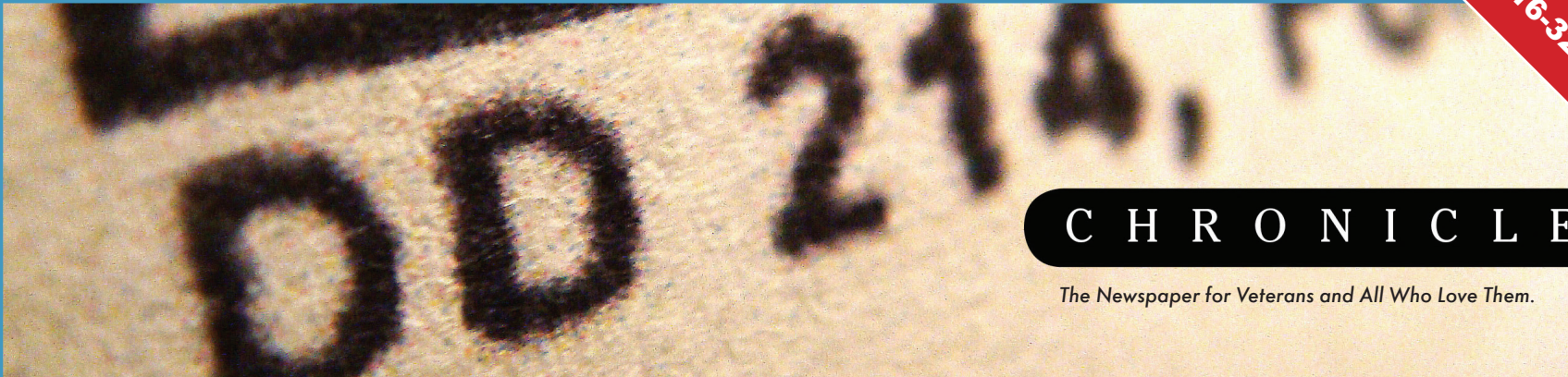



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See page 22...



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STAND AT EASE *By Don Stark, Publisher /Sales Manager*



Donald C. Stark

Every so often, a friend or relative does something surprising, that makes life both more enjoyable and more comfortable.

Life being life, we all have good days and bad. We can only hope the good outweigh the rest. Something happened the other day to make the good come to the front for me. A phone call did that for me.

A call from a friend and client at the Ohio Veterans Memorial Park had news, which has been on my mind for several days now.

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Although I am only the messenger of this man's wish, I am happy to be a tiny part of his consideration for another injured veteran. I only hope my message makes another person feel as much better as it did for me.

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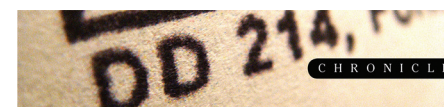
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Orange Juice, Memories, Tears and a Salute to Women of the Vietnam War

By Brian Albrecht

In 1971, in the life-or-death confines of an intensive care unit of the Army's 24th Evacuation hospital in Vietnam, a mortally wounded soldier asked nurse Stephanie Genthon for a glass of orange juice. When she told him he couldn't have anything to drink because of his abdominal wound, the soldier sighed and said, "I'm dead anyway. It doesn't matter."

Genthon left to find a doctor, who affirmed: No OJ. Fifteen minutes later, the soldier was dead.

Twenty-two years later, when Genthon visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial ("the Wall") in Washington, DC, she brought a small cup of orange juice with her, placed it at the memorial's panel inscribed with the names of soldiers who had died in 1971, then quietly walked away.

On Veterans Day in 2023, this gesture of care in the face of futility was repeated at the Wall, not far from the Vietnam Women's Memorial on the 30th anniversary of that monument's salute to the more than 10,000 women, mostly nurses, who served in Vietnam. It took another war of sorts just to get that monument established, when Diane Carlson Evans, a former Vietnam nurse, came up with the idea in 1984. She later explained that the memorial was important because "women's service during the Vietnam era was virtually unknown in our country, as were the emotional wounds they carried that were yet to heal."

To Michele Genthon, of Seattle, last year's anniversary at



Genthon in uniform: Vietnam nurse Stephanie Genthon grew up in a military family in Mississippi. During World War II, their mother was a Navy WAVE (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service), and her father (who served in France during World War I) worked at the Pentagon.



OJ at foot of memorial: A small cup of orange juice was left at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial by Michele Genthon to continue a tradition set by her late sister Stephanie, who served as a nurse in Vietnam, representing a last gesture of care she was unable to give a dying soldier. (Mary Reynolds Powell photo)



Genthon @ VN Women's Memorial: Stephanie Genthon, an Army nurse who served in Vietnam, but never talked about the war, is shown during a prior visit to the Vietnam Women's Memorial. (Her sister, Michele, recently recalled that once when she asked Stephanie about Vietnam, "She responded in a clipped tone, 'I still have nightmares.' Then the door to her face slammed shut and I did not ask any more questions - ever." (Michele Genthon photo)



Visitors to the Vietnam Women's Memorial this past Veterans Day to celebrate its 30th anniversary included many women who served in Vietnam. (Doug Powell photo)



Powell and Evans: Mary Reynolds Powell, right, an Army nurse who served in Vietnam, poses with Diane Carlson Evans, a fellow Vietnam nurse who came up with the idea for the Vietnam Women's Memorial, where they are standing. (Mary Reynolds Powell photo)

the monument was a chance to salute and honor her sister, Stephanie, who died in 2021.

Stephanie kept her role in the Vietnam war in “an impenetrable box in which she had encased her memories,” Michele said.

But Stephanie did talk to a fellow nurse at the Evac hospital in Long Binh, Mary Reynolds Powell, of Cleveland, who wrote a book about her experiences, *“A World of Hurt.”*

The orange juice story was in that book, and Michele said her sister sent a copy to her family, explaining “so those I love will know the stories I will never tell.” And never did. Michele attended last year’s anniversary ceremony at the memorial with her niece, Sharmel Genthon, and she recalled, “I did an awful lot of crying, more than when my sister died. She (Sharmel) held me and we cried together.”

She was also joined on the visit by Powell, who was struck by the candlelight (mostly cell phones) ceremony at the Vietnam Women’s Memorial the night before the anniversary, and the remarks of speakers, all military women, on Veterans Day. As Powell listened, past emotions, not memories, swept through her. “Just overwhelming sadness and heartache,” she recalled.

Michele said she was touched by the memorial’s design, created by artist Glenna Goodacre. “The artistry of it, the sculptor captured not only the actions of people, but their emotions . . . their anxiety, their hopefulness,” she said. “I can see my sister as one of these women.” So why the orange juice donation?

“I think she must’ve carried in her heart some regret about that moment [involving the dying soldier] and wanted to make it right,” Michele said. “I think that helping nature stayed with her through her whole life, though I’m not sure she ever did make peace with Vietnam,” she added.

Continuing her sister’s donation at the Wall was partly a means of coping with her own loss, according to Michele. “I felt it might be a way to close the circle. It turned out there’s still a hole in my heart, but it doesn’t hurt as much anymore. I feel more at peace with it,” she said.

To Powell, bringing the cup of OJ to the Wall “is a reflection of what we could not do for these guys.” Carrying on that tradition is a way to honor Stephanie Genthon’s feelings and the pain she carried, Powell added.

A glass of orange juice. A small gesture, perhaps. Or maybe one that fully embodies the spirit of the Vietnam Women’s Memorial; of hope in the face of suffering and sadness.

And perhaps somewhere, a certain soldier is smiling.



Powell and roses: Vietnam nurse Mary Reynolds Powell said the Vietnam Women’s Memorial “indicates the emotional connection that we had with the guys who were put in that horrible situation. While we were in-country, we could not feel those emotions, because we couldn’t have functioned.” (Mary Reynolds Powell photo)



Vietnam Women’s Memorial: The Vietnam Women’s Memorial, located near the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, celebrated its 30th anniversary this past Veterans Day. When it was unveiled, Gen. Colin Powell noted that the memorial, depicting three nurses at the side of a stricken soldier, represented “a testament to a group of American women who made an extraordinary sacrifice at an extraordinary time in our nation’s history.” (National Park Service photo)

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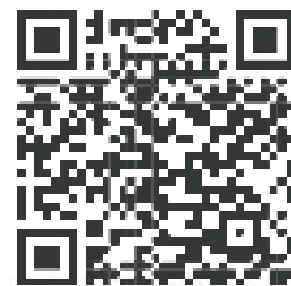
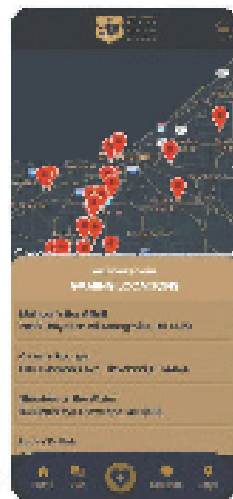
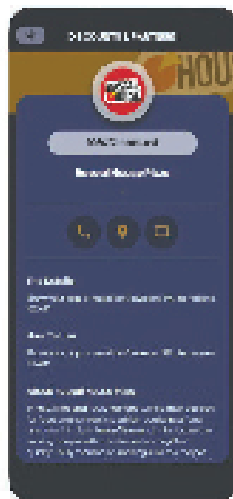
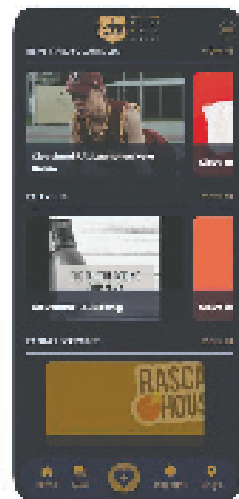


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Lou and Browns Fans Resume Their Acquaintance

By Peace Action Cleveland | posted in: Travels With A Peace Flag

August 11—For the first time since the last NFL season ended, I was downtown yesterday evening greeting folks headed to Cleveland Browns Stadium, formerly the politically incorrect FirstEnergy Stadium, for the Browns' first preseason game, pitting the team against the Washington Commanders, formerly the politically incorrect Washington Redskins. Highlighting the evening was a rather testy comment from a young employee of the Cuyahoga

County Sheriff's Department, who I assume was a deputy sheriff.

After standing about a hundred yards from the southwest gate of the stadium for a couple of hours greeting football fans, an unexpected rainfall began, and I sought shelter under the Main Avenue bridge overpass. Winds off of Lake Erie resulted in the rain blowing onto me so I blocked the rain-soaked wind by standing next to a SWAT vehicle with the word SHERIFF in gold letters on the side. The driver's door was open, and a fellow deputy was in the passenger seat. Since they were a "captive audience", I started to proselytize for peace. Being

a Vietnam veteran, I said, "I'm promoting peace. We were sent to Vietnam to kill communists and today, Vietnam, a communist country, is our ally against China. All those lives wasted. "When people thank me for serving our country I sometimes say, 'I didn't serve my country. I served deceitful, lying, fear mongering warmongering politicians and their war-profiteering bed partners'. "Those truly serving our country are medics, nurses, doctors and mental health professionals who work very very hard to mend as best they can the psyches and bodies of those savaged and ravaged by war. They're the real war heroes."

In retrospect, the deputy in the passenger seat apparently was getting his fill

of my comments, with the "last straw" being my observation that "We call ourselves a Christian nation—followers of the Prince of Peace. What a sick joke that is." The annoyed deputy said he didn't want to hear any more "speeches" and I said, "Oh, okay. I'm just explaining why I'm here." and I walked away, toward the stream of Browns and a few Commanders fans heading to the stadium despite the rain, with many wearing plastic ponchos.

Speaking of medics, a short time later a young man, George, and his friend Dylan, stopped to chat. Turns out George had been an Army combat medic and truck driver in Afghanistan. Both were so appreciative of my peace message that George asked one of the fans heading to the stadium to take a photo of us with his cell phone. It turned out to be a beautiful picture as the setting sun had broken through the rain clouds and the lighting on the three of us and my peace flag was perfect.... suitable for framing. George, now an Army reservist, said he is running for a seat on the Brookpark City Council but if he doesn't win, he will apply for active duty and ask to be sent back to the Middle East, saying he wants to again help save lives rather than take lives.



Earlier in the evening a young woman said she liked my flag and I said, as is my wont, "Thanks. I wish everyone did." At the other end of the spectrum, another young woman walking by said, "What kind of bullshit flag is that!?" I said nothing. When the rain ended, about 8:45, the idea came to mind to end the evening on a high note with the deputy sheriffs, so I walked back to their vehicle and said, "Good evening gentlemen. Maybe I'll see you again...but I won't make any speeches. They smiled and the aggrieved deputy said, "Have a good one."

Originally published at:

<https://www.peaceactioncleveland.org/2023/08/12/lou-and-browns-fans-resume-their-acquaintance/>



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Lorain County Leads In Veteran Suicide Prevention

By JC Sullivan

In May, 1886, after the Civil War was over, and the US was in the period of reconstruction, the Ohio Legislature created the Ohio Soldiers and Sailors Relief Commission. The state legislature felt a need to repay the debt owed to Ohio's Civil War veterans, along with concerns for their families, and formulated this set of laws to provide financial assistance for Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and their dependents or survivors.

The Soldier's Relief Commission functioned for nearly sixty years, providing for Ohio veterans' needs, with little change, and each Soldier's Relief Commission acting as a separate entity.

The Mission of the Lorain County Veterans Service Commission (LCVSC) is dedicated to delivering the finest quality of help and service to their veterans, dependents and survivors. LCVSC is a county agency funded by Lorain County taxes. The Commission works closely with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Human Services, Social Security Administration, and various other Federal, State and local agencies.

In conjunction with their 2nd Annual Race to End Veterans Suicide, DD214 Chronicle caught up with Executive Director Jacob Smith, himself a U.S. Army Veteran. When asked why more veterans in Lorain County don't call the agency, he believes veterans don't know it exists. "Each county has a Veterans Service Commission, so they don't think to call us here in Lorain. Another reason they don't is because there are so many veteran benefits out there and they think 'Well, I don't qualify for anything.' But actually there are many veterans that qualify for benefits from VA that they don't even know about themselves. So, for us to draw attention to the very important topic of veteran suicides, they need to know, not only are we somewhat one-of-a-kind in Ohio, but nationally as well."

Smith kindly referred us to the person who was inspired to start the Suicide Awareness Program, Kristol Mayer, a Lorain County Veteran Service Officer and U.S. Navy veteran.

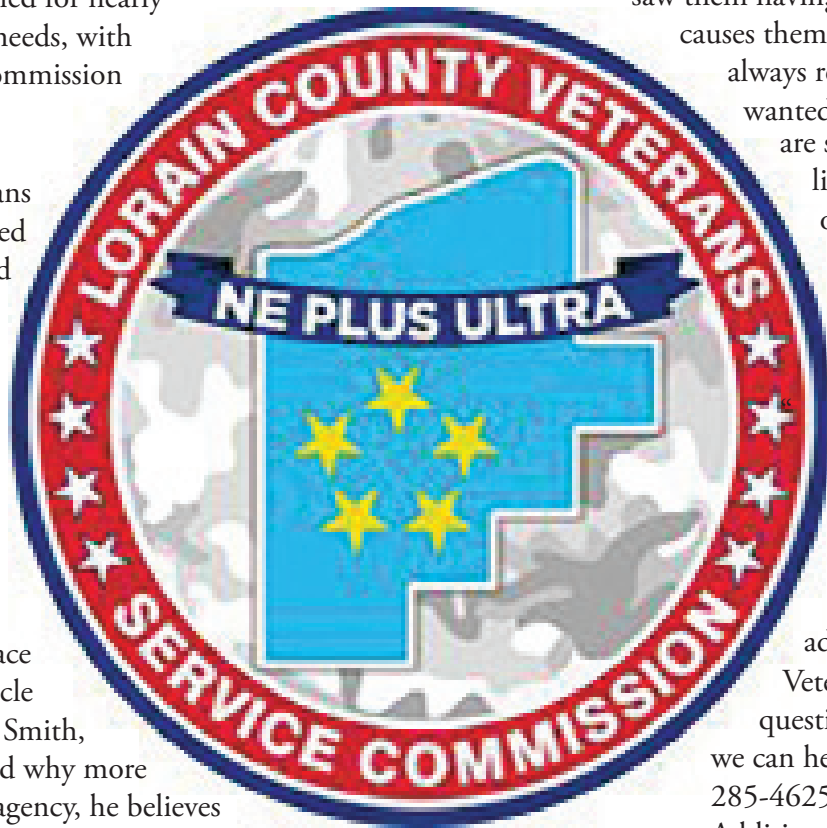
"I noticed that American mental health crises were so close to home that I felt the need to do something within our community," said Mayer.

"Not only does PTSD affect those returning from combat but we also saw them having issues like anxiety and depression that causes them to end up in a crisis. Veterans' suicide isn't always related to combat. This was something I wanted to bring to veteran awareness. When they are sole providers and are adjusting to civilian life, they have a lot of pressure and weight on their shoulders. "We think sometimes veterans once they leave the service maybe had a bad experience and don't want to go back to that environment."

"The veterans who don't know about the Lorain County Veteran Service Office can be walked through the agency to connect them with the resources each may need. Further, they can be introduced to benefits they can take advantage of through the Department of Veteran Affairs (aka VA). If they have questions about anything related to their service, we can help. We also ask that they call (440-285-4625) so we can give them the information. Additionally, they can find us on <https://www.facebook.com/LorainCountyVeterans/> or on the website [LorainCountyVeterans.com](https://www.LorainCountyVeterans.com). We can help them apply for these benefits and also let them know that if they end up in a crisis there are resources for them."

Veterans who live outside Lorain County can also call the Lorain County Office at 440-285-4625 for information or referrals.

Author Sullivan is a U.S. Army veteran who served with the 2nd Armored Division in the U.S. and Europe.



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A Connection at the Heart

By Mary Reynolds Powell

Author: *A World of Hurt: Between Innocence and Arrogance in Vietnam*

In May, 1971, I was stationed at the 24th Evacuation Hospital in Vietnam. In July 2018, John Schaninger, a patient, found me after securing hospital records for a VA claim. Our connection has helped heal both of us.

Working in Internal Medicine, I cared for soldiers with illnesses not usually connected with war: malaria, encephalitis, typhus, septicemia, gastrointestinal bleeds, pneumonia, and cardiac problems. Some arrived on stretchers; others dragged weak bodies through the door saying, "I'd have to get better to die." John was typical. His records, covering two weeks, filled 401 pages. Here are excerpts from our exchange:

July 25, 2018:

Mary, I wanted to write to say THANK YOU AND PLEASE THANK ALL THE NURSES! I don't know if I was nice or nasty, but in retrospect, I sure was grateful for the help. I was diagnosed with Cellulitis, Staph Septicemia, Bilateral Pneumonia and Endocarditis.

It was an extremely painful time; I wondered to myself more than once if I should just hold my breath and quit, because my reward for getting better was to go back out in the bush for another five months. But I decided to live anyhow. On day seven, the doctor told me I was going to recover. I asked: "When do I go back to the bush?" He replied, "Didn't I tell you? You're going home!" Stunned and incredibly happy, I could feel the tension inside me drain away. All the nurses and doctors were caring and helpful.

July 26, 2018:

John, I'm in tears. I'm so glad you felt we cared about you and all the guys. I wish I could remember you. It was always so busy; everyone was so sick. THANK YOU for reaching out to me.

August 10, 2018:

Mary, I felt sad I made you cry, but upon reflection realized you had never been thanked for your care. As for me, I am fine for the most part. I hope all goes well with you and yours. Feel free to contact me or to use what I have told you if you wish.

August 10, 2018:

John, I burst into tears when you said we had provided good care. We had so many very sick guys. To hear you could feel our caring was priceless. We had a great team of nurses and corpsmen. I connected deeply when you wrote that you considered holding your breath, because your reward for getting better would be to go back to the bush. Long after coming home,

I realized that was the deepest pain we nurses felt and we couldn't talk about it. To return you guys to health and then send you back to the bush was the worst, and we couldn't talk about it! Your reaching out closes a circle in a way I hadn't imagined.

August 12, 2018:

Mary: Thank you very much for your note. It affected me very deeply. I sobbed and I have never let myself cry. I never wanted to hurt you. I just wanted to say thank you. I was shocked I made you cry and felt terrible about it. I now know that it did not hurt you, but helped you. At that time, I said to myself, "damn it, you did it again." I rarely spoke with anyone about those times. I never even told my parents about those times to avoid hurting them. I just kept it inside. It stunned me that I helped you with closure about those times. (As if there could be closure).

October 30, 2022:

Mary: I am sure what we both felt has been felt by many, but most have never been able to communicate with others who shared the pain. Everyone buried it inside. Discussing it was almost considered a sin. We were told to suck it up and shut up. We were considered cowards because we could never forget it. Once more, thank you,

Mary and John have remained close friends as John has wrestled with more issues related to his experience in Vietnam. They met in person in October 2022. The Connection continues



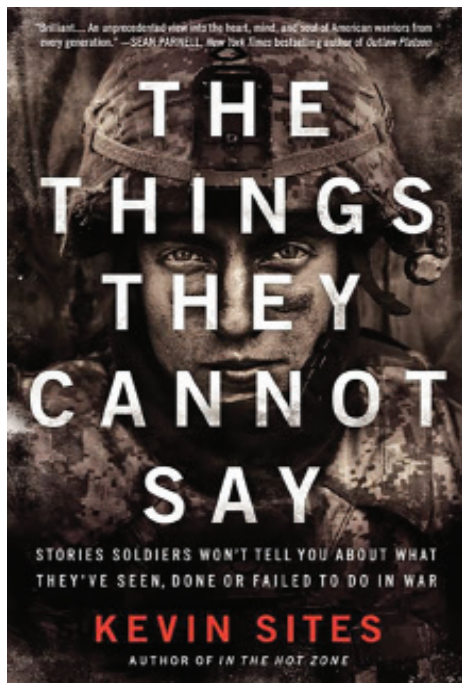
*John Schaninger, PFC, patient on Ward 7, May 30-June 13, 1971
Mary Reynolds Powell, CPT, Army Nurse Corp,
24th Evacuation Hospital, Ward 7, 1970- 1971*

War Correspondent Shares Stories Soldiers Won't Tell You

By Nancy Peacock

He never fired a weapon. But journalist Kevin Sites is haunted by what it feels like to kill someone in combat. And it is why he felt compelled to write *The Things They Cannot Say: Stories Soldiers Won't Tell You About What They've Seen, Done or Failed to Do in War*. (Harper Perennial, 2013)

A self-described “danger dilettante,” Sites began his career as a novice 23-year-old freelance journalist, covering the U.S.-backed war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua in 1986.



“I felt like I had transcended my small-town Ohio upbringing and had become part of the larger world, one that was comprised of excitement, danger and men with guns,” Sites wrote. “While I never saw combat there ... it was my first taste that would eventually help make war my heroin.”

His “addiction to war” came to an end in November, 2004. Sites was filming a Marine methodically shooting wounded prisoners in a mosque. The Marine left the mosque and one of the wounded prisoners named Taleb Salem Nidal, who had been hiding under a blanket, revealed himself to Sites and begged for his help. Sites turned his video camera away and walked out of the room. Three years after the mosque shooting, Sites filed a Freedom of Information Act request with the U.S. government to find out what had happened to the prisoner. He learned that Nidal had been killed with 23 bullet rounds fired into his back.

“Had I simply walked Nidal out of the mosque, he might’ve lived,” Sites wrote. “He had been the only witness besides me. Left alone in the aftermath, he never had a chance. To this day, I can’t begin to fathom how I could have been so stupid.”

His attempt to deal with the resulting Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) took on the all-too-familiar responses of addiction and abuse. He became curious about how other PTSD combat victims dealt with their experiences. He reached out to veterans he met during his time as a war correspondent and asked them fundamental questions: what is it like to kill in war; to be shot, bombed or burned; what can never be forgotten; what is it like to kill your own men or civilians with friendly fire, and how do you know what is right?

His research was distilled into the personal narratives of 11 veterans from the United States, Israel, and Holland. The result is a gripping account of the lives that were forever changed by their actions.

“It was, after all, their perspective as combatants that I was seeking,” he wrote. “They are difficult stories all, and I’m both grateful and hopeful that these acts of sharing will help bring these soldiers, and those who surround them, some peace.”



Author Kevin Sites

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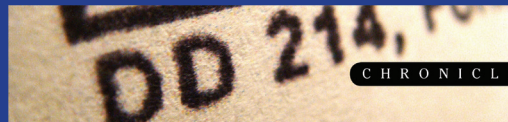
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Cleveland Veterans Day Celebration

By Christopher Zurawski

Cleveland gathered on 10 November in the city's great rotunda at 1100 hours to honor its veterans and their service to our great nation. Presiding over the ceremony was COL James Riley, US Army (ret.). Those gathered were also honored to hear a warm welcome from the Cleveland Safety Director, Kerrie Howard (US Air Force), US Representative Shontel Brown and Anthony Eliopoulos (US Army) of Senator Sherrod Brown's office.

During the ceremony, several awards were presented to Veterans for their outstanding service and achievements. Most noteworthy was the recipient of the "Martin L. Flask Legacy Award for Commitment to Veterans, Public Service and Humankind" presented to Cleveland Police Detective and US Coast Guard Veteran Christopher Porter. He is assigned to the Cleveland Division of Police's Employee Assistance Unit as the Military Liaison and Return to Duty Program Coordinator. He also runs the Healthy Heroes Program, partnering with the Cleveland Clinic, to help officers' physical health through proper diet and physical activity; as well as the K9 handler for the Division's first Officer Support Dog, to help officers' mental health and deal with trauma. He grew up the son of two police officers, is the brother to a fallen officer, and is engaged to Cleveland Police Officer Stephanie Martinez. Chris continues to serve in the US Coast Guard as a Petty Officer.

Molly Carlin, of the Cleveland American Veteran Association, received the Judge Felix T. Matia Outstanding Service Award for Service to Veterans and Community. Molly Carlin, a dedicated advocate for Veterans and community leader, has held the position of president at the Cleveland American Veterans Association (CAVA) since 2011. CAVA, a 501(c)(3) veterans charity established in 2009, traces its origins back to a pivotal moment in 2009, when it recognized that many WWII, Korean Conflict, and Vietnam Veterans were unaware of a generous VA benefit designed to provide a monthly cash income for their care and that of their surviving spouses. Under Molly's leadership, CAVA has played a pivotal role in identifying eligible families, educating them, and assisting them in completing the necessary VA claim forms. The Aid and Attendance funds secured through these efforts are instrumental in enhancing the care and comfort of aging veterans and their spouses. Notably, CAVA, under Molly's guidance, has successfully obtained this vital

benefit for over 4,000 Cleveland-area Veteran families, resulting in an impressive \$40 million being directly disbursed by the VA to support senior Veterans.

The Veteran honoree of the Judge Felix T. Matia Outstanding Service Award Service to Veterans and Community was Walter Collins. Walt is a distinguished 83-year-old native of Mt. Pleasant. He has led a life dedicated to supporting Veterans and advocating for their well-being. While semi-retired, his commitment to the cause rivals that of public officials with whom he collaborates in Cleveland. During a public City Council meeting, Walter courageously challenged officials to do more to support Cleveland Veterans. Walter emphasizes the importance of proactive programs for Veterans, particularly those with "invisible wounds" such as TBI and PTSD.

Two outstanding Citizen Soldiers were honored by NEOPAT during the ceremony. SSG (ret.) Pete Schmitt of Tri-C and William Olmstead of CSU. Pete is an Army NCO and three-time Iraqi Veteran. He also graduated Summa Cum Laude from Tri-C in 2020 and transferred to Arizona State University to complete a bachelor's degree in Global Logistics Management. He also decided to come back to Tri-C to pursue a certification in Paralegal Studies. William deployed twice to the Middle East and served in Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. He completed his first year of law school at CSU, College of Law in 2022 and then volunteered for a deployment to Baghdad, Iraq for a year. There he served as the Security Forces Commander for Coalition Forces in the Iraqi capital. He returned to Cleveland in August 2023 and resumed law school, where he is currently a Dean's Leadership Fellow.

The ceremony concluded with great words of wisdom from RADM Michael Parks, USCG (ret.), the current CEO of the American Red Cross. RADM Parks spoke of resilience and how the Veterans of America are strong. We are a brotherhood and sisterhood like no other. In the face of adversity, we stand strong and support one another—we remain strong and always support our families and communities. This is why the awards we presented today were so important. Veterans continue to serve and will always serve.

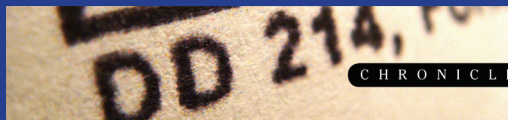
Ohio State House Overwatch

This is a summary of activities taken by the VFW Legislative team working closely with state lawmakers to ensure Veterans' Rights and Benefits are both protected and improved. This is not a complete list of the activities, however, it is an important compilation of what is affecting Veterans in Ohio. The names of the Ohio Representatives and Senators mentioned are only for information purposes. For further information about Ohio's current activities, visit www.legislature.ohio.gov.

November hearings began with House Bill 242 in the House Higher Education Committee. HB 242 establishes the Armed Forces Reserve Component Scholarship Program and related funds beginning on July 1, 2025. It was the fourth hearing for HB 242 and Ranking Member Joseph A. Miller, III (District 53) brought forth an amendment that was accepted before the committee voted 13-0 to favorably pass the bill. The Primary sponsors of the bill are Reps. Adam C. Miller (District 6) and Dick Stein (District 54). The House Pensions Committee held the first and second and hearings for House Bill 310 which was introduced by Rep. Don Jones (District 95) at the end of October. Jones gave sponsor testimony on the 14th and the committee heard proponent testimony on the 28th when two witnesses testified. This bill makes changes to the cost for a State Teachers Retirement System (STRS) member to purchase military service credit according to the Legislative Service Commission analysis.

The House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony on House Bill 254 twice in November. The bill, introduced by Reps. Tracy M. Richardson (District 86) and Adam Holmes (District 97) would enhance and expand a property tax reduction for certain homeowners who are disabled veterans. Veterans rated at 100% disabled would be exempt on the full taxable value of their homestead. A veteran who has received a disability rating of greater than 70% but less than 100% qualifies for an exemption equal to \$10,000 of their homestead's value. A veteran who has received a disability rating of at least 50% and up to 70% qualifies for an exemption equal to \$5,000 of the homestead's value according to the LSC analysis. The Senate Veteran and Public Safety Committee

Continued next page...



heard testimony on 14 November for SB 154. It was the first hearing and was presented by its primary sponsor, Sen. Kristina Roegner (District 27). SB 154 will bring the Ohio Revised Code current by including the U.S. Space Forces.

The Senate Insurance Committee held the 6th hearing for Senate Bill 63 which was introduced by Senator George Lang (District 4) in February. The LSC analysis states that under the bill, "within 30 days of filing any complaint, a plaintiff in any tort action who is alleging an asbestos claim must file a sworn statement signed by the plaintiff or plaintiff's counsel specifying the evidence that provides the basis for each asbestos claim against each defendant in the action." The bill eventually passed out of committee with a split vote of 7 to 6.

Operation Toy Drop

By Christopher Zurawski

Local Clevelanders participated in the 2023 annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop (OTD). This was an amazing event to be a part of wholly because of its cause and its size. This was particularly awesome because several of the participants and jumpmasters were Clevelanders.

Paratroopers assigned to U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) (USACAPOC) hosted the annual Randy Oler Memorial Operation Toy Drop on Sicily Drop Zone at Fort Liberty from 5 to 14 December.

This past December, foreign jumpmasters and others spent a week familiarizing themselves with the C-17 Globemaster, C-130H Hercules, C-27 Spartan and CASA aircraft they would be jumping from, and training soldiers from USACAPOC(A), as well as the 82nd Airborne Division, XVIII Airborne Corps, Army Special Operations Command and others.

The toy drop operation provides USACAPOC(A) and its adjacent commands the opportunity to improve airborne operation training, readiness, safety, and interoperability with partner nations and prepares Soldiers

to execute their missions in support of combatant commanders around the globe. The tradition of OTD continues with Soldiers giving back to the local community through voluntary toy donations for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve which handles the toy donations through their Toys for Tots program.

2023's operation consisted of jumpmasters from 14 partner nations, working alongside U.S. Soldiers and expanding their collective experiences. Some of the countries that participated are Brazil, Canada, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Ivory Coast, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.

Originally begun by Staff Sergeant Randy Oler in 1998, this operation is designed to reinforce the interoperability of active and reserve units across the services, while increasing soldier readiness and adding the bonus of helping children in need during the holiday season.

A special thanks to our local jumpmasters Master Sergeant Allender and Staff Sergeant Plescia. These two are great examples of successful leaders and who Cleveland can be proud.



AO Cleveland Operations in Cleveland and Surrounding Areas



24 Jan	6 pm	10 pm	SFA & AUSA Cigar & Bourbon Night	Tremont Cigar Society 2681 W. 14th St.	Open to All Veterans *NETWORKING*
21 Feb	6pm	10pm	SFA & AUSA Cigar & Bourbon Night	Havana's Choice Cigars & Lounge	170 Pearl Road Brunswick, OH 44212
02 Mar	4:30 p	11:30p	NEOPAT GALA	Embassy Suites Independence	https://neopat.org/gala/
TBD	6pm	10 pm	Purple Heart Homes Cigars & Bourbon	AVON VFW Miller Road	Open to All
13 Apr	11am	2pm	JVCOCC Awards Luncheon	Holiday Inn Independence	JVCOCC.org



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Update: Afghan Allies Await Evacuation

By Jacob Arnett

One year ago, I wrote an article for the DD214 Chronicle entitled “Christmas, Afghanistan”, in which I described the perilous situation Afghan translators have faced since the Taliban’s takeover of the country in August 2021. Since then, American public awareness has been shifted further and further from Afghanistan, first to Ukraine, and now to conflict in Gaza. It has become quite difficult to find any stories in mainstream media coming out of Afghanistan, only 2 years after the last troops departed the battleground of America’s longest war. Despite the lack of attention by our media, the desperation of our Afghan allies to escape Taliban retribution results in cries for help that arrive to the phones, messaging apps, and inboxes of Americans every single day.

Afghanistan War veterans relied on these men and women to interpret and fight alongside of us, and many of those veterans and civilian volunteers have offered thousands of hours to write recommendation letters, assist with paperwork for the Department of State’s Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) program, and maintain contact with and even financially support our Afghan allies. Some Afghans are in such dire need for asylum that they must be moved from safehouse to safehouse on a daily basis. I have met some of these exceptional Americans who coordinate these efforts behind the scenes with trusted Afghan handlers they pay to help these men and women escape detection. The Taliban have orders to “kill onsite” any members they find of the Afghan Special Forces, and this quite often means interpreters as well. Many have fled Afghanistan to neighboring Pakistan to escape the Taliban, although Pakistan has cracked down in recent months, deporting “more than 482,000 Afghans (who) have returned home in the past more than two months, 90% going voluntarily” (AP, DEC 2023) Taking the above into consideration, I feel it is appropriate to remind our readers that their situation gets more desperate by the day.

For this month’s edition, I’ve asked the 9 Afghan interpreters I have been helping through the SIV process, who remain in Afghanistan, to provide an update for our readers on their current situation.

Interpreter #1 “I have received 6 emails, and a phone call since submitted my DS-260 and civil docs. Our family are still waiting for information.”

Interpreter #2 “I have heard nothing in the last 1.5 years. I reach out, they say they have 1000s of emails pending and to wait my turn.”

Interpreter #3 “My family was approved to evacuate to a 3rd Country enroute to USA on 27MAR23. We have been waiting 8 months and no response from Nation Visa Center or CARE Team (Coordinator for Afghan Relocation Efforts). I don’t know what is going on with my case. We have no money and no information since March.”

Interpreter #4 “I was denied for SIV, so I appealed in March 2023. I am still waiting for reason why I was denied and for appeal to be decided. Please help me, Sir, if you have information for me...”

Interpreter #5 “Sir I have been pre-approved for SIV, I am awaiting information from CARE Team for several month now.”

Interpreter #6 “Sir, I receive this from Department of State ‘Your case is now documentarily complete, and ready for an immigrant visa interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. Because the U.S. Embassy in Kabul has suspended all operations, you cannot continue your visa process in Afghanistan at this time.’ I am awaiting information on evacuation from CARE Team.”

Interpreter #7 “I fought with U.S. Marines in Helmand as Special Forces, but I have not heard any news of my case. I am still on Step one...”

Interpreter #8 “My family is awaiting evacuation from Afghanistan. Most recent update was in November.”

Interpreter #9 “I have been approved and waiting for interview for myself and wife and three daughters since April 2022. We have been surviving by help of others as it is Taliban area I live in. I cannot work in the city as it is too risky to be found by Taliban.”

Interpreter #10 SIV granted. Relocated to Michigan, USA, FEB 2023. Lives with brother.

Interpreter #11 SIV granted. Relocated to Arizona, USA, NOV2022. Awaiting evacuation of wife and children.

Continued next page..



Many have asked me how to help these families, and the best way we can help them at this time is to send money to these families directly, as these men are unable to work and support their families due to the danger of being discovered by the Taliban as they wait for evacuation. I have personally sent money to these families via Western Union and our Afghan contact in Kabul (so the family isn't endangered by receiving funds from a westerner).

If you would like to learn more about donating subsistence money to one of these families, please contact me at jacob@noblecleaners.vegas. I will explain the process fully. 100% of all donations will be given directly to the families, with updates and receipts upon delivery.

Semper Fi.




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Debra Gipson Forged Path for Women in the Military

By Chris Johnston

Education has played a vital role in Debra Gipson's life, including more than 15 years in the military. After graduating from Shaw High School in East Cleveland, she attended Oberlin College, where she earned her bachelor's degree in 1989. While there, she had also earned math credits from Harvard University, which she likes to "sort of brag about a little bit," she says with a smile.

Debra went on to earn her master's degree from Carnegie-Mellon in Public Management and Policy in 1991 and then earned a Juris Doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1998. During her summer break after her first year at Oberlin, though, she had an intriguing discussion with her cousin George about his time in the U.S. Navy that changed her life.

"After speaking with my cousin, I knew I didn't want to go into the Navy because that's water, and I don't know how to swim," Gipson says. "So, I chose the Army, but I thought you can't do it part-time, but my cousin said you can, and so I joined." She also has a legacy of other family members who had served in the armed forces.

"I noticed there were no African American females in my family who served in the military," she said in a 2021 interview with North Carolina Public Radio station WUNC. "I thought, 'We can serve too.' So I decided to sign up."

Her recruiter at the Military Entrance Processing Station in Cleveland happened to be the son of Alex Haley, author of *Roots*. After talking with the bright, fiery young recruit who weighed all of 100 pounds "soaking wet," he told her wasn't sure whether she was ready for the Army or if the Army was ready for her, she recalls. In 1986, Debra enlisted in the Army

Reserves in administrative services and did her basic and advanced individual training at Fort Jackson in Columbia, S.C.



Debra Gipson

She remained in the Reserves for four years, but then took a break to finish school. She reenlisted in 1998, shortly before 9/11. Debra went on to serve in the 316th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), and her unit arrived in Iraq in April 2006.

While in country, Debra was asked to teach at the Education Center in Balad, where she was stationed. Back in an academic setting, she flourished and became a highly popular teacher, so much so that the class of about 15 students that she had taken over quickly grew to close to 100.

Debra also wrote, directed and produced the Black History Month play and organized all of the women's History Month activities. Commanders often asked her to speak to their soldiers about education and the importance of formal education for their careers outside the military. Her dynamic leadership and willingness to push back if her authority was questioned enabled her to become a powerful role model for women and African American women in the military. The Women Veterans Alliance named her a 2023 Woman's Veteran Trailblazer, a program founded by Michelle Obama.

"I think I made the lives of the people that were around me much better than their lives would have been had I not served in Iraq," she says. "So I'm completely grateful that I was able to do that."

Before retiring as a Captain in 2014, Debra severely injured her back while training to serve in Afghanistan. During her recovery in the Wounded Warriors program, she immersed

herself in films, and began to write a script about women who had served during the Korean War. Her screenplay "Sons of Distant Fathers" has already won several awards internationally, and she received a grant from The Rocaberti Writers Retreat in France. Currently, she is discussing writing a documentary about women who served in the Korean War with PBS, and she is scheduled to meet with Steven Spielberg's creative team next fall.

In 2021, Debra completed her LL.M. degree in health law and policy at the Maurice A. Dean School of Law at Hofstra University.



VETERAN PROGRAMS

Family & Community Services, Inc.



The Samuel A. Felton, Jr. Valor Home of Lorain County Transitional Housing Program for homeless male veterans and Veteran Service Center for all local veterans and families. Contact: 440-387-4293. Facebook: Valor-Home-Lorain-County.



The Harry Donovan Jr. Valor Home of Summit County Transitional housing program for homeless male veterans. Contact: 330-773-7000. Facebook: Harry Donovan Jr. Valor Home of Summit County.



Veteran's Haven of Warren and Youngstown Counties goal is to promote housing stability, to male and female veterans and their families. Through transitional housing for male veterans, Transition-In-Place housing for veteran families and a Service center which is open to all veterans in the community. Contact: 330-409-9139. Facebook: Veteran's Haven.



Freedom House of Portage County. Transitional housing program for all single veterans. Contact: 330-673-0705. Facebook: Freedom House



Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF), provides services to low-income veterans and families in order to assist in stabilizing housing. Available to those living in Lorain, Ashtabula, Stark, Medina, Summit, Portage, Geauga, Trumbull and Mahoning counties. Veterans experiencing COVID-19 housing emergencies call 855-234-7310 or email ssvf@fcsohio.org



Honor Home of Stark County Transitional housing facility for homeless single male veterans and women veterans with children. Support is provided via the Advisory Committee. Contact: 330-631-3075. Facebook: Honor Home.

More information at Family & Community Services, Inc., <https://fcsserves.org/> or 330-676-3069

Honor & Remember in December Fourteenth Annual Gold Star Family Evening

Founder's Inn-Virginia Beach, Virginia / Sunday, December 3, 2023

By Barb Smith

Many of the 100 people attending didn't know each other personally, as they gathered in the atrium to pose around the 30 ft sparkling Christmas tree for the annual photo. All were related, however, by the blood spilled by the loss of their son or daughter, who died during their military service.

George Lutz, of Chesapeake, is the founder of the Honor and Remember Organization, creator of the Honor and Remember Flag, and coordinator of this annual banquet. George and his wife, Patty, lost the eldest of their four children, George Anthony (Tony) Lutz II, who was killed by a sniper's bullet, on Dec. 29, 2005:

Cpl George A. Lutz II-29 Dec. 2005-Iraq

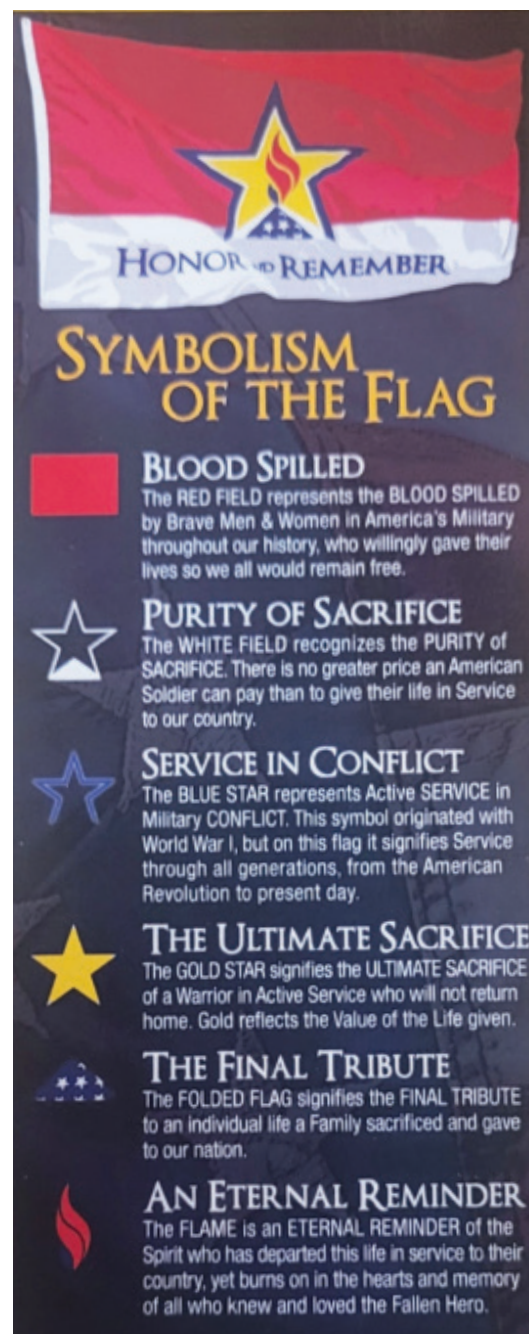
Several Gold Star Families joined the Lutzes and brought their personalized flags to the ballroom, where they were hung on display. Each personalized flag contains the name, theater of operation, and date of death of the individual. The flags are presented on both private and public occasions. The presentation of six flags to Gold Star families was listed in the night's program.

Stories from the Families

From our table, we could view four, large TVs flanking the stage, showing a continuous loop of uniformed service members. "There's our son, Michael Smith," Avis and Durell Smith of Virginia Beach, exclaimed. I snapped a photo of them within the same frame as the image of their son. I did the same for Glenn and Liz Weaver of Williamsburg, honoring the memory of Glenn's brother. Many of the families of the fallen live in the area. Our table was made complete with our friends, Marti Miller of Elyria, and the Rehms, Anita and Gary, formerly of Elyria, now residing in Williamsburg.

Marti was one of the twelve keynote speakers at the unveiling of the War on Terror Mural, at the Veterans Day ceremony, in Amherst, Ohio, on Nov. 11, 2017. Marti spoke of her son, US Army Sgt Norman Lane Tollett, of the 82nd Airborne Division, killed on April 28, 200, at the age of 30, in Baghdad, Iraq. Artist Mike Sekletar de-

picts Lane standing in the center amongst eleven of our local warriors, facing forward, in his dress blues and red beret. (www.veteransmural-association.org)



Description of the elements of the Honor and Remember Flag

On Nov. 11, 2021, on stage at the Lorain Palace Theater, in Lorain, Ohio, John Rich performed a veterans' concert benefitting the Travis Mills Foundation. Marti, Cleveland Browns' quarterback, Bernie Kosar, and I held her son's flag, as Joe Molnar, an association member described its details, just prior to the presentation of the Honor and Remember Flag to the family of US Navy Corpsman:

HM3 Maxton W. Soviak-26 Aug 2021- Afghanistan

In the summer of 2017, Anita and Gary, and their daughter-in-law, Erin, were looking forward to Gary's pending retirement once home from his mission in the Philippine Sea. Gary was a fire controlman aboard the USS Fitzgerald. "Don't worry about me, Mom, I'm on a big ship. What could happen?" On, June 17, 2017, the destroyer was struck by a massive container ship off the coast of Japan. Gary was one of the seven missing sailors, found dead by rescue divers. Gary's parents were told of his death on Father's Day. Gary, Sr. remarked, "Father's Day will never be the same."

George Lutz presented Marti with her Gold Star flag, sponsored by Elyria, VFW Post 1079, on Friday, September 27, 2019, in the auditorium of Elyria Catholic High School, in Elyria, Ohio. "This is a tremendous honor but the most important thing is that no one forgets the contribution that these gentlemen made."

(www.wkyc.com/article/features/fallen-soldiers-gold-star-families-honored-during-elyria-catholic-football-game)

The Rehms received their personalized flag in the summer of 2018, after Anita completed the Fallen Heroes 5k run, in Virginia Beach, sponsored by the Spartyka organization.

Back to the Banquet

After-dinner entertainment was provided by retired Iraq War veteran, Bobby Henline. Bobby is now a motivational speaker known as The Well-Done Comedian. On his fourth tour in Iraq, Bobby's Humvee was blown up by an IED, on April 7, 2007. The four soldiers with him were killed. During his six-month recovery, he remained upbeat. After 48 surgeries, he inspires others. I met him at his table afterward, and told him what a bang-up job he did onstage. He laughed. I handed him a Project DREW flyer and explained the details of the two-day workshop. (www.projectdrew.org)

Bobby replied, "Kentucky's not that far. I'd love to come to support the vets. A song was also written for me by Isaac Lord, entitled, "Not a Day Goes By." (www.bobbyhenlinecomedy.com)

Please visit honorandremember.org. Sign the petition to ask Congress to establish the Honor and Remember flag as the national symbol of America's fallen.

Please join us in Virginia Beach at the 15th Annual Gold Star Family Evening, on December 1, 2024.

27 states have adopted the Honor and Remember flag as a sign of commemorating the ultimate loss of loved ones from Gold Star families. With continued, persistent commitment of Rep. Joe Miller, and the Ohio State Congress, Ohio will become the 28th.



George Lutz, Founder of the Honor and Remember Organization



Joe Molnar describes the elements of the Honor and Remember flag of Sgt. Norman Lane Tollett and Lane's mother second from the right, mother, Marti Miller, Bernie Kosar and Barb Smith attend.

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Sunday, May 19, 2024 at
Bunker Hill Golf Course in Medina**

More info will be coming soon about how you can secure a foursome, become a sponsor, or just support the event with a donation.

ANY support helps our previously homeless Veterans!

Save the date for May 19, 2024!





Veteran's Haven Project Announcement

October 10th, 2023: Youngstown, OH – Veteran's Haven, a program of Family & Community Services, is set to begin construction on a container home project at the intersection of West Warren Avenue and Hillman Street before the end of the year. The project made its way to

Mahoning County after an invitation by County Commissioner Carol Rimedio-Righetti in 2019. The facility has been working out of a temporary shelter on Chalmers Avenue since 2021 and has served 75 homeless veterans this year.

This new 1.2-million-dollar facility was made possible through \$600,000 of capital funding from The Department of Veterans Affairs Capital Program, \$150,000 of ARPA funding from The Mahoning County Board of Commissioners, and \$100,000 from the City of Youngstown-Ward One. In addition to these funds, Family & Community Services, has launched an adopt-a-room program for donors to also participate in the creation of this needed facility. For more information on the adopt-a-room campaign contact Matt Slater, Director of Development at m Slater@fcsserves.org or at 330-297-7027 ext. 327.

The first phase of the new housing project will include a transitional shelter made out of shipping containers – a greener, faster, and less expensive method for construction – yet will look like a traditional home built out of wood and lumber. Veteran's Haven plans to complete additional phases of the project to add permanent supportive housing on the vacant lots over the next several years. Once Phase One is complete, the facility will have the capacity to serve 14 homeless veterans with their own private bedroom and bathroom and will be open to veterans of all genders and sexual orientations.

It's your future. Get started now!

Veterans-LCCC is here for you!

We are proud to offer services for all veterans, guardsmen, reservists and their families. When it's time to transition out of your military career let LCCC's Veterans Service Center help you prepare for your future.

LCCC's Veterans Service Center is a one-stop shop where you can:

- Learn how to maximize your veteran's benefits
- Learn about other scholarships available
- Talk with a Veterans Certifying Official
- Meet with a Counselor
- Explore all that LCCC has to offer

Call the LCCC Veterans Service Center at 440-366-7378 or visit lorainccc.edu/veterans



**Lorain County
Community College**

ATTENTION

• Vet-2-Vet Classifieds •

This Classified page has been added, particularly for veteran units, VFW's American Legions, DAV's etc., to advertise Get-Togethers, Fund Raisers, BBQ's and the like, for your advertising needs. Please Join Us!

Five bucks per line of copy with free bolding and color. Contact (216) 323-4699 or donaldstark408@ymail.com

Looking for some fun volunteer work to support our Veteran Community? If you have an interest, please forward an e-mail to donaldstark408@ymail.com

Marketing Services

CloughCleveland
IDEA ENGINEERING
Veteran Owned
Business Resource
Contact
Dick Clough
cloughcleveland@gmail.com

Landscaping

Stark Landscaping & Snow Removal
(216) 978-1293

Painting

Stark Painting Company
(216) 258-5225

Clough Cleveland Consulting

IdeaEngineering
StrategicDialogue
WordWorks
MarketingSolutions
A Veteran-owned Business Resource
Contact Dick Clough
cloughcleveland@gmail.com
216.226.9040

Veteran Tribute

Cleveland Police Foundation has established a special fund to honor Bill Denihan the long-time government administrator, community activist, and veteran who passed on in June. Bill was an avid painter in retirement and donated many of his artistic creations of Cleveland scenes to raise money for charity. Please consider donating to the "Denihan Community Art Fund" to help underwrite local veteran artists. Thank you.

Details:

www.clevelandpolicefoundation.org



**CALL FOR
VOLUNTEERS
AND SPONSORS!**

**2024
PAL WRESTLING
PROGRAM**

Contact Sgt. Bob Kumazec (Ret.)
clevelandpal@yahoo.com

**ACHIEVE A SAFER
COMMUNITY
FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY,
AND FRIENDS.**



**Become a Friend
of the Cleveland Police Foundation.**

**TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE
A DIFFERENCE!**

Patrol Officer - \$50 / Individual

Membership Card
Lapel Pin & Window Decal
Monthly Partner Newsletter
Annual Report / Website Listing

Sergeant - \$75 / Add Spouse or Friend

Two of each of the perks listed above.

Lieutenant - \$150 / Family

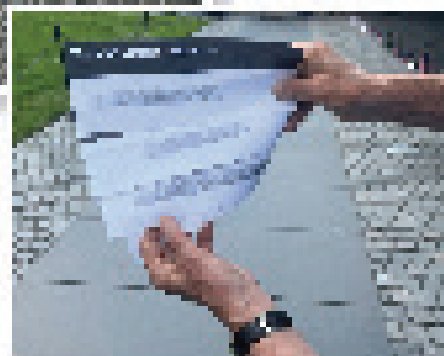
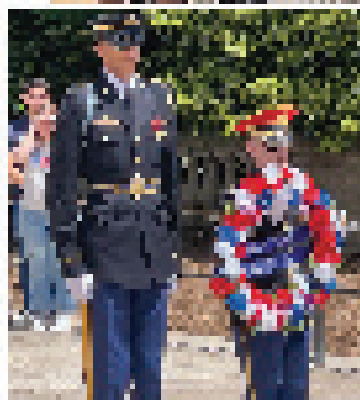
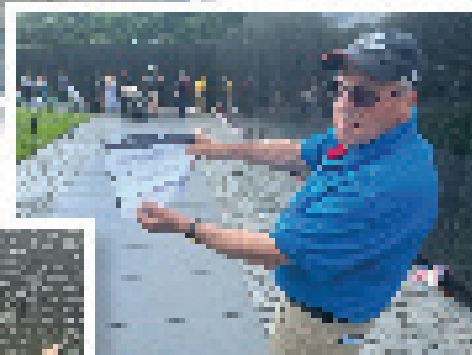
Four of each of the perks listed above.

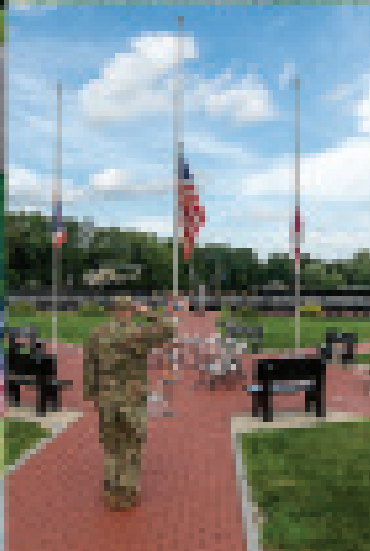
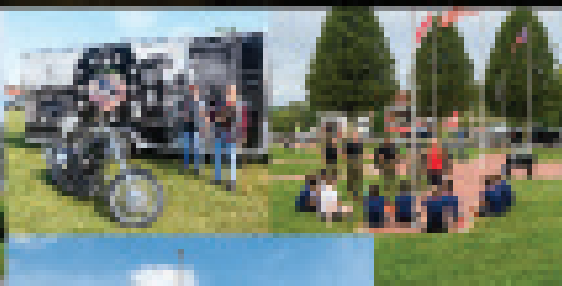
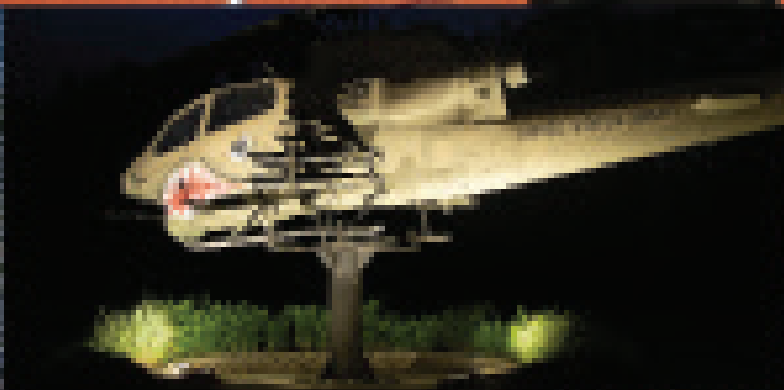
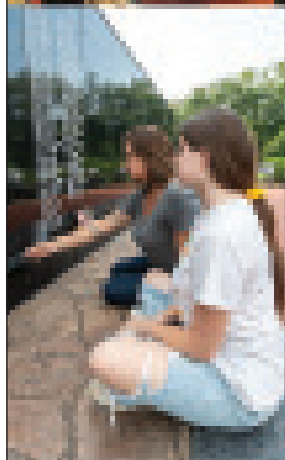
Join online at
clevelandpolicefoundation.org/friends

or contact
Rick DeChant, Executive Director
(216) 536-6776
rdechant@clevelandpolicefoundation.org

**Veterans from Northeast Ohio,
Along With their Guardians,
Having a Wonderful Thank-you Day
Courtesy of Honor Flight Cleveland**

Honor Flight





The Ohio Veterans Memorial Park located in Clinton, Ohio,
invites all to visit the home of "The Longest Free Standing Memorial Wall" in the USA.
We honor active service, Veterans and
"WE REMEMBER THE FALLEN"



8005 S Cleveland Massillon Rd, Clinton, OH 44216
OYMP.ORG

