in meters), three miles southeast of Yudam-ni, it was very dark and the temperature averaged a minus 40 degrees. The companies relocated a few times, and then back to a knoll between two rugged mile- high mountains where grenades, machine guns and rifle fire bombarded them. Staff Sergeant William Windrich led a rifle squad of twelve men to meet the enemy head on, armed with a M-2 carbine. Seven of his men were wounded or killed before they reached the forward.



Windrich was also wounded in the head by a bursting grenade. As blood gushed down his shoulder and back he moved his remaining men into a tight fire group. Then he ran to the company command post, drafting a small group of volunteers, and led them to evacuate the dying and wounded. Assuming command of what was left of a platoon, Windrich once more took up defensive positions. Now shot in both legs, he kept fighting, always refusing medical attention. For a long time he crawled in the snow, back and forth between his men shouting words of encouragement, deploying his forces and helping to throw back the attackers.

Only after the communist had been beaten off on the morning of December 2 did Staff Sergeant Windrich collapse and die due to the bitter cold, excessive loss of blood and severe pain. In the end two officers and eighteen enlisted men lived, to stagger down the mountain to be with the rest of the column headed toward Hagaru-ri. Windrich was not there! They could not take his body down the treacherous mountain terrain.



From a distance Lieutenant Colonel Davis could hear the sounds of battle throughout the night of December 1st and into the morning of the second. He hoped and prayed that Barber could hold out one more night, sure that if his own force could survive the constant attacks of the enemy, they would reach Barber with daylight. Somehow Barber did survive that fifth night, and shortly before noon on December 2nd he welcomed Davis and his Marines to Fox Hill. From its heights the two could look down on the MSR as 8,000 men from the 5th and 7th Marines moved from Yudam-ni to Hagaru-ri. It had been a costly effort; the mission to secure the Toktong Pass, but as those Marines struggled down the road to safety, Barber knew it had been worth it.

Despite the presence of Barber and Davis on Toktong Pass, the movement to Hagaru-ri was not easy. For the entire 14-mile mountainous route, the Marines had to fight for every inch of progress. The Chinese weren't content to see the First Marine Division leaving; they wanted to wipe them out to a man. Dressed in the uniforms of friendly forces, one CCF force attacked near a position held by Sergeant James E. Johnson of Company J, 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division. Johnson rallied his men to resist the opposing force, and then placed himself in a position to provide covering fire for his men. It was obvious that he had stationed himself in a no-man's land from which there could be no rescue. Still he fired on the enemy as the Marines withdrew, buying them precious time before his own time ran out. With his own life he purchased "tomorrow" for many Marines.



By mid-day on December 7th, that last men from Hagaru-ri arrived, nearly 25,000 frozen, starving, wounded, battle-weary Marines and their supporting elements from what was left of the Army's 7th Infantry Division. Over the following days the dangerous withdrawal continued along the 53-mile distance from Koto-ri to the port at Hungnam.

In a final, desperate attempt to crush the First Marine Division, the CCF destroyed a vital bridge over a 1500-foot gorge between Koto-ri and Chinhung-ni ten miles away. In one of the engineering marvels of modern warfare, the US Air Force dropped eight spans of M2 pre-fabricated bridge. The two-ton, bulky structures were erected and on December 9th the first soldiers crossed the bridge to safety, followed by thousands more. On December 11th the last American troops arrived in Hungnam for evacuation.

Despite their best efforts, the Chinese forces had failed to crush the indomitable First Marine Division. They came out unashamed, bringing their equipment, their wounded, and most of their dead. They would live to fight another day, and continue the gallant legacy of the United States Marine Corps. At the Chosin Reservoir, they established their own legacy...not one of retreat...but one of surviving against incredible odds through leadership, teamwork, and the highest degree of brotherhood.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

There were many acts of heroism by thousands of soldiers and Marines at the Chosin Reservoir that went unheralded simply because they were unseen or unreported. Two soldiers, nine Marines, and one Naval Aviator received Medals of Honor. Seven of them survived to wear their award. All would be quick to point out that the award they received, they wear in honor and memory of other valiant men whose heroic actions went unrecognized.

S/Sgt Robert Kennemore USMC	Cpt William E. Barber USMC	Pvt Hector Cafferata, Jr. USMC
Maj Reginald Myers USMC	Pvt William Baugh USMC	S/Sgt William Windrich USMC
Ltc Don Carlos Faith US Army	Ltc Raymond Davis USMC	Sgt James Johnson USMC
Cpt Carl L. Sitter USMC	Lt(jg) Thomas Hudner, Jr. US Navy	Ltc John Upshur Page US Army

AUTHOR'S NOTE: This story was initially prepared as a tribute to US Marines on the Marine Corps Birthday (November 10th). Missing from this chronology is the story of Army Lieutenant Colonel John Upshur Page. It would take a book of its own to detail his repeated heroism during the twelve-day period he fought and survived the action at the Frozen Chosin, actions so outstanding that the Marines demonstrated their respect for this brother from the Army by submitting him for the NAVY CROSS. LTC Page was ultimately awarded the Medal of Honor. He was one of the Frozen Chosin's many casualties.



Special Acknowledgement

Chosin Reservoir Painting: "We Band of Brothers" Courtesy of the Chosin Few, Inc.
© 1991 by Col. Charles Waterhouse, Used by Permission

Sources:

The Story of Ray Davis, by Raymond G. Davis

Korean War Heroes, by Edward F. Murphy

Above and Beyond, Boston Publishing

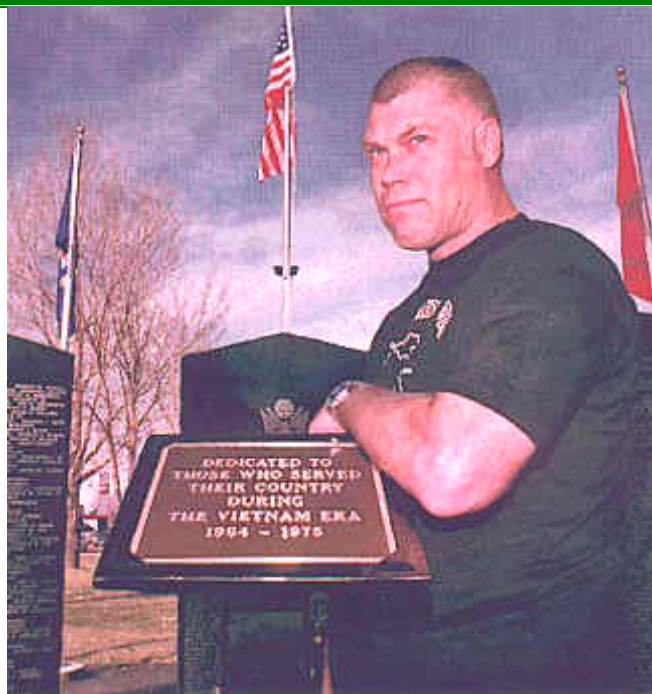
Personal Interviews and/or conversations with Medal of Honor recipients:

Carl Sitter, Thomas Hudner, Raymond G. Davis, William Barber, and Reginald Myers

PUEBLO'S FORREST GUMP

Delbert Schmeling

**The
"Kid Brother"
Who became a BIG BROTHER
To All Veterans**



Brothers are often quickly distinguishable by a common surname. Those who have defended and preserved freedom have such a name in common. We are identified as "Veterans". Within the family of America's veteran population you can find men and women who mirror all areas of family life. There are the leaders who guided us and prepared us for what was to come. These leaders can take on an almost paternal or maternal shape in our memories. We have those members of our family who stand out and make us proud, and we also have our "black sheep of the family" who may from time to time embarrass us. But we are family all the same.

When we think of the "brotherhood" that exists among veterans, it is usually the stronger, older brother that stands out. We remember our older brothers for their strength, for the way they "taught us the ropes" and the way they stood up for us when we needed an ally. Delbert Schmeling was the kind of young soldier that would have been easy to think of as a younger brother, the one that needed a big brother to look out for him. He refers to himself as his hometown's "Forrest Gump". At first there seems to be little in common between Delbert and the fictional character of the popular movie. In the movie, Forrest Gump is a hero who receives the Medal of Honor. Delbert Schmeling completed his tour of Vietnam duty having never even had to fire his M-16 rifle. Forrest Gump was a combat infantryman fighting the enemy in the field, Delbert was a "sanitation engineer" cleaning the field latrines for other soldiers.

When you begin to talk with Delbert, the similarities become more noticeable. Delbert talks with the same, slow drawl we recognized with the line, "Life is like a box of chocolates". His words reflect the same kind of simple logic. Upon meeting Delbert, many people would gain a first impression that he is handicapped. Delbert himself admits that he is a little slow mentally. Because of his struggle with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Delbert IS considered 100% disabled by the Veterans Administration. But handicapped? No way. Delbert is the "kid brother" who grew up, and never forgot his "big" brothers. Would to God there were more heroes like him. Perhaps Forrest Gump should have characterized himself as his own hometown's DELBERT SCHMELING.

“All my buddies are heroes. It ain’t right to forget them. I miss all of them.”

Delbert Schmelling

It was just prior to Veteran's Day, November 2, 1996 as my wife and I drove to the new Vietnam War memorial in our hometown of Pueblo, Colorado. This was the day the memorial was to be dedicated. And, though it was located in Pueblo, the monument itself was the Colorado State Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

It was heartwarming to see the crowd that had already gathered as I parked the car. Hundreds of Vietnam veterans were quickly identified by their uniforms, hats, or patches. It was also a "high profile" crowd including state legislators and virtually every one of our city officials. It promised to be a ceremony all of us would be proud to be a part of.

From a distance I could see the three, 8-foot granite slabs that contained the names of the 620 Colorado men and women who had died in Vietnam. Above them flew the National Colors, the flags of each branch of service, and the POW/MIA flag. It looked just like the diagram Delbert Schmeling had shown me three years earlier. That thought caused me to cringe inside, first in embarrassment, and then in shame.

Delbert had kind of looked up to me as a "big brother". I first met him when he and his parents attended a rather large, patriotic celebration I had organized that included several Medal of Honor recipients. At the conclusion of the event Delbert had walked up to tell me how impressed he was with our program. "You know," he told me, "If you can put together something THIS BIG, maybe you can help me with a project I am working on." I courteously invited him to call to make an appointment to discuss his project. "I will," he replied. And he did, the very next week.

As I set coffee for the two of us on the desk in my office, Delbert began withdrawing pages of plans, designs, and a list of names. He explained that it represented a dream for a local memorial to honor his brothers and sisters from Colorado who had died in Vietnam. I appreciated the concept, but couldn't bring myself to believe in its viability. The project had been started by the local chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA), which disbanded shortly thereafter. By "default" Delbert became president of the non-existent chapter and the sole hope for the future of the project. I thought to myself, "If a whole chapter of Vietnam Vets couldn't get this done, there is no way Delbert will ever pull it off." Of course I didn't SAY that out loud, I went out of my way to be patronizing...the big brother offering encouragement while knowing "the kid" was dreaming "pie in the sky".

I felt a strong sense of compassion for Delbert as we talked. His appearance, the difficulty he had with speech, and other mannerisms initially give one an impression that he may have been severely wounded in Vietnam. That afternoon Delbert opened up to me and began to share a little about himself.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

There are those that would argue that Delbert should never have been in the military in the first place, much less Vietnam. His learning difficulties as a child left him far behind his classmates. He graduated from high school two years behind other young people his age. But Delbert had hung in there, never given up....and ultimately, graduated. He hadn't realized when he turned 18 that he was required to register for the Selective Service. He was shaken when someone told him that he could go to jail for not registering. Delbert, ever mindful to do the right thing, registered immediately.



Upon finishing high school in 1967 Delbert felt the right thing to do was to serve his country. He volunteered to join the Navy, but they weren't interested in Delbert Schmeling. By November, however, the Army had enlisted Delbert and sent him to training. Ten months later he arrived in Vietnam. "I would have been there sooner," Delbert says, "but I had to go through basic training three times."

Delbert never saw combat in the field, but Vietnam had its way of working into your consciousness wherever you might be. For 365 days Delbert literally slept with his M-16 rifle, prepared for whatever may come. He tasted death, watched friends die in an explosion and fire on the base camp. On his last night "in country" the enemy reached out one more time. That night Delbert huddled in a bunker with other soldiers as a major rocket attack was launched against his position. Throughout the night he never knew from one minute to the next if he would be walking onto the "Freedom Bird" home the next day, or if others would carry his body to the belly of a cargo plane for the return home. Men died around him that night. "They wouldn't tell me who died," he says. "Maybe I didn't really want to know."

Delbert came home to try and put his life back together. But Vietnam would invade his dreams. Many nights he would awaken screaming, his body shaking and covered with sweat. For 14 years he worked at menial tasks on the housekeeping staff at the Colorado State Hospital. But the inner demons plagued him time and again until Delbert finally broke down. After six months in a VA hospital, Delbert was diagnosed with PTSD and determined to be 40% disabled. Two years later the VA re-evaluated him and granted 100% disability. Back home with his parents, Delbert struggled to survive the bad days, and find a sense of purpose in his few good days. He found some comfort and understanding among fellow Vietnam Vets in the local VVA before the group disbanded. When they were gone, Delbert determined to follow through with the dream of building a memorial to all his Colorado brothers and sisters who had died in Vietnam.



The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

When Delbert left my office that day back in 1993 my mind was flooded with a mix of emotion. I couldn't help but admire the courage and determination in my "kid brother". Part of me wanted to reach out and help, do what I could do to help Delbert make the dream come true. The "rational" side of me was more inclined to spend my time on "more attainable" goals. In the years that followed Delbert would call or visit me from time to time, but sadly, I never took the time to pay attention to how much he was doing. I'd pat him on the back, give him a few words of encouragement, and then send him off to accomplish his mission....alone.

And that is exactly what Delbert had done. The kid who had so much trouble forming speech in normal conversation, had stood alone before City Council and city leaders to promote his project. He sat in front of local grocery stores for three years with a small glass jar to collect nickels, dimes, and quarters to make the dream happen. He collected aluminum cans, visited businesses, and solicited help wherever he could. He translated his list of names to an identifiable format for creation of the three granite slabs after obtaining a commitment from a local company to donate their time inscribing those names. He paced off an area allocated by City Council for a memorial site, dug up snow covered dirt, and staked off areas for concrete masons and contractors. His drive, his dedication, and his determination to remember his comrades struck a nerve at City Hall. City Manager Lew Quigley became a "second-father", coaching and helping where he could. Council members could not help being moved by his commitment to the project. And now, just a week before Veteran's day, the fruit of his labors became a source of pride for our whole city.



The Colorado State Vietnam Veterans Memorial
Pueblo, Colorado

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

The dedication of the memorial that day was moving and emotional. Elderly mothers gently ran their fingers across the engraved names of Colorado sons and daughters who had answered their Country's call and paid the supreme sacrifice. Others left flowers, mementos, and tears at the base of the three granite panels. Medal of Honor recipient Peter Lemon presented the keynote address, stopping from time to time to wipe tears from his eyes and clear his throat. Colorado State VVA president Carl Rust summed up the meaning of the event. In conclusion he pointed to the dedication of the solitary figure that had made it happen. "We all thank you, Delbert, for a job well done. You are relieved of your duty." It summed up how we all felt about Delbert, a good soldier who had done what none of us had thought possible. Delbert accepted the accolades with modest humility, giving credit to others, when we all knew full well that HE was the reason it had come to pass. Delbert Schmeling had become, in his own simple way, a hero to all of us.

By the time the ceremony had ended my feelings of shame at not having been a better "big brother" to Delbert had been replaced by an immense sense of gratitude and pride in what he had accomplished. I couldn't wait to go up and give him a big, brotherly hug and tell him how proud I was of him. And then, as his head rested on my shoulders I felt him begin to shake and realized he was crying. "What's wrong, Delbert?" I asked.

"They're taking away my pension," he replied.

"WHAT!"

Yes...the Veterans Administration had also been impressed with what Delbert had accomplished. They had re-evaluated his condition and the previous week he had received a letter informing him that his pension would be cut by more than \$900 per month. Their reasoning? Any person who could spend three years raising the funds, coordinating the work, organizing the details, and accomplishing a feat as wonderful as the new Colorado State Vietnam Veterans Memorial COULDN'T POSSIBLY be disabled. They cited another evidence of his "improved condition". In 1994 Delbert didn't know who the President of the United States was. Now, when asked, he could identify the President as "Slick Willie".



Despite the blow, Delbert made it plain that he didn't regret what he had done. He was quick to point out that even if it meant the loss of his pension, he would do it all over again so that others would not forget the sacrifice of his friends in Vietnam. Delbert had filled a void in our veterans' community, now HE needed a big brother more than ever before. And we came, in FORCE!

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell, himself a veteran, sent a letter to the director of the US Department of Veterans Affairs pointing out that Delbert's pension was being cut "because he raised money for a Vietnam memorial in Pueblo." The local media, which had gained a wonderful sense of respect for Delbert, was quick to point out the irony of this Vietnam veteran coming under fire, not by a foreign enemy, but by his own country. Mr. Lemon began to make calls and

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

write letters. We all rallied around the cause of our younger brother, our hero...Delbert Schmeling. In the end, we prevailed. It was the RIGHT THING TO DO!

Delbert's commitment to his brothers and sisters in arms has been a lesson to all of us. Over the last three years there has seldom been a day he has not visited the memorial. He tends the landscape, polishes the stone, and regularly provides fresh flowers from his mother's garden. He is a daily volunteer at the local VA clinic, and frequently drives the four hour round trip to take less fortunate veterans to the nearest VA hospital in Fort Lyons. The man who I always thought of as a "kid brother" is proving to be the biggest of us all. We need him far more than he needs us. I hope and pray that I can be half the man he is today.

Recently while visiting with Delbert in putting this story together he looked at me and said, "Doug, maybe you can help me with a project I am working on."

I smiled inwardly and thought to myself, "Where have I heard those words before."

"You know," Delbert said, "There is lots of space near the Vietnam memorial, and we need to do something to remember our Korean War Veterans....."

Special Thanks to *The Pueblo Chieftain* for the photo at the beginning of this story, as well as for permission to use some of Delbert's quotes from local articles on his project.

Like A Bridge over Troubled Waters....



R i c h a r d N o t t A n t r i m

**Executive Officer
*U.S.S. Pope (DD-225)***

Brotherhood is more than biological, it is fraternal. It develops quickly among men in uniform, both in peacetime and during time of war, simply by virtue of the call to duty they share in common. There is a sense of family among men in uniform, a common bond to look out for each other. But how far will one brother go on behalf of another? The horrors of war often test the limits of that brotherhood.

Richard Nott Antrim became a part of a very special brotherhood when he graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1931. Naval officers have always shared a kindred spirit. To the men who served under him in the years that followed, Antrim was a capable leader. As executive officer of the *U.S.S. Pope* when World War II began, he was a man of rank who inspired confidence. On March 1, 1942 disaster struck the men of the *U.S.S. Pope*. For the next three years the survivors would need more than a leader, they would need a "big brother". No one could have imagined how big would be the shoulders of Richard Nott Antrim, the stronger, older brother they would all need to see them through a crucible of unimaginable horrors.

Among the myriad of tales of courage and heroism that fill the annals of Medal of Honor history, the story of Richard Nott Antrim has always been one of the most inspiring to me. It was a story, however, that could not rightly be told for many years. When Rear Admiral Antrim retired from the Navy in April, 1954 he settled with his family in the quiet community of Mountain Home, Arkansas to run a small tour boat. In the community everyone knew him as "Dick", and that is how he wanted it. Tom Dearmore was editor of the local newspaper and one of Dick's friends. One day when Tom asked Dick about his Medal of Honor action the kindly man whose only concerns were for the welfare of his community pointed his finger at Tom and said, "I don't want it published--I don't want to ever read anything about it in your newspaper." Thirty years after Dick Antrim's death, Tom finally wrote the story saying, "He (Antrim) has been dead 30 years now and will not reproach me."

In preparing this story for our Brotherhood series, I first sought the approval of Rear Admiral Antrim's family. I am especially indebted to Judy Antrim Layton for her assistance in putting together this glimpse into history that needs to be told and retold, not to glorify the heroism of the humble hero who graced our world, but so that his example can inspire others to put the needs of others before themselves. Ms. Layton wrote:

"My father was a very modest man and probably wouldn't have contributed the information about his heroism, but I feel this generation who has not really experienced war needs to know about the people who came before them and what they did to preserve our freedom."



Richard Nott Antrim was born in Peru, Indiana where he lived his early life with his mother Mary who was a local schoolteacher. Young Dick Antrim attended Peru public schools and found a good balance between education and athletics. Two years before his high school graduation in 1926 he was part of the squad that won the Wabash Valley Football Conference championship. From there he received an appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis where he played varsity football for three years, graduating on June 4, 1931.

Two years later Dick and his young wife Mary Jean welcomed daughter Judy to the family. A second daughter, Nancy, was born two years later. In May, 1937 the family was living at the Lakehurst Naval Station in New Jersey when the Hindenberg began its approach. Dick Antrim was on the mast to anchor the dirigible when tragedy struck. Standing on the porch of the Antrim home, Jean and 4-year old Judy watched in horror as fire rained down around the Naval officers stationed below. It was a moment of horror that tried the soul of the Antrim family. "Two things went through my mind." Jean later wrote. "If Dick is all right he won't want me running around, he'll want me at home. The other, if any thing has happened I must be here to receive word, so I stuck my ground." Dick survived, but the strength of character that Jean Antrim exhibited that day would receive its greatest trial in the years that lay ahead.

In December 1939 Naval Lieutenant Richard Nott Antrim was assigned to the *USS Pope* (DD-225), an aging but important part of the Asiatic fleet. Mary Jean and daughters Judy and Nancy had returned home to Peru, Indiana while Dick was serving at sea. When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the 7 and 9 year old girls knew it would be a long time before they saw "daddy" again. They didn't realize however, just how LONG it would be.



In the first 80 days after Pearl Harbor, the *Pope* served well in two major engagements, the Battle of Makassar Strait and the Battle of Badoeng Strait. The cool, effective leadership of the Pope's executive officer led Commander Welford C. Blinn, the ship's commanding officer, to recommend Richard Antrim for "a decoration deemed appropriate ... for the meritorious performance of his several duties before and throughout the action." Though eventually that recommendation resulted in the award of the Navy Cross to Lieutenant Antrim, before it could be awarded, his courage was tried even more severely than it had been during those long hours of Naval Combat. It would be one of many recognitions eventually conferred on the humble hero from Peru.

During three and a half years of captivity as a prisoner of war, Lieutenant Antrim would prove to be not only courageous, but also ingenious. The citation for his subsequent Bronze Star award speaks for itself:



"For meritorious conduct while a Japanese Prisoner-of-War. He was forced to take charge of a labor party and assigned the task of constructing slit trenches for bomb protection. Through self-effacing courage and sheer audacity of purpose, he caused to be constructed under the very eyes and alert surveillance of Japanese guards, a huge sign "U.S." This was done by rearranging the construction work of the slit trenches from the Japanese approved plan to one of his own devising, after causing the Japanese to concur in the changes suggested. The sign, if recognized by the Japanese, would have resulted in Antrim's immediate beheading, but Antrim's well-thought plan would result in Allied photographs indicating the occupants of the trenches and thus save hundreds of prisoners' lives."

The actions of Lieutenant Antrim that resulted in these two awards are admirable, but they are not unlike such similarly heroic actions of many other American soldiers, sailors and Marines. But one fateful day in April, 1942 Richard Nott Antrim did something unbelievable. It was a deed that went beyond VALOR. It was a deed of rare NOBILITY so profound that, as returning prisoners of war circulated the story, it captured the imagination and spoke volumes about selfless service and sacrifice. The award of the Medal of Honor by President Harry S Truman on January 30, 1947 recognized the deed for its valor. As was his custom at these presentations the President told the Naval hero, "I would rather have this medal than be President." Then the President did something unusual, recognizing Antrim's incredible actions for their nobility with an addendum.....

"You did a mighty fine thing!"

One hundred and fifty anxious faces looked back at the *USS Pope*, slowly sinking into a watery grave. The ship "that was old enough to vote", an old four-stack destroyer, had served well during its short combat career. The Battle of the Java Sea was its third major engagement. It was only three months after Pearl Harbor and the Japanese ruled the seas. A massive force of enemy cruisers and destroyers sought to encircle Java, a small island of the Malay Archipelago. As darkness fell on the eve of February 28, 1942 three ships slipped out of Surabaya in a desperate attempt to escape the snare the enemy was creating. Two of the ships were British, the heavy cruiser *HMS Exeter* and the destroyer *HMS Encounter*. The third was the *USS Pope*. Through the night they had quietly tried to elude the enemy, but with daylight they were spotted by enemy aircraft and quickly engaged by nearby enemy cruisers and destroyers. All three ships fought valiantly, but in vain. The *Exeter* and *Encounter* quickly sank and the badly damaged *Pope* was spared the same fate only by being hidden in a passing rainsquall. The reprieve was only temporary. Damaged by enemy shells and bombs from Japanese carrier-launched aircraft, the *Pope* had slowly begun to sink.

As the sun set across the ocean, it would have been a night for panic and terror, were it not for the courage of the *Pope's* Executive Officer, Lieutenant Richard Nott Antrim. As the ship began its slow descent to the ocean floor, he had organized life rafts and a single whaleboat to bear the 151 man crew to safety. Despite wounds from the earlier engagement, he struggled through the pain to lead and encourage his men. With great foresight he had attempted to insure provisions for an ordeal at sea, then distributed the meager rations among the men. All but one of the *Pope's* crew survived the sinking, a tribute to Antrim's cool, effective leadership. But for them all, the greatest ordeal lay ahead.

For three days the sailors remained together in a tight group, enduring the heat of the tropical sun, a merciless ocean, and a shortage of food and water. Richard Antrim's calm voice, effective leadership, and valiant example held them together. Then, on March 5th they were plucked from the sea....by a Japanese war ship. They became prisoners of war, taken to Makassar in the Celebes, one of the larger islands that was firmly under the control of the Japanese army. It was there that not only allegiances, but also customs, collided.

"BUSHIDO" is a Japanese word meaning "the way of the warrior". It is an ancient code with roots in feudal Japan, a code that demands endurance, courage, and other warrior-like traits. It also demands that any warrior who forfeited his honor in any way, should take his own life rather than live in dishonor. To the Japanese soldiers of World War II, a prisoner was a warrior who had forfeited his honor and should have taken his own life. For this reason their hatred of Americans as enemies at war, turned to absolute disdain towards prisoners of war. Bushido justified, for the Japanese captor, sub-human treatment of prisoners--men the Japanese considered to be cowards and unworthy of respect. Torture was common, arbitrary, and deadly. Such was the fate that awaited the crew of the *Pope* when they joined more than 2,500 other prisoners at the POW camp at Makassar.

For weeks the prisoners had lived in fear, watched fellow prisoners broken and abused by sadistic guards who viewed their lives as something lower than the most basic animal life forms.

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Cries of pain and anguish filled the long nights, and the sights of death were quickly seen with the dawn of each heart-rending day. Hope quickly vanished as prisoners did their best to avoid eye contact with the enemy and struggled to obey each order to the ultimate degree. They had seen time and again how quickly, how cruelly, and how deadly, the slightest infraction could be.

Time lost meaning--all that the prisoners could do was hope to survive each night, then pray for the end of each day. Tension mounted on both sides, and the situation was extremely volatile. It could erupt into mass murder at any moment, for the slightest, or even for no, reason at all. It was in this climate that the 2,700 prisoners watched in pained agony as a young Naval lieutenant failed to bow too low to a Japanese guard one horrible day in April. As was expected, and all too common, the reaction was swift and violent.

The Japanese guard flew into a rage, venting all of his anger in a swift series of abusing blows from his swagger stick. It was an insane, violent flurry of blows that broke the skin and crushed the body of the lieutenant. Those Japanese guards who witnessed it felt no compassion, content to believe the battered lieutenant was receiving all he deserved and perhaps not enough. The frightened prisoners could do nothing but look on helplessly, knowing that the slightest movement might draw attention to them and result in a similar or worse fate. But Lieutenant Richard Nott Antrim had had enough. His heart breaking for the lieutenant he stepped forward, calling attention to himself to plead for mercy. It was an act that could have been perceived as insane as the wrath the guard vented on his victim, a hopeless gesture that could only result in two deaths instead of one. But it was an act the Naval lieutenant believed had to be done, regardless of the cost.

With the broken body of the lieutenant lying at their feet, Richard Nott Antrim faced the enraged guard to plead the case of his brother. Struggling with broken English and gestures, he tried to convince the guard that enough had been done, that the offending lieutenant had meant no insult. Antrim's sincere effort drew the attention of the entire force of enemy guards. Fellow prisoners looked on in amazement and fear, certain bad was about to turn worse. It also attracted the attention of the Japanese commander. Antrim continued to appeal the lieutenant's case, begging for mercy. In the center of the prison compound with trigger-happy guards on one side and the abused and demoralized prison population on the other, a "kangaroo court" was held. There would be no mercy. Antrim was ordered to step back while the nearly unconscious lieutenant received his "just sentence".... Fifty lashes with a thick, raw hawser.

The helpless lieutenant was already near death from his earlier beating as the first lash of the hawser landed across his body, only to be followed by another, and another, and another. Large welts broke open to spill his blood on the ground and, like a swarm of hungry sharks, the frenzy of the guard administering the punishment created a bloodlust. Fifteen lashes had left the man unconscious, unable to move or flinch from the repeated beating. Three more guards rushed into the scene, brutally kicking at the prostrate form. Further lashes would fall upon a body that could feel no more pain unless something happened.

I t d i d !

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

"E n o u g h !" Spoke the voice of Lieutenant Richard Nott Antrim as a stunned silence fell over the camp at his unprecedented action.

"I 'll t a k e t h e r e s t !" Lieutenant Antrim added.

Prisoners could only stare in incredulity. The Japanese too, were stunned. They had never expected to see such an act of unselfish, personal sacrifice by any of the prisoners they despised as sub-human. So stunning was the proclamation, no one on either side of the camp could believe what their ears had heard. Lieutenant Antrim had to repeat his offer.

"I f t h e r e i s t o b e 5 0 l a s h e s , I w i l l t a k e t h e r e s t o f t h e m f o r h i m ."

This time his stunning pronouncement sunk in. From the ranks of the battered, broken prisoners there erupted a roar of acclaim. Among the Japanese guards there was nothing but silence, amazement, and a slow dawning of what had just occurred before their eyes. It was a defining moment, one of those rare experiences that are so magnificent and powerful, none can deny it. The punishment ended, and a young Naval officer's broken body was gently restored, because Richard Nott Antrim cared enough to show the highest degree of brotherhood... unconditional love.

In the years that followed, torture and abuse continued. But the actions of Lieutenant Antrim that day in April gave the Japanese guards a new appreciation for their prisoners and the torture and beatings lessened for a time. For the hopeless men who struggled to find reason to continue, to survive in the living hell to which they had been cast, there was a new inspiration.

On January 17, 1943 station J.L.G.4, Tokyo broadcast a message, read by a Japanese announcer and written by Richard Nott Antrim. It read:

"Dear Mother: The Japanese have given me permission to send a message and I am sending you my love. I am treated fine and in good health. I want you to write in care of the War Prisoners' Information Bureau in Tokyo, through the International Red Cross at Geneva, Switzerland. Love Dick."

Two and a half more years remained before he would see his family again. When he was liberated in September, 1945 he returned home to continue his service in the United States Navy. He never sought recognition, only to serve others. His valor on that momentous day in April, 1942 became known only because it was an act other returning POWs couldn't help telling and retelling. On January 30, 1947 President Truman invited Commander Antrim to the White House to award him the Medal of Honor with that simple under-statement,

"Y o u d i d a m i g h t y f i n e t h i n g ."

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

On a chilly April day in 1969, the sound of "Taps" echoed across the hillsides where warriors rest in Arlington National Cemetery. Beneath a flag draped casket rested the body of a hero far too few people ever met. Most of his neighbors back home in Arkansas saw Dick Antrim in uniform for the first time as the newspapers announced the death of a humble, quiet man whose first concern had always been for other people.

On September 26, 1981 Mary Jean Antrim flew to Seattle for the Commissioning of the Guided Missile Frigate Antrim, named for her late husband. It was a ship destined to remind us all of a noble hero who had passed through our midst. The crest of the ship tells a story that, due the wishes of a humble hero, hadn't been heard enough.



The wreath is for outstanding gallantry and achievement in which the palm denotes victory, and the laurel, honor. The torch symbolizing leadership and bravery is contained behind the portullis representing the period of imprisonment as a prisoner of war.

On the shield, the dark blue and gold are traditionally associated with the Navy and represent the sea and excellence. The light blue and downward pointing star refer to the Medal of Honor awarded to Rear Admiral Antrim for heroic actions while in a Japanese POW camp at Makassar, Celebes and Java.

The anchor symbolizes his naval career and represents his dedication to service. The crosslets are a personal device from the Antrim family crest. The cross throughout the shield is an allusion to the Navy Cross awarded Admiral Antrim for action in the battle of Java Sea in the Dutch East Indies. Beneath the shield is the ship's motto "IN DEFENSE OF FREEDOM", which provides a reference to both Admiral Antrim's life of dedication and the mission of the ship, which bears his name.

Among those attending the commissioning ceremony was Tom Dearmore, now an editorial director of the *San Francisco Examiner*. Tom reported that the day started with the dark clouds so common to the Puget Sound. And then, "just at the right moment a shaft of sunshine breaks through." Perhaps it was symbolic in its own way, a humble man's way of saying, "Okay, my story can now be shared."

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A very special "Thank you" to Dick Antrim's daughter JUDY ANTRIM LAYLON for sharing her father's story with us and assisting in the preparation of this story. She has done so, not only out of a deep love and sense of respect for her father, but also out of a strong patriotic love for America.

SOURCES:

Judy Antrim Laylon

"*The Peru Republican*" Peru, Indiana

"*The Baxter Bulletin*" (and specifically articles by Tom Dearmore)

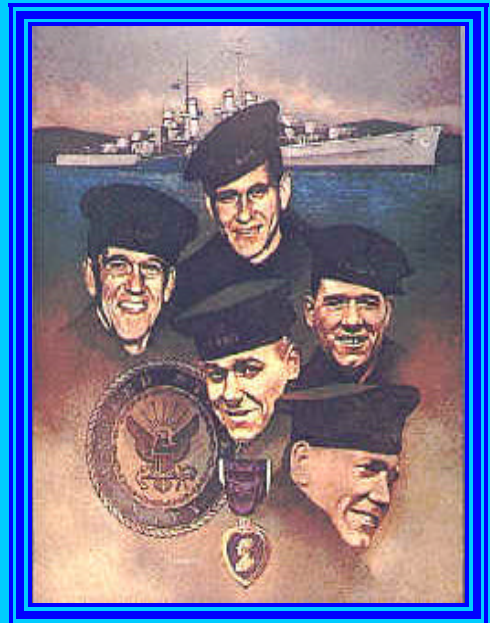
Heroes of World War II, by Edward F. Murphy

The U.S. Naval Historical Center

We Stick Together

The Sullivan Brothers

George, Frank, Red, Matt & Al



Des Moines "Register", January 4, 1942

Five husky Waterloo brothers who lost a "pal" at Pearl Harbor were accepted as Navy recruits yesterday at Des Moines. All passed their physical exams "with flying colors" and left by train last night for the Great Lakes (Ill.) naval training station.

"You see," explained George Sullivan, "a buddy of ours was killed in the Pearl Harbor attack, Bill Ball of Fredericksburg, Iowa."

"That's where we want to go now, to Pearl Harbor," put in Francis, and the others nodded.

"Which one?" Thomas Sullivan asked. It was early on the morning of January 11, 1943 and Tom was the only one moving about the kitchen of the house at 98 Adams Street in Waterloo, Iowa. He had awakened that morning to prepare for work and, while fixing breakfast, noticed the black sedan arrive. The three men in Naval uniforms had been welcomed inside. The Sullivan patriarch knew before they spoke that they were bringing news of his sons. He also knew the news wouldn't be happy news.

Lieutenant Commander Truman Jones swallowed hard. It was the saddest, most disagreeable task of his Navy career. "I'm sorry. All five." he said matter of factly. There was no other way to break this kind of news.

As the rest of the family gathered in the living room, mother Alleta, sister Genevieve, and Katherine Mary, wife of the youngest of the five Sullivan brothers; it was a moment filled with sorrow and grief. Commander Jones steeled himself to finish his unenviable task.

"The Navy Department deeply regrets to inform you that your sons Albert, Francis, George, Joseph and Madison Sullivan are missing in action in the South Pacific."

The news wasn't completely unexpected. Over the last month there had been hints of something amiss. The lack of mail from boys accustomed to writing home regularly, the neighbor a week earlier who had received a letter from her own sailor son stating "Isn't it too bad about the Sullivan boys? I heard that their ship was sunk.", and perhaps even the sense of a mother's intuition had left the family with reason for concern.

Within the hour the Naval officers were gone. Thomas Sullivan began to deal with the impact of the statement that morning while going about his tasks aboard a trainload of war supplies headed east. It had been a difficult decision, leaving for work, but Tom Sullivan had seldom missed a single day of the important freight runs. If Tom's trains didn't run on time, important war supplies might be delayed, and other American boys might die. "Shall I go?" he had asked his wife that morning.

"It's all right, Tom," Alleta had replied. "It's the right thing to do. The boys would want you to...There isn't anything you can do at home."

The big house at 98 Adams Street seemed suddenly very empty. Only the women and 22-month old Jimmy Sullivan, son of the youngest Sullivan brother Albert, remained. The Sullivan women pulled together as the family always had. "Commander Jones only said 'missing in action'," Alleta struggled through her own doubts to reassure her daughters. It was a shallow hope, but it was a hope just the same. If only one survived then perhaps there would be hope for a second, a third....who knew for sure. One thing was certain, if hope existed for even one, hope existed for all. The Sullivan Brothers had been close, looking out for each other, enlisting together, and living by the family motto they had echoed to a Naval recruiter only a year earlier:

“We Stick Together”

Friday, November 13, 1942

Off the shores of Guadalcanal

The yellow-black smoke of battle had cleared from the skies as the sun set in the South Pacific on that fateful day in November. The deep swells of the ocean, however, still bore the scars of the previous night's battle and the early morning of death and disaster. A thick, black layer of oil moved with the currents, and in the midst of the oil floated the debris of an American light cruiser, the last remnants of the *U.S.S. Juneau*. Desperate sailors clung to the debris, most of them wounded, all of them frightened. They were all that remained of the *Juneau's* crew of 698 American boys. It was impossible to count the survivors, probably somewhere between 90 and 140, but such a count would have been worthless anyway. Wounds, injuries, and the unforgiving sea diminished their numbers with each passing hour.

The heat of the tropical sun gave way to a bone chilling night, pierced by the moans and cries of men suffering unimaginable horrors. The cries and moans added an eerie atmosphere to a scene already beyond human comprehension. The sounds would haunt the dreams of survivors for the rest of their lives, assuming that any of the men should survive. And then, across the waters, could be heard another desperate voice crying hopelessly into the darkness: "Frank?" "Red?" "Matt?" "Al?" It was the voice of George Sullivan, the oldest of five brothers who served on the *Juneau*.

George had survived and now sought desperately for his younger brothers.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

Born and raised in Waterloo, Iowa; the five Sullivan brothers had always stuck together. From George, the oldest, to Al, the youngest; there was only a 7-year age difference. They had lived together at the plain but large house at 98 Adams Street, along with one sister Genevieve, and their parents Thomas and Alleta and grandma Mae Abel. The longest period of time the boys had ever been separated had been the four years prior to World War II when George and Francis Henry, second oldest of the quintet and usually called "Frank", had served in the Navy. Even then, the two brothers had served most of their hitch together, on the same ships.

George Sullivan was discharged after fulfilling his four-year commitment on May 16, 1941. Eleven days later Frank received his own discharge and both boys returned to the family home. Six months later they listened intently to reports of the attack at Pearl Harbor. Former shipmates and friends still on active duty and serving in the Hawaiian port, not to mention two brothers from nearby Fredericksburg, were under fire and both Sullivan boys felt both a sense of helplessness and anger. They determined that night to return to service. This time Joseph Eugene whom they all called "Red", Madison Abel "Matt", and even Albert Leo "Al", insisted on joining them. Their resolve was further strengthened when, just prior to Christmas, they learned the fate of the Fredericksburg brothers, Bill and Masten Ball. Masten had survived the day of infamy, but Bill, who had frequented the Sullivan house and perhaps even "been sweet" on sister Genevieve, had gone to a watery grave aboard the *U.S.S. Arizona*.

The five brothers who had always done everything together, walked into the local Navy recruiting station together. Though Al, just nineteen years old and married less than two years would have qualified for a deferment from combat service, he insisted on being with his brothers. He would leave behind not only a young wife, but also little Jimmy Sullivan, his ten-month-old son. The Navy was desperate for men in the early days after the destruction at Pearl Harbor, and quickly welcomed the Sullivan brothers. Until the determined young men threw a new "wrinkle" into their enlistment plans. George had echoed the sentiment the night of December 7th when the five young men had made their decision. "Well, I guess our minds are made up...when we go in, we want to go in together. If the worst comes to worst, why we'll all have gone down together."

Now, as they stood in the recruiting office, they demanded that the Navy assure them that they would be allowed to serve together...on the same ship. When they couldn't get the guarantee that day, they took their demands all the way to Washington, DC. In a letter to the Navy Department they explained their desire to defend their Country, but insisted that if the Navy wanted the Sullivan brothers, it would have to be a package deal. "WE STICK TOGETHER!" Finally, the Navy agreed. The transcripts of all five Sullivan brothers reveal that each was "Enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserve on 3 January, 1942" and together they were "Transferred to the Naval Training Station, Great Lakes, Illinois." Exactly one month later the individual orders for each of the five sailors read, "Transferred to the receiving ship, New York, for duty in the *USS Juneau* detail and on board when commissioned."

Eleven days later, on February 14, 1942, the *USS Juneau* was commissioned. The five Sullivan brothers became instant celebrities when photographers captured the photo at the top of the next page, a photograph that symbolized not only the sense of brotherhood among those who volunteered to defend our Nation, but the commitment of an entire family from the heartland of America. George, Frank, Red, Matt and Al enjoyed the spotlight that day. They also shared the spotlight with four other brothers, Joseph, James, Louis and Patrick Rogers. In time, a total of 9 sets of brothers would serve on the *USS Juneau*. But no family in America could match the record of the five Sullivans.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War



Late in May, George, Matt and Al came home one last time. It gave Al the opportunity to say farewell to his young wife, Katherine Mary. For her it must have been a time of mixed emotions. She had lost her mother at the age of seven. Now she was losing her husband, if even for a brief few years...possibly forever.

In order to survive on Al's small Naval salary she had moved in with Tom and Alleta. She could have kept her husband out of harms way, used his role as husband and father to defer him from combat. But she knew the Sullivan brothers well, loved Al enough, not to come between the brothers.

"Don't worry," perhaps he reminded her,

"WE STICK TOGETHER!"

A sixth Sullivan joined the Navy that day, though he was only 15-months old. Little Jimmy donned his uniform cap to pose with his father and uncle Matt for local media. Then it was time for a final farewell. On June 1st the *USS Juneau* sailed out of New York and into history, carrying nearly 700 sailors including:

Joseph, James, Louis, and Patrick ROGERS
(James & Joseph Later transferred to another ship)

William and Harold WEEKS

Russell and Charles COMBS

Albert and Michael KRALL

George and John WALLACE

Curtis and Donald DAMON

Richard and Russell WHITE

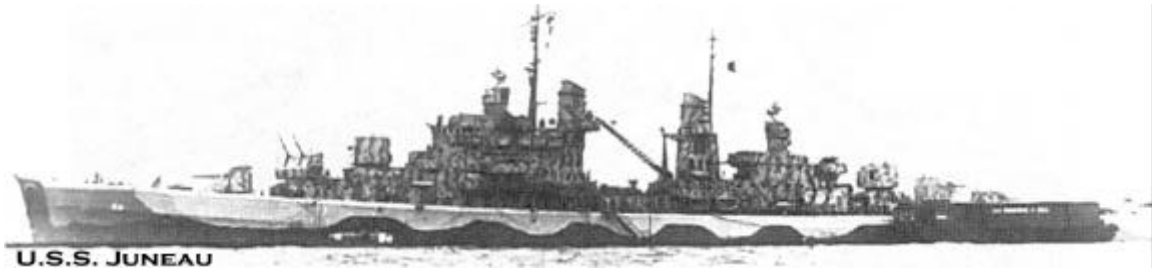
Harold and Charles CAULK

&

THE FIVE SULLIVAN BROTHERS



Albert Sullivan with 15-month old Jimmy, Thomas and Alberta, and brother Matt.



Thursday, November 12, 1942

The war in the Pacific was not going well. Despite the "moral victory" of Jimmy Doolittle's bombing raid on Tokyo in April and the victory at Midway in June, the Japanese seemed almost invincible. The Philippine Islands had fallen, and the one thread of hope rested with the battle-weary Marines who clung tenuously to a small Pacific Island called Guadalcanal. Though the Marines controlled most of the island, the Japanese still ruled the surrounding seas and rained nightly death from their heavy guns on warriors who had suffered too much for too long. On this night a Japanese fleet of twenty ships formed in two columns began a run through the narrow passage called "the slot", from which they could bombard the Marines on Guadalcanal.

Rear Admiral Daniel Callaghan sailed out to meet them on his flagship cruiser *USS San Francisco*. His outnumbered, out gunned force consisted of two heavy cruisers, three light cruisers, and eight destroyers. Shortly before 2 A.M. on Friday the 13th the two forces met. Rear Admiral Callaghan did the unthinkable, forging his way up the middle of the two enemy columns, his ships firing in both directions. The half-hour battle was unlike any in Naval history, close quarters with friend and foe nearly ramming each other in the darkness, the skies exploding in brilliant flashes that could be seen by war-weary Marines in their muddy foxholes on Guadalcanal. Then, as silence fell once again upon the South Pacific, the Americans assessed the damage. The *USS San Francisco* was badly damaged, Admiral Callaghan killed in action. Below deck Captain Cassin Young, one of only five living Medal of Honor recipients from the Pearl Harbor attack, was also wounded and later died. Four of the eight destroyers had fallen to the enemy guns, a fifth left limping towards safety. Of the five cruisers, four were badly damaged, among them the *USS Juneau*.

As daylight dawned the *Juneau* joined the floundering *San Francisco*, the cruiser *Helena*, and destroyers *Sterett*, *Fletcher*, and *O'Bannon*. Save for the damaged *Portland* and the destroyer *Aaron Ward* which was being towed to refuge, they were the only survivors of the battle.

Aboard the *Juneau* the wounded were being tended, George Sullivan among them. Below deck a torpedo hit had killed as many as twenty sailors and badly crippled the cruiser. Daylight revealed the *Juneau* sitting about 4 feet lower in the water and Captain Swenson was concerned that the keel might have broken. Three pharmacists' mates were exchanged to the more badly damaged *San Francisco* to tend the wounded. George Sullivan, his injury treated, returned to

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

duty near the depth charge racks. Below deck his brothers went about their jobs, Al and Matt in the loading room and Frank and Red in damage control parties. Death, fear, and the smell of leaking fuel filled the broken body of the *Juneau*.

Anxious eyes watched the skies for enemy planes. But the real threat lay below the surface, where Commander Minoru Yokota of the Japanese submarine I-26 scanned the *San Francisco* through his periscope. The heavy cruiser was a prime target, an easy kill. At 11 A.M. on that Friday morning he issued the command to launch two torpedoes. Alert lookouts aboard the *San Francisco* noticed the wake of the underwater warheads and the *San Francisco* began a turn. Both barely missed the cruiser and continued on. The first ran out of steam, broke water, and then sank to the bottom of the ocean. The second continued its course, on a direct line with the *Juneau*. Less than a minute later it struck the Sullivan Brother's ship and exploded. The *Juneau* didn't sink....

I t V a p o r i z e d !

George Sullivan slowly began to realize where he was, what had happened. The *Juneau* no longer rode the swells of the South Pacific, only the debris of that once proud Naval cruiser. So intense had been the explosion that ripped apart the *Juneau*, witnesses to the disaster aboard the *San Francisco* were certain there had been no survivors. Crippled beyond defense, aware of the danger from the submarine that had destroyed *Juneau*, and convinced there were no living sailors to rescue, the battered convoy faded on the horizon in search of safety.

Amazingly, there had been survivors, perhaps more than one hundred out of the 700-man crew. The violence of the explosion that had severed a 5-inch gun turret and hurled it more than half a mile, had catapulted the bodies of the sailors on deck through the air and into the ocean. Slowly they bobbed to the surface, breaking through a black layer of oil several inches thick to grab floating nets and other debris to cling too. Almost all were severely wounded. Broken limbs with bones protruding, deep lacerations, and deadly internal injuries abounded. Across the waters could be heard the cries of pain, moans of despair, and shrieks of fear. Amid the cacophony of an unbelievable hell rose the voice of George Sullivan. "Al! Are you there? Red.... where are you? Frank....Matt....please answer me."

Slowly the survivors began to pull the debris together, three donut-shaped life rafts and assorted floating nets. Wounded sailors desperately swam to join their fellows, and George continued to call out in agony, searching each face for the features of one of his brothers. Among the floating debris he had found rolls of toilet tissue and quickly stripped away the oil-covered outer layers. It was a pitiful sight as he moved from raft to raft, net to net, slowly wiping the black oil from the faces of stunned and wounded sailors and peering into blank, frightened eyes for any sign of recognition. He was the oldest, the "big brother", and he had to find and help his younger

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

brothers. They had to be there....somewhere. And so, despite his own wounds, he continued his fruitless search.

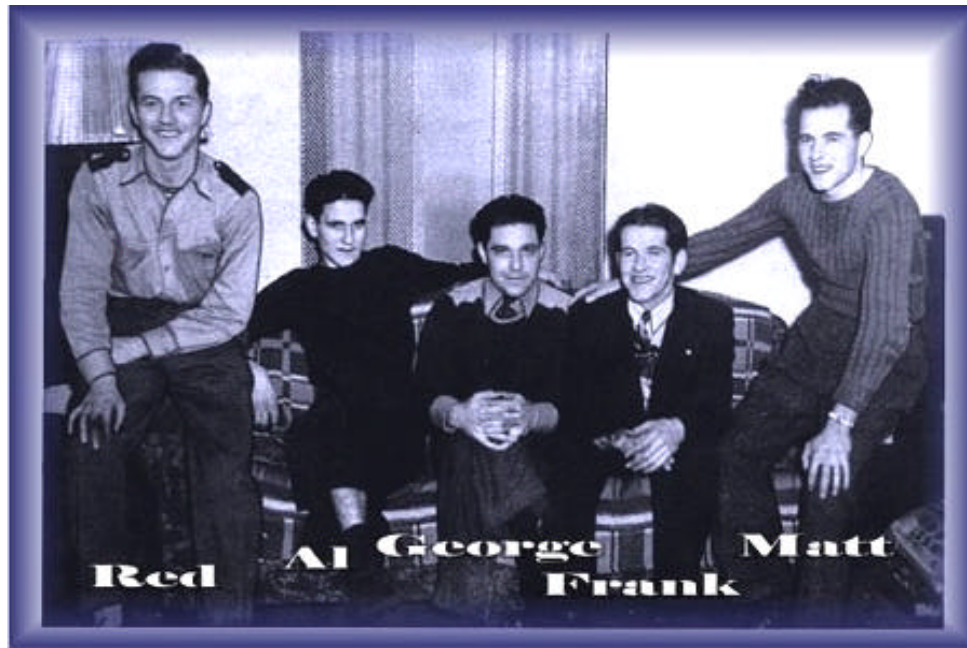
Throughout the day many sailors died of their wounds. Others, too tired to find within themselves any reason to go on, slipped away from the nets and sank beneath the black ocean swells to meet their former shipmates. As night fell, fewer than a hundred survivors remained. Throughout the night men died, at least one an hour. And throughout that long, cold night, all could hear the voice of George Sullivan continuing to cry out: "Al, Matt, Red, Frank? Where are my brothers?"

The breaking sunrise on the morning of November 14th brought some relief. Slowly the layer of oil began to thin and move away. The men crowded into the donut shaped life rafts had stood in three feet of water through out the night, their legs now swollen and their bodies chilled. Others sat on the edges of the crowded rings, dangling their legs over the edges. But as the water cleared, new dangers were revealed. Slowly the sharks moved in, hesitant at first. Then came screams as first one, then another sailor, was dragged from the nets and shredded by the predators of the deep. Some men were "fortunate" to lose only an arm or leg to the new enemy, others were dragged screaming completely beneath the surface to be devoured. New panic set in. George Sullivan continued to search for his brothers. He had to find them before the sharks did, offer the protection of a "big brother". To no avail he searched and searched.

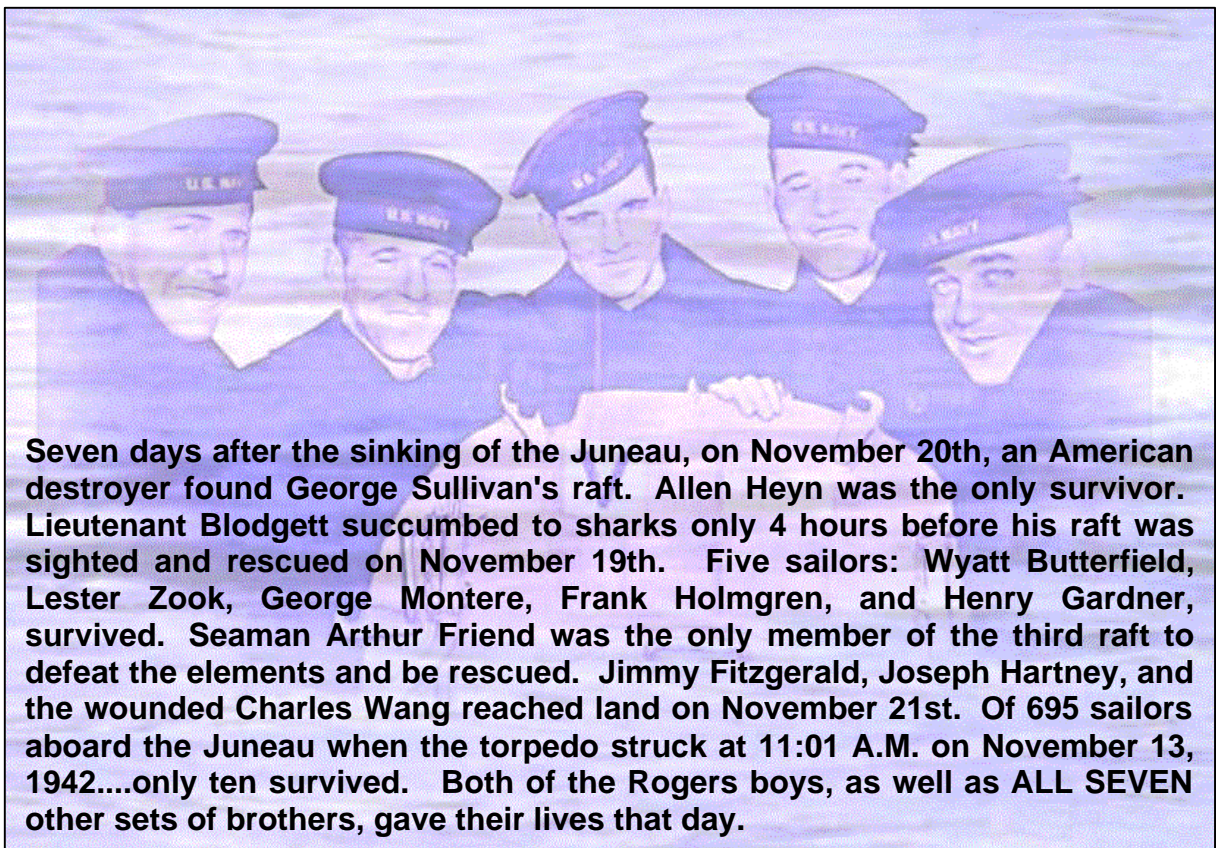
Towards noon a patrol plane appeared and dropped an inflatable raft. Seaman Joseph Hartney and Jimmy Fitzgerald braved the sharks in a desperate swim for the precious bundle. Amazingly they survived and returned to load the more severely wounded into the dry bottom of the new raft. The appearance of the plane provided more however than the raft, it signaled hope of rescue. But as the day dragged on the hot tropical sun became yet another enemy, frying the flesh of men whose clothing had been literally ripped from their bodies by the explosion that destroyed the *Juneau*. Before nightfall Hartney, Fitzgerald, and a badly injured officer left the group of survivors in a desperate effort to find land and mount a rescue effort.

As darkness fell on the second night, hope was vanishing for survival. Without food or fresh water, men began drinking salt water and becoming delirious. Into the night the cries of despair continued, and even through that second night with all hope seemingly gone, George Sullivan continued to call out for his missing brothers. When dawn arrived on the third morning it brought no relief. The survivors of the *Juneau* had to choose between a blistering sun that left their flesh as if it had been "shaved with a razor", or sharks that moved in with razor sharp teeth.

Finally the survivors chose to split into three groups. Lieutenant John Blodgett, one of only three surviving *Juneau* officers, set out with 7 of the strongest survivors on one raft. Nineteen other survivors set out in a second raft. The third carried almost a dozen survivors including George Sullivan and Allen Heyn. By the fourth day George Sullivan became more and more delirious. He continued to cry out for his brothers to no avail, but his voice became weaker, his cries less frequent. As darkness fell over the South Pacific he turned to Allen Heyn and said he was going to swim to shore and take a bath. Quickly he stripped off his clothes and plunged into the darkness of the ocean, swimming desperately for an imaginary shoreline. From a distance Allen Heyn could only watch helplessly the desperate struggle of George Sullivan against the elements. Then screams as the sharks moved in, the sound of thrashing in the water. Then....silence. In the depths of the South Pacific, George finally found his brothers.....



"We Stick Together"



Seven days after the sinking of the Juneau, on November 20th, an American destroyer found George Sullivan's raft. Allen Heyn was the only survivor. Lieutenant Blodgett succumbed to sharks only 4 hours before his raft was sighted and rescued on November 19th. Five sailors: Wyatt Butterfield, Lester Zook, George Monterey, Frank Holmgren, and Henry Gardner, survived. Seaman Arthur Friend was the only member of the third raft to defeat the elements and be rescued. Jimmy Fitzgerald, Joseph Hartney, and the wounded Charles Wang reached land on November 21st. Of 695 sailors aboard the Juneau when the torpedo struck at 11:01 A.M. on November 13, 1942....only ten survived. Both of the Rogers boys, as well as ALL SEVEN other sets of brothers, gave their lives that day.

FREEDOM ISN'T FREE

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

The story of the Sullivans is more than a true story about five brothers, it is the story of the courage and patriotism of an entire family. Despite the pain of their own tragic loss, Tom and Alleta Sullivan endured the invasion of their personal grief by a sympathetic Nation to promote the war effort. In April, 1943 sister Genevieve herself, enlisted in the Navy's WAVES. A year after the death of the Sullivan Brothers President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the launch of a new destroyer called "*The Sullivans*". Christened by the first mother since the Civil War to loose FIVE sons in defense of freedom, *The Sullivans* served in World War II and Korea, and is now on display in Buffalo, NY.



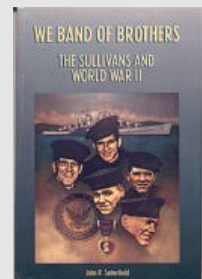
In 1995 a new Aegis Destroyer named *USS The Sullivans* was christened. It was commissioned two years later on Saturday, April 19, 1997. Among those in attendance was Lester Zook, one of Juneau's ten survivors. Three years later on November 12, 1998 (almost 56 years to the day after the sinking of the *Juneau*), Mr. Zook was tragically killed in an automobile accident. Another was a 25-year old school teacher from Cedar Falls, Iowa; a short distance from the hometown of the five Sullivan brothers. "We have pictures of the boys up in the house," the schoolteacher told the media. "You think about it (the sinking of the *Juneau*), when you go to a sporting event and sing the national anthem. You think about the pride you have for your family and the pride you have for all military people and their sacrifices." That schoolteacher, who has dedicated her life to America's children, is Kelly Sullivan Loughren, Jimmy Sullivan's daughter. Yes, the Sullivan family still sticks together....and keeps the memory alive.

In 1944 Hollywood released a movie titled "The Fighting Sullivans". The black and white film is shown on television from time to time, and is available at most local libraries. We encourage you to take the time to view it.

In 1995 the story of the Sullivan brothers, their family, and the crew of the USS Juneau was published in the book **WE BAND OF BROTHERS**. Written by John R. Satterfield, it is a moving and historically accurate account of events far beyond what we can share in these few pages. We highly recommend it to all people, but especially to those who work with American youth...the heroes of tomorrow. **WE BAND OF BROTHERS** can be ordered for \$17.00 postpaid from:

Mid-Prairie Books
P.O. Box 680
Parkersburg, IA 50655.

We are especially indebted to Mid-Prairie books for the use of many of their photos in these pages.



The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

- The Sullivan Brothers are not forgotten in their hometown of Waterloo, Iowa. A special acknowledgement is made to the [Grout Museum](#) for their assistance in preparing these pages. The Grout Museum maintains the history and heritage of the Sullivan Brothers for future generations.
- Special acknowledgement is also due [Mr. Mike Magee](#) who knew the Sullivan brothers as children and contributed considerably to our story as well as to the book by Mr. Satterfield. In a recent communication Mr. Magee indicated to us that there has been an unsuccessful campaign to get a U.S. Postage Stamp issued to commemorate the sacrifice of the Sullivan family.
- Finally, a special thanks to [Kelly Sullivan Loughren](#). The deaths of the Sullivan brothers more than 50 years ago marked only the beginning of the sacrifices made by the Sullivan family. In the face of such tremendous loss, one can only marvel at the continued service and patriotism of the surviving family.

SOURCES:

[We Band of Brothers](#) by John R. Satterfield

[Above and Beyond](#), Boston Publishing

[Left To Die](#) by Dan Kurzman

Grout Museum, Waterloo, IA

Waterloo Public Library, Waterloo, IA

Mike Magee

Kelly Sullivan Loughren

Jaime's Story

God Is Good

A True Story of Friendship & Faith



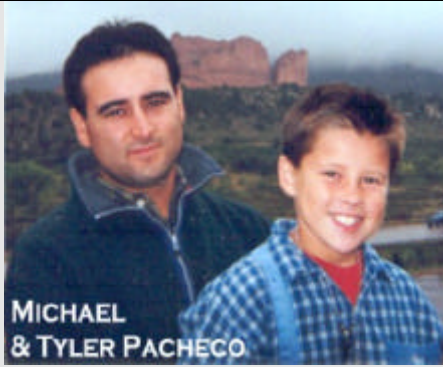
AUTHOR'S NOTE:

I debated long and hard about including this story in our "Brotherhood of Soldiers at War" series for many reasons, including the fact that it is a story that is "too close to home". As the series developed I realized more and more how much it belongs here.

JAIME'S STORY was the first website I created as I discovered computers in the Spring of 1998. It was at this same time I finally fulfilled a twenty-six year dream of finding Jaime Pacheco's son. At the request of Jaime's family, I made my first feeble attempt at web authoring to share this story. It was posted that year on Father's Day. The Hall of Heroes web site was begun the following month on July 4th, an outgrowth of Jaime's Story.

I am often asked why I do the things I do, how I find the drive and determination to engage in the many patriotic activities I volunteer to do...not to mention the thousands of hours I have put into this web site. Those who haven't read Jaime's Story will ever fully understand my motivation. Everything I do today, I do in memory of a kinship I felt, and still do, to the Brother I lost in Vietnam.....

JAIME PACHECO



A Son's Tribute to His Father

I never really had the chance to meet my father. I was only 18 months old when he was killed in Vietnam. Throughout my life I often wondered about him, what kind of man he was, how he lived and died. I didn't know that for 25 years my father's closest friend had been looking for me, anticipating my questions, anxious to share the answers with me. Publication of the photo on the previous page on the cover of the 1997 1st Cavalry Division calendar set in motion a chain of events that finally brought Doug Sterner and I together. When we talked for the first time on January 20, 1998 one of my first statements was, "Tell me about my father." That night he faxed me the pages of a small booklet he wrote in 1973 shortly after my father was killed in action, a booklet he had never published but had kept along with my father's letters to him throughout the years. This booklet told me more about my father than I could have hoped for. I am happy to share it with you here in honor of the hero I never really met, my father, Jaime Pacheco.

Michael Pacheco



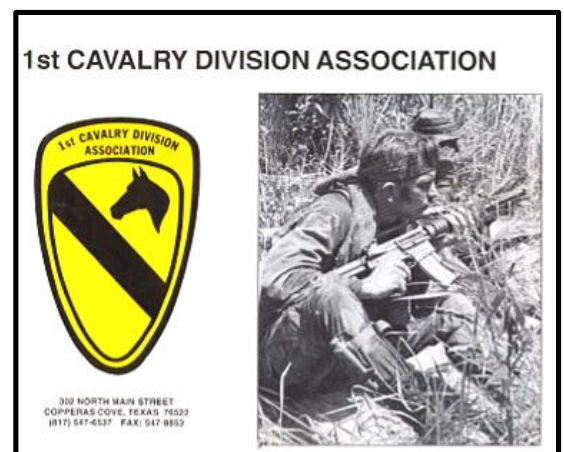
Preface

Life is often measured in terms of months, decades, and years. For the young soldier facing combat on foreign shores life can be defined.... and lost....in fleeting seconds. In one moment of horror a bond was born between Jaime Pacheco and I in Vietnam, a bond that would impact my life forever. In yet another fleeting second, Jaime lost his life.

This booklet was written six months after Jaime was killed in Vietnam. I never really intended it for publication and perhaps thought of it more as a personal diary or journal. The single copy I made in 1973 remained archived for 25 years with my black beret, Jaime's letters, the letter from our Ranger Executive Officer detailing Jaime's death, and a letter from Jaime's wife (written to me a month after Jaime died.) Through the years and several moves, all of my photos and other physical memorabilia from two tours in Vietnam were lost. Only the aforementioned survived the quarter century.

Of all the photos, copies of news stories I had written, and other personal memorabilia; the one I lamented the loss of most was a picture taken of Jaime and me shortly after the mission referred to in this booklet. But through the years I found I did not need a photograph to keep Jaime constantly in memory. As an active public speaker much involved in veteran's programs, I talked of Jaime often. And throughout the years there was seldom a night that I did not wonder where Michael Pacheco, the boy who was only 18 months old when his father was killed, was. My four children knew both Michael and Jaime by name, though they had never met. My reoccurring dream was that one day I would visit Jaime's grave in Hobbs, New Mexico; and while standing there would finally meet his family.

Of the millions of photographs in the historical files of the First Cavalry Division, the fact that the picture of Jaime and me that meant so much would one day be "randomly" chosen and published on the cover of the 1997 Cav calendar, is beyond coincidence. I should not have been surprised, for it seems God has interwoven Jaime's and my life from the moment we first met. With the publication of the calendar, I felt a renewed



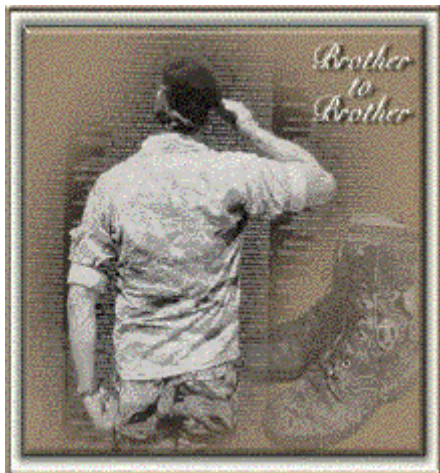
The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

urgency to find Jaime's family and share the calendar with them.

On January 20, 1998, a year after the calendar was published, I received a long distance call from Texas from a young lady identifying herself as Lenay Pacheco, Michael Pacheco's wife. After all the years, all the wrong phone calls and lost letters, thanks to the staff at Angel Fire, New Mexico, Jaime's son and I would finally meet.

The phone conversation that evening was long and emotional, but a dream come true. Michael asked, "What can you tell me about my father?" For the first time in more than 20 years I pulled this booklet from my files and reread it. When I finished I felt that it said more about Jaime and who he was than anything I could say over the phone. That same evening I faxed a copy to Michael. The following day, after making photocopies for myself, I sent him the originals of Jaime's letters, written in his father's own hand twenty-five years before.

Within a month I was contacted by one of Jaime's sisters, and shortly thereafter spoke with Jaime's mother. I shared with them copies of the calendar, and Michael shared with them copies of my fax to him containing this story. At their request I am sharing it herein. Almost without exception, it is word-for-word as I wrote it months after Jaime's death.



As I speak and visit with veterans groups around the country, I am constantly amazed at how the friendships forged in battle so often become lifetime associations. The friendship Jaime and I shared was not only forged in battle, it was nurtured by God. Though Jaime is gone, the impact of his life on mine has survived not only the test of time, but his own death. In many ways when I speak, write, or serve our Nation in any capacity; I like to believe that a part of Jaime Pacheco lives on in me.

C. Douglas Sterner
21 May 1998

FOOTNOTE TO PREFACE:

On Memorial Day, 25 May 1998... 26 years to the day after Jaime's death...I met Jaime's family. As Michael and I went through his father's personal effects, he handed me a box containing a Bible. As I held it in my hands for the first time in 26 years, I opened it and read the inscription: "To Jaime Pacheco, From Doug Sterner, 15 March

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

1972." That same Memorial Day, wearing the original beret presented to me on behalf of Ranger Team 75 by my closest friend, I held Jaime's mother in my arms as she introduced me as her "oldest son". At the close of Memorial Day Services in Angel Fire, NM I was overwhelmed by emotion as I watched my 21 year old daughter join hands with the 28 year old son of Jaime Pacheco on the platform of the Vietnam Memorial to sing "God Bless America".

Today my best friend's son calls me "dad", and though I know I can never replace the father he lost, I have made the commitment to become the father he found. Somewhere above I believe Jaime is looking down at me with a smile on his face and saying, "Doug, you were a true brother." GOD IS GOOD!



Author (left) with Jaime's Mother and Michael Pacheco meeting for the first time at Angel Fire, NM....26 years TO THE DAY after Jaime was killed in Vietnam.

Contact

A trickle of sweat began to inch down my forehead and sting in my eyes as I struggled through the thick brush. The heavy pack crushed my back and the straps cut through my shoulders. Despite the shade of the dense jungle foliage, the heat was stifling and seemed to burn through my whole body. I put a hand to my face to brush away another bead of perspiration and it came away covered with the green stain of camouflage face paint I was wearing.

My back still burned like a thousand tiny needles were piercing the skin, the grim reminder of the consequences of stumbling over a red ant pile. There was an irritating pain in one leg and I knew at least one leach had "hitched a ride" as I'd crept along. Ahead a ray of sunlight was breaking through the brush indicating we were near a clearing. Knowing how dangerous it could be to cross an open area, I gripped my rifle more tightly in my sweaty hands. A branch hit me in the face making a scratch that soon stung with the salty burn of sweat. "Nineteen more days and I will be home," I thought silently. "Home....away from Vietnam, away from the jungle, away from the heat, the leaches, the red ants; and yes, away from the war.

My thoughts were interrupted when Stubby, the man ahead of me, turned and whispered one word..."Dinks", our slang term for the enemy. Instantly I froze, my eyes scanning the trail we were breaking out on. Another trickle of sweat rolled down the tip of my nose and I suppressed an urge to brush it aside. My heart was pounding like a drum but around me all was quiet. Too quiet! It was uncanny. "Nineteen days, " I thought again. "What am I doing here?"

Suddenly there was the sharp, staccato beat of automatic rifle fire. No time to think now. I threw my pack to the ground hanging on to my rifle and my camera. I hit the edge of the clearing at a run and flung myself to the ground behind a mound of dirt, my AR-15 rifle spitting flame and lead almost before I felt the hot dust beneath me.

"Xray, Xray, this is 75, 75...Contact, Contact, Contact," I could hear our radioman Specialist Four Jaime Pacheco yell into the radio.

"How many were out there?" I wondered. There were only seven of us, a mere handful of men. Then came the dull roar of a detonating hand grenade and a cloud of smoke and dust rolled over my position. "I must have been crazy," I said to myself as I kicked an empty magazine out of my weapon and inserted another 30-round clip. Then I had to laugh a little under my breath. "Me, crazy?" That was just what everyone else had been calling me.

For a year and a half my friends had called me crazy for the foolish bravado I exhibited. When I arrived in Vietnam it was to work in the capacity of a combat engineer. But three months before my second tour was to end I was transferred to the 3rd Brigade, 1st Air Cavalry Division and employed as a correspondent for the military news media.

Because my tour was nearing its completion I'd been informed by my superiors that I would not be allowed to go "in the field" for my stories, but would work in the office and around our base camp at Bien Hoa. I was not one to sit behind a desk for long, and was even worse at

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

following orders. I started making trips to the jungle against orders "bouncing with the Blues", our quick reaction force, on several missions. Our commanding officer would review my stories and photos, shake his head, and forbid further excursions. "You're too short (our slang term for having a short time left in our combat tour) to be going in the field," he would say. "I don't want to have to write your parents and tell them, 'I know Sergeant Sterner was supposed to be home in a couple of weeks but.....'."

His protests aside, he continued to publish my stories and photos. I kept returning to the jungle for more. I enjoyed the freedom of going out with different units and being where the action was, but before my tour ended there was one story I was determined to get, one I was sure would be an exclusive.

For years our office had tried to get a correspondent on a mission with a team from H Troop, 75th Rangers. All efforts had failed, not so much because Rangers were publicity shy, but because the nature of their mission was so unique that an untrained man could mean disaster. These men who wore the much-envied black beret were an elite unit that hunted the enemy in the most silent and deadly fashion. Working in teams of five or six men, they were famed for their occasional reconnaissance missions. Their most common mission however, was what they called "hunter-killer" missions, operations where they stalked the enemy with stealth and skill using highly honed guerrilla tactics to out-manuever and ultimately destroy him.

After more than a year of unsuccessful attempts to write and photograph the Cav's rangers in action, our public information office had given up on the possibility of getting that story. I wasn't satisfied and boasted that before my tour ended, I would get that story. My superiors in turn told me that even if the Ranger Company gave their consent (in itself considered an impossibility), they would not allow me to take the job. Normally any man with less than 30 days "in country" was kept on the base camp. I had been consistently in the jungle right up through the Tet holiday just four weeks before my scheduled return home.

Then, miraculously, the Ranger commander gave his consent for me to accompany a team on a mission. No one in our office could understand the change in his attitude and not until later did I understand the reason. For though, at the time, some of the men in our office believed that it was my persistence and military record over two tours that persuaded the Rangers to take me on, I know now that God had a plan behind it all.

"Sergeant Sterner," my senior NCO said just before I left on my first of several missions with Ranger Team 75, "You really are crazy!" And then I was one my way--my last mission in Vietnam and the chance to get my exclusive story.

Actually I would pull several missions with the team in the short time remaining in my tour. My first lasted only a few hours. The chopper inserted the seven-man team just before noon and at four in the afternoon we walked within ten feet of an enemy soldier hidden in the dense jungle. When the firing subsided we were extracted and flown back to Bien Hoa for the night. The following morning we were inserted again in another area. So here I was, two contacts in two days, and my tour of duty almost over. I knew I had to make this one good.

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Remembering what my job here was, I jumped to my feet and snapped a picture. In that brief instant I saw a flicker of flame. One of our grenades had started a brush fire. Before I could move Jaime was rushing forward at a crouch to beat out the flames. I snapped another picture, then sent a burst of fire from my weapon to cover Jaime's return to his position.

Overhead I heard the beat of helicopter blades slicing the air above the trees. Our team leader was barking instructions into Jaime's radio, "We have movement to the south, about a hundred yards out." Then came the crash of rockets and the scream of a Cobra gunship making its lethal dive. Another grenade thundered and I slapped a fresh magazine in my weapon and continued to fire. And then silence came. The enemy had withdrawn, the fight was over....for me at least.



The team leader jerked his head my way. "Sterner, cover the trail for the radio man," he said matter of factly, treating me as a member of the team and not just a correspondent who was along for the trip. I responded by moving to the center of the trail and taking up a defensive position while a reconnaissance element went out to check our "kill zone".

The recon team found a bunker complex and was gone for some time. Then came the sound of a grenade and Jaime turned and said, "I hope that was one of ours." I nodded grimly and, suddenly realizing how thirsty I was, got out my canteen and took a long drink. I offered it to Jaime and between the two of us it was quickly drained. Still thirsty, we made short work of Jaime's canteen, then went to work on the five-quart flask in his pack.

As we waited for the recon element to return we had time to talk and snap a few more pictures to send home. We were two soldiers who had just survived a moment of danger together, and that puts a unique bond between men. Such bonds were not uncommon among the soldiers who fought in Vietnam. Soon Jaime and I would find an even stronger bond, one that would tie our lives together for eternity.



A m i g o , A s t a L e u g o

It was Sunday night and as usual I was at our chapel for the Sunday evening service, the only one of its kind in our unit. It was a very informal service consisting of lively singing, personal testimonies, and group sharing. We were singing when I heard someone coming in late and turned in time to see Jaime take a seat near the back of the chapel. He caught my eye and nodded and I acknowledged his presence with a similar silent nod of the head. This was Jaime's first visit to our chapel service, and knowing he was Catholic I was somewhat surprised to see him visit our less orthodox worship session.

When the service concluded I invited Jaime to stick around and visit over a cold soda. As we walked to the group in a corner of the chapel I told him, "It sure is good to see you here, Jaime." It had only be a few days since I had pulled my last mission with Ranger Team 75. I had written my story, made copies of all the pictures for the men of the team, and was busily getting my affairs in order to depart Vietnam the following week.

"It's good to be here," Jaime replied with a smile, and I knew he sincerely meant it. "You know something Doug," he continued, "It is kind of funny the way we met. I knew the first time I saw you that you were a Christian and God had sent you out with our team just so you and I could meet."

Now I smiled. "Yes Jaime, that is the way God is. He works out all these things with some master plan we may not understand, but it all has a reason. I wouldn't want to be here and not be a Christian. It really is a good life."

"It sure is Doug. Boy, I'll tell you something, God is sure good!" And that was the first time I heard Jaime mention the phrase that I now associate with him in every fond remembrance.

The following evening I was again at the chapel, this time to practice some music with "The King's Children", a gospel singing group I had started on the base a few months earlier. We were singing a Bill Gaither song titled "Jesus, There's Just Something About That Name" when I noticed Jaime come in and again take a seat at the back of the chapel. As we sang I saw a noticeable glow in his eyes, and when we finished he looked up quietly and said, "I hope I'm not interrupting anything, but that is the most beautiful song I have ever heard. Would you sing it again for me?" We did, and as we sang one couldn't miss the tears that formed in Jaime's eyes. I couldn't help but think that there sat a man deeply in love with Jesus Christ.

Several times that week Jaime returned to listen to us as we practiced, and always he would ask us to sing that same song over and over again. It became his favorite, as well as ours.

Often during that week Jaime and I would talk late into the night. He had many questions about the Bible, about Jesus, and about living the Christian life. In that week we became close, very close. For me it was a new experience for I had always been somewhat of a loner who avoided close ties to any person. But in that last week a bond of brotherly love grew between us that I shall never understand or forget.

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Jaime also spoke often of his family back home, and especially his wife and small son. He informed me that his wife made "the best Mexican food you have ever ate and will ever eat. A Big Brag but it can be kept." We made a pact that, when Jaime finally returned home I would come and visit his home in Hobbs, New Mexico, meet his family, and prove his brag about his wife's cooking.

Mid-week came and on Wednesday Jaime left on a mission with his team. I hoped and prayed he would get back before I left for home as I was scheduled to depart the following Monday. Sunday arrived all too quickly but I was thrilled to see Jaime walk into the chapel service that evening. He took a seat beside me in the front and together we sang, we prayed, and we worshipped God.

When the service concluded we gathered again at the rear of the chapel to visit. I spent a good deal of time saying "good-by" to my friends before they returned to their barracks. When everyone else was gone I turned to Jaime and said, "I have to stop by the office tonight, so I can walk that far with you on your way back to the Ranger compound."

We stepped outside the chapel and the beauty of the night was enough to warm the heart. The sky was clear with a scattering of stars and a bright moon. The air was warm with a breeze that was refreshing but not too hot or too cold. I was struck by the magnificence of God's creation, even in a war zone. "Thank you God", I said silently, "for beautiful nights like this, and for the kind of friendship You have given me and Jaime."

As we walked we talked again of family and friends, but mostly about Jesus. There was a real sadness in parting but it was also a time of joy in the realization that, when the bond of Christian love exists, you are never far separated.

Then we were at the door to the Public Information Office where I was to clean out the last of my personal effects. We paused for a long moment of silence, neither of us wanting to say goodbye. For a moment I felt guilty. For months I had tried to extend for yet another tour and been denied each time. I wanted to stay in Vietnam and was being sent home anyway. Jaime had a wife and young son. He not only wanted to be home, he needed to be home. I wished that somehow we could trade places, even wondered if I was deserting my friends by leaving. It was an emotion packed, awkward time of silence, neither of us wanting to say goodbye.

Then Jaime looked at me and smiled. "You know Doug, God is good." I smiled again at his classic statement. "We won't say goodbye, for we'll meet again someday, somewhere."

"Yes, Jaime," I replied fighting back a rush of tears, "we'll meet again. Just as soon as you are back in the States I'll be knocking on your door, just waiting to try your wife's cooking."

"Doug?"

"Yes Jaime?"

"Whatever happens, God IS good!"

"Yes Jaime, He sure is."

"I better be going Doug. Amigo, Asta Leugo." And then he was gone, walking away into the night. The tears came as I watched him leave. And then, just before he disappeared from view I experienced a strange feeling. I knew that I was looking at Jaime Pacheco for the last time.

In Christ, Your Brother...

Before I'd left Vietnam I'd learned from Jaime that he did not own a Bible. My first concern upon my arrival home was to purchase one. I had his name embossed on the cover and mailed it to him along with several religious paperback books. A few weeks later I got my first letter in reply.

When I'd been with Ranger Team 75 there had been talk among the men of awarding me their coveted black Ranger beret. Having pulled more than the required 5 missions, the team had chosen to do so and asked Jaime to mail it to me. It is one of the very few mementos of my Vietnam service that I still have, and it is indeed the one that means the most to me.

In his letter Jaime talked mostly about how good God was and how much it meant to him to be a Christian. There was some talk about the team and how things were going in the "bush", mention of family and home, and repeated mention of how much he enjoyed his new Bible and other books. It was closed with four words that became his standard closing line in every letter: "In Christ, Your Brother, Jaime Pacheco."

A few weeks later another letter came. "I don't know what our good Lord has for me," Jaime wrote, "but I tell you, when He leads or shows me to where He wants me I'll know I can't ever be happy unless I do as He wants me to. As for my going home, I don't know yet. I'll just let Him take care of that as He has taken care of me in ALL things." I read and wept unashamed at his simple faith in God and the way he unreservedly committed his entire life and future into God's hands. Before he closed with "Your fellow Brother in Christ," Jaime wrote, "I know if it be Our Lord's will to go back to the States alive and well, we, my family and I will meet again some day."

Every night I would lay in bed and pray that God would keep His hand on Jaime, would keep him safe and free from harm, and bring him safely home soon. I waited eagerly for each letter, and the third arrived shortly after Jaime had written it. It was dated 12 May, 1972.

By this time Jaime knew that it would be some time before he would be coming home. As a Ranger he was much in demand and the rash of troop withdrawals would not affect him. "Man let me tell you," he wrote, "I am ready to go home right now! Personally I would, like I said, go home right now, but if I had my way I would like to go the 15th of June so I could be there for her (his wife's) birthday, and after all out processing, arrive at my home town the morning of the 20th of June. But the way things look it seems that it will be more like in August or the very latest, October. But at any rate, I am going to let God lead me and use me according to His will. Yes, that is the way to be Doug, God IS GOOD." He closed the letter as my brother in Christ as was his usual pattern. In this letter there was a slight change in the closing lines, however, it was two months before I was to notice it or understand what it meant.

I continued to pray for Jaime, asking God to protect him. Every day I would check the mail, which came to my father's house in Montana, in hopes there would be another letter from Jaime. In the previous weeks Jaime had been asking me to tape some Gospel music to send him. I

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had been singing with some friends in a neighboring town, and every time we got together to sing I thought of my promise to send Jaime some music. Somehow, we just never seemed to get it done. I was thinking about this as I drove home from work one day early in June. I would be visiting my musical friends that very weekend and resolved that whatever it took, I was going to get Jaime's tape made.

As I passed my father's house on the way home I stopped to check the mail. There was one letter, from the Department of the Army. My hands trembled as I opened it, knowing deep inside what it was going to say. The black type blurred beneath a rush of tears. I struggled to believe it said something else. But no, there it was in black and white,

"I regret to inform you that Specialist Pacheco died on 25 May, 1972."

God is Good

"God, NO!" I cried in anguish. As I struggled to drive home, my vision blurred by tears, I couldn't help repeatedly asking, "God, WHY?"

Then bitterness crept in. "God is good," Jaime had written just 13 days before his death. Somehow it was hard to accept that fact now. How could a good God allow something like this to happen? Of all the people, why Jaime?

Throughout the sleepless night the question arose again and again, "God, why?" And then guilt again, and anger at being home. "What if I had been there? Could my being with Jaime in that moment of danger have changed the outcome somehow?" I'd lost many friends in Vietnam, but somehow this struck a nerve that wouldn't heal. Of all the people, why Jaime? It just didn't seem fair. Where was God?

A few weeks later a letter arrived from the executive officer of the Ranger detachment detailing for me how Jaime had died. Jaime had been covering the rear of a recon element that walked into an enemy bunker complex. As the firefight ensued Jaime realized the danger that threatened the three men ahead of him. Leaving his more secure area at the rear of the team he rushed forward firing his weapon and throwing more than a dozen grenades, permitting his comrades to safely withdraw. Then, as the team pulled back, a round from a malfunctioning helicopter minigun struck him and took his life.

For his heroic actions that day, Jaime was awarded the Silver Star Medal. But the point that stood out far above his heroic actions was the love for his comrades that compelled him to risk his life that they might live. It was so characteristic of the Jesus Jaime loved so much, He who once said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Of Jaime Pacheco, the Ranger executive officer wrote: "I can honestly say that he is one of the few in this world who had no enemies." Still I couldn't help wondering, and questioning God.

The following Sunday I attended church with a mixture of anger and puzzlement in God's failure to protect my friend. The choir stood to sing, and the song was Jaime's favorite, "Jesus, There's Just Something About that name". Again I could not restrain the tears.

Then came the letter from Jaime's wife, a letter filled with both sorrow and faith. "Yes, 'God is Good'," she wrote. "It is my wish and prayer that the 'Good God' continue helping me face my future with a smile, a smile at God in loving acceptance of whatever He sends into my life now, so that I may merit to have the radiant, smiling face of Christ gaze on me for all eternity."

Still I wept long and bitter tears. For two months I mourned and questioned, wondered and wept. Few had been my acquaintances that had been allowed to become so close, and despite my puzzlement at how God could have allowed Jaime to die, I knew deep inside that God had nurtured the bond that had grown between us for some unknown reason in His master plan.

I picked up Jaime's last letter to me and read it as I had so many times in the previous weeks. It was so bright and characteristic of Jaime's simple faith, and as I read I could almost picture the light in Jaime's eyes and the smile that was so uniquely characteristic of him. I read it

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

again, "Yes, that is the way to be Doug, God IS Good." I found that statement a little hard to accept now that Jaime was gone. At the letter's end he had written, "Amigo, Asta Luego," and I remembered that warm night in Vietnam just scant months earlier when we had parted and Jaime had vanished into the darkness with those words.

And then, finally, his closing signature, "In CHRIST Your Brother...." but wait, there was something sandwiched between the words in CAPITAL letters, something I had never noticed before. Yes, this letter written just 13 days before Jaime Pacheco would sacrifice his life for his friends, was closed "In CHRIST, FOR ETERNITY, Your Brother, Jaime Pacheco."

For the first time a warm glow filled my heart and a smile came to my face in the sweet, powerful realization of what Jaime had told me in that final goodbye. Somehow he sensed he was not going to be coming home, that he would die in Vietnam. He also knew he was prepared for that moment. It wasn't really goodbye after all. "In CHRIST, FOR ETERNITY, Your Brother...."

"Yes my brother," I said aloud to myself,

"GOD IS GOOD".

Epilogue

There were TWO versions to the details of Jaime's Death:

The Official Version



This was the version told in Jaime's citation for the Silver Star. It was the only version of the events told to Jaime's Family.

The Way It Really Happened



Jaime's family was unaware of the details in the above letter for 26 years. Finally learning the truth brought closure to many nagging doubts they held for years.

Those who do not understand the nature of warfare will find in these conflicting accounts reason to condemn the military. I neither condone nor condemn the decision not to tell the family all the details, I simply UNDERSTAND.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Headquarters, U S Army/Vietnam/MACV Support
Command

APO San Francisco 96375

19 August 1972

GENERAL ORDERS

NUMBER 1923

AWARD OF THE SILVER STAR

TC 439. The following AWARD is announced posthumously.

PACHECO, JAIME SPECIALIST FOUR U.S. Army, Company H (Ranger), 75th Infantry, 3d Brigade (Separate), 1st Cavalry Division, APO 96490

Awarded: Silver Star

Date of action: 25 May 1972

Theater: Republic of Vietnam

Authority: By direction of the President, under the provisions of the Act of Congress, approved 9 July 1918.

REASON:

For gallantry in action while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam: Specialist Four Pacheco distinguished himself on 25 May 1972 while serving as medic on a Ranger Team which was on a reconnaissance mission in Tan Uyen Province, Republic of Vietnam. Specialist Pacheco walked as rear scout for a four-man point reconnaissance element when the element discovered an enemy bunker complex. As the first three men of the element exhausted their first magazines, Specialist Pacheco immediately recognized the danger caused by the lull in firing and rushed the bunkers firing his own weapon and throwing fragmentation grenades. As the team withdrew from the bunker complex, he remained in

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Company H (Ranger) 75th Infantry (Airborne)
Task Force "Garry Owen" Provincial
1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile)

5 July 1972

Mr. C. Doug Sterner
Route 48
Anaconda, Montana

Dear Sir:

SP/4 Jaime Pacheco was killed in action on 25 May 1972, while serving as Team medic for Ranger Team 76 which was on a reconnaissance mission approximately 10 kilometers north of fire support base Spudis. Walking in the position of rear scout, SP/4 Pacheco accompanied a point reconnaissance element which walked into a bunker complex. As the lead element made contact and expended its initial magazine, a dangerous lull in fireing (sic) ensued. Realizing the danger, SP/4 Pacheco rushed forward and covered the withdrawal of the point reconnaissance by fireing (sic) his own weapon and throwing 12-15 fragmentation grenades. (Because this action allowed the entire element to withdraw unharmed and because it showed great valor with little concern for his own safety SP/4 Pacheco has been submitted for a Silver Star). Once contact had been broken, the point reconnaissance returned to the rest of the team, and the Team Leader requested a pink team and a section of Max gunships. The Team Leader worked out the pink team's Cobra first, expending all of its ordinance on the complex. Next the Max section worked on the complex. On the 11th or 12th run the minigun on one of the Cobras malfunctioned and fired 6 rounds which landed in and around the small Ranger perimeter. One round struck Pacheco in the back and exited through the chest region, causing a sucking chest wound. The Team Leader told the pink team commander he needed to get him out as soon as possible, while the team members

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his position and continued to throw a total of twelve fragmentation grenades, covering the team's withdrawal. By holding the enemy at bay his fellow soldiers were able to escape without injury. When he attempted to rejoin his team, he was hit by enemy fire which wounded him fatally. His actions gave the team the precious time they needed to reach safety. Specialist Pacheco's gallantry in action and devotion to duty, at the cost of his life, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

HAROLD H. DUNWOODY
Brigadier General, US Army
Acting Chief of Staff

A TRUE COPY

stopped his sucking chest wound with a five-quart canteen. Two members of the team carried him to the nearest semblance of an LZ, and the pink team's low bird came in, taking several blade strikes in the process. Although he was barely alive when placed on the low bird, he expired while on the chopper and was dead when it landed at Spudis.

The company felt a great loss upon Pacheco's death. He was a deeply religious man and so well liked that it seems so cruel that he should die in such a fluke. A memorial service was held in his honor and each member of the command gave him his last salute. I can honestly say that he is one of the few in this world who had no enemies.

I thank you on behalf of all Rangers for the stories you wrote about us, and assure you that many copies of the Garry Owen were sent home to friends and relatives. If I can be of further assistance, do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

/s/

JOHN A. FENILI

A TRUE COPY

Ranger Story

(This was first published as text for a photo layout in the "Garry Owen" Newspaper and the "First Team Magazine" in March 1972. The cover photo as well as some of the others on this site were official US ARMY PHOTOS from that story layout.)

The huey "Slick" hardly seemed to stop in its descent on the clearing before Ranger Team 75 was on the ground and moving rapidly to the edge of the jungle. As I lunged through the underbrush I glanced back long enough to see our rear scout, Sp4 Kenneth (Snuffy) Anderson backing out of the clearing in a crouch, ready for any signs of the enemy. I wanted desperately to stop for a chance to shoot a picture, but now wasn't the time. We had to get to cover before the enemy had a chance to locate us. The pictures would have to wait.

Once the team was concealed in the brush, Sgt Paul "Blinky" Morguez, Team Leader (TL) for 75 motioned for us to sit down. It was a relief to drop my heavy pack and relax in the brush. Somewhere a bird began to sing, and it was almost possible to forget that you were hiding in enemy infested jungle, just a handful of men and their weapons.

Sp4 Jaime Pacheco, RTO for the team, unsheathed his radio. When the TL began to make his report to the rear he spoke only in a whisper. No one made any noise. Quietly I unsnapped my camera, focused it, and pushed the button to release the shutter. It sounded like a bomb dropping in a sound proof room and everyone turned quickly to look at me. A little embarrassed, I put my camera up and resolved that my pictures would have to wait a little longer.

After about 20 minutes the TL felt confident that the enemy had not noticed our insertion and had not come in our direction. We hitched up our rucks and began moving through the brush. There were no trails, no paths, we just walked and crawled where we could, never making a sound. No one spoke, not one vine was cut from our path, and so well hidden was each man by the heavy brush and camouflage jungle fatigues and face paint that often I would lose sight of "Stubby", Sgt Lynn Morrison, who was walking just ahead of me.

My ruck was beginning to give me pains and sweat poured off me. It was rough on me, and try as I might to hide it, anyone could see I was tired. I started glancing at the other members to see how they were taking it. They were sweating too, which made me feel a little better. That is, all except "Blinky" who I was sure by now could out-walk a horse. Someone once said that Rangers don't have to shoot the enemy, they just hump them to death. I was beginning to believe that was the truth.

There were times I wished I had packed a little more, though my ruck was more than heavy enough for me. But a five-day log of supplies to a Ranger seemed awful meager to me. Three LRRP meals won't last the average grunt a day and a half, and I was expected to make them last for five days. And six quarts of water, a two-day supply for most grunts, had to be stretched out over that same five-day period.

The Brotherhood of Soldiers At War

Finally we paused for a few minutes. It was getting well along into the afternoon and the heat seemed to be reaching extremes. I lifted my canteen to my lips, rationing myself the barest amount of water, and settled back to listen. There was a crackling of brush that made my heart beat a little faster. I strained my eyes and saw two chickens strutting about. They walked within 20 feet of me but so quiet was the team that they never realized we were in the area.

Twenty minutes later we were moving on again. We were reaching an open area and "Stubby" stopped beside me. "When we cross this area," he said, "make sure you step on the branches and not on the ground." It seemed strange to me, but Stubby explained that in the open area if the enemy were near they would see us, so the sound of a breaking twig made little difference. Now the important thing was to insure that we left no footprints for the enemy to find. Later Sp4 Pacheco explained that the Team tries to leave no evidence of its presence after it has passed. "We even eat the plastic containers our LRRPs come in so the enemy can't find them," he said with a laugh.

We finally stopped in a small clearing and I decided to chance a few more pictures. Muffling my camera as best I could with my towel, I took a few shots, then helped myself to a drink from my canteen. We'd been in the jungle for about four hours and yet my canteen was practically full. It was surprising.

It was getting dark as we moved on, though it was still early in the evening. Then the Team stopped. Blinky was on the point and had broken onto a trail. While we waited he scouted the trail with Sp4 Melvin Mullis, the assistant TL who had been walking "slack". Then they motioned for the team to move up. I was just breaking through the undergrowth when the world exploded. Dropping to the ground I worked out of my ruck and alternated between shooting pictures of the elite team in action, and talking back to the hidden enemy with my AR-15 rifle.

For Blinky it had been close. Breaking from the trail and into the open, he had heard a man to his left shout at him in Vietnamese. The enemy soldier had undoubtedly mistaken us for NVA or VC troops. He had been no more than 10 feet from Blinky when he spoke, and the TL had answered with a burst from his AR-15.

"Make sure you cover our rear," I heard Blinky yell, and then from back on the trail I heard Snuffy yell back, "Yeah, I've got it." "Frag out," yelled 1Lt Lynn Moore, the Ranger operations officer who was along for the trip. As he stood to throw his grenade the team covered with a burst of fire. "Someone pass me a cigarette," yelled Blinky, crouching now and firing from the hip. Then Pacheco, talking into the mouthpiece of the radio, "Xray, Xray, 75, 75. Contact! Contact! Contact!"

Then all was quiet again save for the sound of Blue Max waiting overhead. Blinky took two men and scouted the area where the enemy had been. All that could be found was a thick trail through the brush where he had "duffed". Pacheco and I sat back drawing long gulps on our canteens. We could drink all we wanted now. We had a contact and would be pulled out.

When all was clear we moved into the open and popped smoke for our bird. While the skids were still well above the ground I felt the other members of the team boosting me in. Then I turned to haul them aboard. The door gunners opened fire on the area and we left with tracers tearing the brush in case any enemy had followed us to the PZ. As the chopper circled we could see Max diving in on the position we had just left, tearing the jungle with his rockets and minigun. We were on our way back to the rear for a hot meal, a cold soda, a shower and a good night's sleep. My job was finished but for Team 75 there would be tomorrow...another day, another mission, and perhaps another contact.

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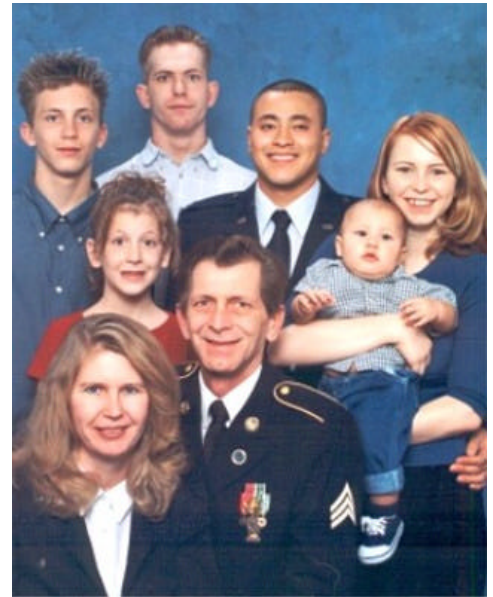
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About The Author:

DOUG STERNER

“Mr. Doug Sterner, in the truest sense of the word, is a genuine “All American.” As a patriot he is the best of the best. His passion for our country, our citizens and our children runs deep in his veins. He feels in his soul the great indebtedness we have to our country for the freedoms we enjoy. Doug speaks with great enthusiasm and a tremendous fervor, leaving you with your heart racing, standing taller and possibly drawing a tear from your eye, feeling proud to be an American.

*Peter C. Lemon, Recipient
Congressional Medal of Honor*

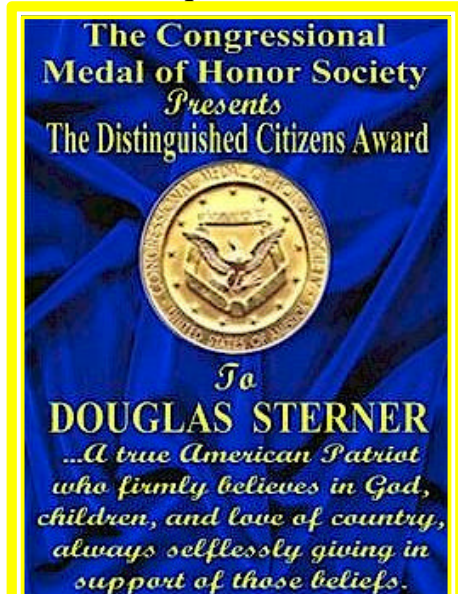


Doug Sterner is a popular author, speaker, Webmaster and historian who has dedicated his life to preserving the stories of some of our Nation’s greatest heroes. He has single-handedly authored more than 15,000 web pages in his popular site at www.HomeOfHeroes.com. A dedicated public servant in his hometown of Pueblo, Colorado; he initiated and organized several programs to introduce Medal of Honor recipients to the community, including a series of school assemblies that brought history and inspiration to more than 32,000 youth in one day of activities. He and his wife Pam’s continuing programs resulted in the community bidding for and hosting the Medal of Honor convention in Pueblo in September 2000. Other activities have resulted in local schools promoting and passing legislation in two states authorizing distinctive Medal of Honor license plates.

Doug is a decorated, two-tour veteran of service in Vietnam where he served as a squad leader in the US Army. Following discharge from active duty, he spent 6 years as a member of the Montana National Guard. In 1998 the Congressional Medal of Honor Society recognized the continuing efforts of the Sterner Family when it presented Doug with its prestigious and unique Distinguished Citizens Award. In 1999 Governor Bill Owens appointed Doug to the Colorado State Board of Veterans Affairs. In 2001 he was elected Chairman of the Colorado State Board of Veterans Affairs.

“It’s hard to say whether Doug Sterner has done more for his country or for his fellow man. He loves them both and works hard to instill that love in the next generation.”

Adrian Cronauer
“Good Morning Vietnam”



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