

PO Box 605
West Chester, Ohio 45271
(Donations welcomed)

Rolling Thunder® Chapter 9 - September 2009

Just because you can't do everything does not give
you an excuse to do nothing



From the President's



Well here it is, the last month of summer. By any measurement, I'd have to say the chapter's mission was a success. I'm writing this before the mini-chopper drawing and not knowing the final count on tickets I know we did very well with that work. Thanks to everyone who stood behind our table this year speaking about our POW / MIAs and our veterans. Raising money at these events is necessary only to continue our help with local veterans. A special recognition has to be given to Mike and Connie. Without them lugging the mini-copper, the tables, the shirts, the magnets, the flags etc, etc, etc all over the state of Ohio, we would not have been as successful.

Thank you Roadie and Angel.

The second annual VA picnic was fantastic. Sure was a very hot day but with the shade of the trees and the shelter it was great. Little bit of a mix-up with getting people out of the hospital but with those who came out their family, our friends from Joseph's house and some VA staff we served 96 people lunch.

The door prizes were a big hit and several were disappointed on not winning. However, Angel being just that brought a box of snacks that the patients were able to grab a handful of items before returning to the DOM.

"Wonderful and yet sad", one patient brought down by his family had been given less than a week to live. Agent Orange ravaged his body. He was not supposed to leave the hospital, but his wife wanted him to share some time with other veterans. He loved the smell of the hamburgers and hotdogs and was able to bring one back to his room to eat. Who will ever know when and how Agent Orange effects will be over. Sorry to say, no one. It's a shame!

Okay remember, elections are being held at the September meeting. Please give some thought to whom you'll be casting your votes for.

Spy

Vietnam



On the 6th day of September 205 U.S. Heroes died between 1963 and 1974

11 from Ohio:

George Stephen Spak Jr	USMC	AKRON
Michael Carey Kolarov	ARMY	AKRON
Barry Russell Moree	ARMY	AKRON
Allan Russell Fischbach	USMC	BEREA
Gus Winslow Johnson Jr.	ARMY	BLACKLICK
William Lester Wilhelm	ARMY	COVINGTON GARFIELD HEIGHTS
William Richard France	USMC	HEIGHTS
Joseph Sylvester Hume Jr.	USMC	HAMILTON
Michael Lynn Griffith	ARMY	LANCASTER
James Cecil Holmes	ARMY	SABINA
Ronnie Shinya Marshall	ARMY	ZANESVILLE

7 From Indiana

Charles R Leming	ARMY	COLUMBUS
Donald Ray Henry	USMC	DILLSBORO
Jeffrey Alan Davis	ARMY	INDIANAPOLIS
Bradley Andrew Saintclair	ARMY	INDIANAPOLIS
James Vernon Hembree	ARMY	LOOGOOTE NORTH
Loren Lee Morford	ARMY	MANCHESTER
George Alfred Nash Jr.	USMC	VALPARAISO

1 From Kentucky

Arnold Noel Jaco	USAF	BENTON
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July 20, 2009, marked the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing by astronaut Neil

A different take on moon landing

By JAMES H. WARNER

July 20, 2009 marked the 40th anniversary of the first moon landing by astronaut Neil Armstrong. Almost everyone who was alive at the time will remember the day. They will remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news.

I, too, remember where I was and what I was doing on that day. However, I did not hear the news of the moon landing for several more years. I was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam and on July 20, 1969, I was in a small box that sat out in the sun in the third month of a prolonged interrogation about what the Communists were convinced was an escape attempt. Although we did not hear any news about the actual moon landing, the Apollo program did affect us in an interesting way because we thought the landing had happened several months earlier.

One morning in late December 1968, we heard the customary hiss as the loudspeaker system began warming up for what we anticipated would be the usual propaganda session from radio Hanoi. To our surprise, however, at 8 a.m., instead of radio Hanoi, we heard a man with a British accent say, "This is the BBC Hong Kong. The American astronauts become the first human beings to come under the gravitational influence of another celestial body." And then the radio went dead.

We never knew whether they wanted us to hear this or if it was a terrible mistake by someone who had been surreptitiously listening to the BBC.

An hour later, we were taken out to wash. The first man out of our cell was Air Force Capt. Kenneth Fisher. We had not rehearsed what happened next. Ken looked up and could see the moon in the clear winter sky. He came to a stop, snapped to attention and saluted the moon. Instantly, the rest of us caught on. As each of us left the cell, we came to a stop, snapped to attention and saluted the moon.

The guard who was on duty in the guard tower leaned out to see what we were saluting. He had to lean so far that his pith helmet fell off. He almost

dropped his rifle and, for a second, we thought he would fall out of the tower himself.

Navy Lt. J.G. Ted Stier went up to one of the guards and pointed at the moon and spoke the Vietnamese word for the United States, "Hoa KY." He then pointed at the ground and said "Vietnam." He then made a pantomime as though he were operating a very large piece of artillery. Pointing at the moon again, and again speaking the Vietnamese word for America, "Hoa Ky," he began rocking back and forth with his imaginary artillery piece while crying out "boom, boom, boom" to show that American artillery, if placed on our moon, would have the range to hit North Vietnam. Ted walked away while the guard continued to stare doubtfully at the moon.

Later that morning, our political officer called Ken Fisher, who was the senior officer in our cell, out to interrogation and demanded an explanation of our conduct. Now, we didn't hear the whole news report from the BBC, so we assumed it meant somebody had landed on the moon. Ken explained since Americans were the first to land on the moon, it must belong to us. Therefore, we were just showing respect for our country by saluting when we saw it.

He told the political officer, whom we called "Louis the Rat," that despite American ownership of the moon, we would allow Vietnam to continue to use our moon to time their lunar new year. However, Ken added, they would have to change the Vietnamese word for moon. In Vietnamese, the word for the moon is actually two words, "ma trung." The word for American is "my." Therefore, Kenneth said, they would have to call our moon "my trung." Rat got very angry and sent Kenneth back to our cell.

Thereafter, at every opportunity, we asserted American ownership of the moon. This soon spread throughout the camp and guys began saluting the moon whenever they saw it.

We didn't learn about our error in timing of the moon landing until early 1973, when we were joined by some of those shot down in 1972. By that time, however, the other news about what was going on in the real world was so interesting that we paid little attention to the moon landing. In any

case, our story about the landing, even if premature, sounded better to us.

James H. Warner of Rohrsville is a retired attorney. He was a naval flight officer in the Marine Corps, flying in F-4B fighter/bombers in Vietnam. He was a POW for 5 1/2 years.



Welcome Home

Capt Michael Scott Speicher U.S.N

For the past five years Capt Speicher's picture was prominently displayed on our chapters homepage.



Our mission statement and Speicher's picture greeted anyone who logged onto our site. Well on Sunday August 2nd 2009 Scott's picture was removed because the U.S. Navy positively identified his remains.

I wonder how many people ever even thought of Scott. Heck there are so many people in this country that never even heard of him yet alone thought about him, but we did our mission. We continued to keep his name and his picture in front of the public.

The Navy provided these details regarding the discovery. Speicher was shot down flying a combat mission in an F/A-18 Hornet over west-central Iraq on Jan. 17, 1991, during Operation Desert Storm.

Acting in part on information provided by an Iraqi citizen in early July, Multi National Force – West's (MNF-W) personnel recovery team went to a location in the desert, which was believed to be the crash site of Speicher's jet. The Iraqi, a Bedouin, was 11 years old at the time of the crash and did not have direct knowledge of where Speicher was buried, but knew of other Bedouins who did. He

willingly provided his information during general discussion with MNF-W personnel and stated he was unaware of the U.S. government's interest in this case until queried by U.S. investigators in July 2009.

The Iraqi citizens led MNF-W's personnel recovery team to the area they believed Speicher was buried. The area where the remains were recovered was located approximately 100 kilometers west of Ramadi, in Anbar province. There were two sites that teams searched. One site was next to the downed aircraft that was discovered in 1993 and the other site was approximately two kilometers away. The second site was where Speicher's remains were recovered.

The recovery personnel searched two sites from July 22-29. The personnel recovery team consisted of approximately 150 people, mostly Marines and other forces under MNF-W.

The recovered remains include bones and multiple skeletal fragments. Based on visual examination of the remains and dental records at the site, a preliminary assessment was reached that the remains were that of Speicher. After searching the site another day, no further remains were recovered.

On July 30, the remains were turned over from the recovery team to MNF-W mortuary affairs at Al Asad. The remains were then transported to Dover Port Mortuary at Dover Air Force Base, Del. They were examined by the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology's (AFIP) Armed Forces medical examiner who positively identified them as those of Speicher on Aug. 1.

Positive identification by AFIP was made by comparing Speicher's dental records with the jawbone recovered at the site. The teeth were a match, both visually and radiographically. AFIP's DNA Lab in Rockville, Md., confirmed the remains to be Speicher on Aug. 2 via DNA comparison tests of the remains by comparing them to DNA reference samples previously provided by family members.

One home; lose another

Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl, 23, was serving with an Alaska-based infantry regiment earlier this month when he vanished, just five months after arriving in Afghanistan. He was serving at a base near the border with Pakistan in an area known to be a Taliban stronghold.



Bergdahl is from Hailey, a town of about 7,000 people in central Idaho where he worked as a barista and was active in ballet. A sign hangs in the window of Zaney's River Street Coffee House says "Get Bowe Back," and a message inside asked customers to "Join all of us at Zaney's holding light for our friend."

Sue Martin, owner of the coffee shop, said she knew Bergdahl as a free-spirited young man with blonde hair who rode his bicycle everywhere in town and was keen to learn as much as he could about the world.

"He joined the ballet. Then he joined the Army," Martin said in an interview from a room at Zaney's, which has become an impromptu meeting place for friends, acquaintances and the media since the Taliban video was shown around the world. "People have been calling and asking what they could bring to show their support."

Bergdahl's family issued a statement asking people to keep the soldier in their thoughts and prayers, but told The Associated Press that the family was requesting media respect their privacy. Neighbors and others in the community have known for weeks that Bergdahl had been captured, but said the family urged them not to talk about

the kidnapping out of fear that publicity would compromise his safety. Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter told the AP that he had been working to keep the soldier's name quiet until it was officially released.

In the video posted Saturday on a Web site pointed out by the Taliban, Bergdahl says his name and his hometown. The Pentagon has confirmed his identity.

"We hope and pray for our son's safe return to his comrades and then to our family, and we appreciate all the support and expressions of sympathy shown to us by our family members, our friends and others across the nation," Bob Bergdahl, the soldier's father, said in a statement issued through the Department of Defense.

The family, described by neighbors as deeply private, lives six miles west of Hailey on a remote gravel county road. The humble home has a metal roof and several outbuildings, and vehicles parked in front. The family has chained and locked the front gate, and a small cardboard sign says: "No visitors."

Neighbors are abiding by the family's wishes not to comment on the record about Bergdahl's capture, but described the 23-year-old as an "adventurous" soul who was educated at home, danced ballet and took part in a sport fencing club, the Sun Valley Swords.

One of the directors of the Sun Valley Ballet School in Ketchum said Bergdahl performed with the group for four or five years until about 2008.

"He's athletic," Jill Brennan said. "He just had a knack for it. He's a wonderful young man."

In the 28-minute video, Bergdahl said he was "scared I won't be able to go home." He said he was lagging behind a patrol when he was captured, which conflicts with earlier military accounts that indicated he walked off the base with three Afghans.

It wasn't clear who initially captured Bergdahl, but the U.S. command in Afghanistan said he was being held by the Taliban and condemned the video as a violation of international law.

"I'm glad to see he appears unharmed, but again, this is a Taliban propaganda video," spokeswoman Lt. Cmdr. Christine Sidenstricker said. "They are exploiting the soldier in violation of international law."

With a shaved head and dressed in a nondescript, gray outfit, Bergdahl was shown eating at one point and sitting cross-legged. He choked up when discussing his family and his hope to marry his girlfriend.

"I have a very, very good family that I love back home in America," Bergdahl said.

The Pentagon identified his hometown as Ketchum, which is about half the size of Hailey and about 12 miles north. His family says he grew up in Blaine County, closer to Hailey.

Hailey is a mix of a working-class community and resort town, just down the road from upscale Sun Valley, a ski resort that's home to celebrities including Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Hanks and Sen. John Kerry. Bruce Willis maintains a vacation home in the area and owns local businesses.

Bergdahl is a member of 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, based at Fort Richardson, Alaska.

He entered the Army in June 2008 and was trained in Fort Benning, Ga., said Lt. Col. Jonathan Allen, spokesman for Fort Richardson. Bergdahl reported for duty in Alaska in October, and deployed to Afghanistan in February.

In the video, Bergdahl said the date was July 14; it's clear the video was made no earlier because Bergdahl repeated an exaggerated Taliban claim about a Ukrainian helicopter that was shot down that day.

He was interviewed in English and asked his views on the war, which he called extremely hard; his desire to learn more about Islam; and the morale of American soldiers, which he said was low. He was prompted by his interrogators to give a message to the American people.

"Please, please bring us home so that we can be back where we belong and not over here, wasting

our time and our lives and our precious life that we could be using back in our own country," he said.

The circumstances of Bergdahl's capture weren't clear, but apparently he was trailing his unit and was captured.

On July 2, two U.S. officials told the AP the soldier had "just walked off" his base with three Afghans after his shift. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak on the record.

On July 6, the Taliban claimed on their Web site that five days earlier "a drunken American soldier had come out of his garrison" and was captured by mujahedeen.

Details of such incidents are routinely held very tightly by the military as it works to retrieve a missing or captured soldier without giving away any information to captors.

Afghans in contact with the Taliban told the AP that the soldier was held by a Taliban group led by a commander called Maulvi Sangin. They said the fighters decided to move him north into Taliban-controlled areas of Ghazni province.

The Afghans spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of arrest or reprisal. It was impossible to independently confirm their information.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, said the militants holding the soldier haven't yet set any conditions for his release.

Keep these men in your prayers this month!



Military Humor

Having passed the enlistment physical, Jon was asked by the doctor, "Why do you want to join the Navy, son?"

"My father said it'd be a good idea, sir."

"Oh? And what does your father do?"

"He's in the Army, sir."

Reflections 'A closer look'



Last hope for blue water vets

Veterans Corner / Bobbye C. Jerone

Like the Cavalry in an old western movie, House Veterans' Affairs Committee Chairman Bob Filner [D-CA] has ridden to the rescue of the 'Blue Water Navy' Veterans. These are Veterans who have been excluded from receiving any disability compensation due to exposure to Agent Orange and the other toxic chemicals sprayed in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. Rep. Filner has introduced a new law [H.R. 2254], which, if passed, will restore equity to all Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange.

Before 2002, it didn't matter where a person served in the Vietnam War. If a person became disabled due to the exposure to the terrible poisons in the air and waterways, VA would pay disability compensation. In February 2002, Congress decided to 'save our taxpayers money' and ordered VA to implement a 'foot on the ground' policy. After this policy revision, only service members who actually set foot on the ground in Vietnam could get paid for the terrible medical conditions from Agent Orange and the other herbicides that were routinely sprayed. The soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines serving in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos and the China Sea were exempt from payment even though they were contaminated by these toxins just like their brothers in arms who served on the ground, in Vietnam itself.

Those of you who read this column know that the lawsuit that followed was won by the Veterans at every rung of the judicial ladder until it got to the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. That Court sided with the VA and against the Veterans. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the case early this year. So this bill, introduced by Congressman Filner is the last hope for the 'Blue Water Navy Vets'.

This is the second time Congressman Filner has introduced a bill like this one – which will lay to

rest the issue of 'presumptive contamination' once and for all. The first one, introduced last year, died in committee. If every person who thinks this issue is important doesn't contact his/her congressperson this time and insist on passage, then this one will die also – and with it the hope of disability compensation for all these brave and very sick Veterans.

Time is running out. The Veterans who served on the ships just off shore are suffering from the same diseases as their 'ground pounding' brethren. They are dying by the thousands from the same diseases. Now a new disease has been added to the list of medical disorders presumed to be caused by exposure to the herbicides, known collectively as Agent Orange. That new addition is AL Amyloidosis, a usually fatal disorder. This brings to twelve [12] the number of diseases that are accepted to be caused by exposure to herbicides [Agent Orange] during the Vietnam War.

H.R. 2254 is intended to clarify the law so that the Blue Water Veterans and every service member awarded the Vietnam Service medal, or who otherwise deployed to land, sea or air, in the Republic of Vietnam is fully covered by the comprehensive Agent Orange laws Congress passed in 1991. If it passes, this bill will make it easier for VA to process Vietnam War Veterans' claims for service connected disabilities that are linked to exposure to toxins during the Vietnam War. It will remove the arbitrary exclusion of a Veteran based solely on where he/she served – not whether or not he/she was exposed.

Chairman John Hall heads the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, the subcommittee that has jurisdiction over these issues in Congress. He stated, "With this legislation, Congress will leave no doubt that the 'Blue Water Navy' and all combat Veterans of the Vietnam War are intended to be covered and compensated; thus ensuring that these Veterans will receive the disability benefits they earned and deserve for exposure to Agent Orange. This is the cost of war. We asked these brave men and women to fight for us and serve their country, and it is a grave injustice that they have had to wait this long

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for treatment. We must place care of our soldiers among our top priorities.”

Rep. Filner also said, “Time is running out for these Veterans. Many are dying from their Agent Orange related diseases, uncompensated for their sacrifice. We are a country at war; we must prove that we will be there for all of our Veterans, no matter where they serve – or have served. The courts have turned their backs on our Veterans, but I believe this Congress will not allow our Veterans to be cheated of their earned benefits.”

The only way Chairmen Hall and Filner can win this battle is if every one of us private citizens contacts our Congressperson and encourages him/her to vote for Bill H.R. 2254. Please do not let this last hope of these brave Veterans die in committee.



EXTRA

Some of you know her, most of you don't but she's one of a special breed, the American Soldier. This month I'd like to let you know about the special family she belongs to as well.

A Father, Daughter and Granddaughter all served or are serving our country.

First of all there is the Father, Anthony Schepis.



Anthony was born in the home of the cheese steak and huge pretzels, Philadelphia PA.

He served in the U.S. Army. He retired after 22 years. He joined the CC Camps (Civilian Conservation Camps) in Pennsylvania and then joined the Army at 18.

All of his Duty Posts unknown but: he served in the Pacific Theater during WWII, Munich, Germany, Ft Polk, LA, Ft Devens, MA, Ft Meade, MD, Ft Leonard Wood, MO, Korea and Ft Bliss, TX

Some of the awards received by Anthony were the Combat infantryman badge, Bronze Star, Army Good Conduct, American Defense Service, American Campaign, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign, WWII Victory and WWII Honorable Service

His Daughter, Susan ‘Patches’ Hopkins was born at Ft Meade, Maryland and was ‘in the Army’ until her father retired while she was still in grade school. The family continued to live in PA from then until Sue graduated from high school.



At that time the Women's Army Corps WAC was growing very rapidly and she wanted to change from Army brat to become all that she could be! So she joined right after graduating from high school. Eventually the Women's Army Corps was abolished in 1978 and was no longer a separate component of the US Army. Susan states, “I am proud of the fact that I was a WAC.” (I also received MSM (2d).)

1975 - 1983 Active / 1983 - 1997 Reserve

Susan went to Basic Training - Ft Jackson, SC. Then onto AIT - Ft Ben Harrison, IN Her Duty Stations were: Ft Meade, MD. Bad Kreuznach, Germany, Reserve AT, Ft Hood, TX, Ft, Bragg, NC, Ft Bliss, TX, Honduras, Korea, Germany, Panama

Some of the awards received by Susan were the Good Conduct (3rd); ARCOM (2d); SVC Ribbon; Overseas SVC Ribbon and the Meritorious Service Medal (2).

That's not where the story ends. Anthony's Granddaughter, Susan's baby, is Maria Hopkins

Maria recently joined the Army! How could she not with all that history in her Army Pride in her family?

She was born in Cincinnati but lived in Northern Kentucky all of her life. Maria said she always knew she would serve but wanted to be on her own a little before she did. She decided to join at age 21.

She is very athletic and has earned a brown belt in karate, she always scores 100% on PT both for her running and push-ups – I'm glad we did not have this crap in the Navy! Mom boasts that Maria “learns quickly and is very independent and that she is also an excellent marksman, qualifying expert in both M4 and grenades, although she prefers grenades.”



(Maria – She look like she prefers grenades?)

There is no doubt that with her lineage and training Maria will make an "excellent NCO" and that's backed up by he drill sergeants and her current chain of command as well as her mom.

She is deploying to Tuz, Iraq north of Tikrit Iraq. Just for some history, Maria went to Basic Training and AIT at Ft Leonard Wood, MO from Jan 21st to June 6th this year. Her first permanent station was at Ft Riley.

Maria's MOS is 31B Military Police. HHC, 4IBCT, Ft Riley "Dragon Brigade", so although she's a beautiful woman I don't think you want to get on her bad side remember that Karate thing and her love for the grenades. So my advice is for all of us to respect the woman and the uniform and remember she's probably much like her 'pit bull' mother!

We all wish her Godspeed and hope she returns to Mom and us healthy and happy!

PATCHES



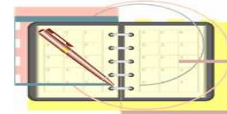
They say it's your *Birthday!*



Ditzy

9/2

Upcoming Events



Friday O **POW/MIA Day**
September **Meet at 5:30 PM at the Blue**
16th **Ash Veterans Memorial**

S = Suggested / O = Official / I - Info

Have an Idea for an article send it to Spy!

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