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Photo courtesy of Veterans for Peace

*Golden Rule  
Sailboat  
Visits  
Cleveland...  
See page 4...*

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The *DD214* is published six times annually and this position would require a couple of hours, Mondays thru Fridays, over a two-or three-week stint prior to going to print to keep us moving comfortably.

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*Donald C. Stark*

Cinco de Mayo, became a date for me that I will never forget. I had a wonderful invite from the staff at Honor Flight Cleveland, to join them on a one-day trip of a lifetime. Up and on the way to Cleveland Hopkins at 2am, at the Southwest Airlines doors and welcomed by the USO, and Jacob, Bill and all their comrades, associated with Honor Flight. The invited Vets, most with guardians along, were an excited and fun-loving group, being entertained and lauded for their service everywhere in the airports, both Cleveland and Baltimore.

Bag-pipes and trumpeters, people clapping, whistling and cheering for all the branches of the services men and women along, made for such a wonderful day. At every museum and memorial in Washington people were aware that Honor Flight Cleveland had arrived.



*Marching to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*



*Honor Flight Cleveland Veterans & Guardians*



*The Honor Flight Cleveland wreath before placement*

Then a somber part that took my breath away, I was asked to be a part of a march to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, wheelchair escorting a 99-year-old WWII Vet abreast of guardian Bill, escorting a 100-year-old WWII Vet in cadence with the US Army guard. The Honor of this request at the tomb, watching as our wheel chaired Vets handed the Honor Flight Cleveland wreath to the soldier helping place the wreath at the placard in front of the Tomb, and at attention and saluting as TAPS was played was a thrill I will remember forever.

All I can say is thank-you to Honor Flight Cleveland for the wonderful moments.

For more information go to <https://honorflightcleveland.org>

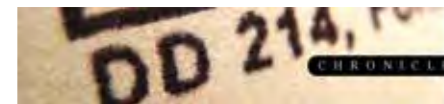
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# Veterans for Peace Will Bring the Golden Rule Sailboat to Cleveland for Visit on an Enduring Anti-Nuclear Mission

By Brian Albrecht

The nautical embodiment of peace will dock in Cleveland Aug. 4-8 as part of the latest resurgence of what may be the world's first protest vessel.

The Golden Rule, a 30-foot double-masted sailboat, will visit here on an 11,000-mile journey, bringing its historic yet enduring message of ending the risk of nuclear war. In that role, the ketch first sailed in a failed attempt by the fledgling group, Non-Violent Action Against Nuclear Weapons, to interrupt U.S. nuclear bomb testing in the Pacific's Marshall Islands, in 1958. Several nations were involved in hundreds of above-ground nuclear tests at that time, contributing to atmospheric fallout in the race to perfect nuclear weaponry.

The Golden Rule's four-man crew, who had publicized their intentions to sacrifice themselves for peace, made it from California to Hawaii where their boat was seized by the Coast Guard and they were arrested.

The crew was sentenced to 60 days in jail (suspended) and a year's probation, but their effort became part of a growing anti-nuclear campaign that included subsequent attempted test-zone incursions by the Golden Rule and other vessels, culminating in the 1963 international Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

The Golden Rule fell into obscurity and sank in a storm off the California coast in 2010. The vessel was raised, stripped of its engine, masts, cabin and rigging and destined for scrap, until the international anti-war group Veterans for Peace offered to restore it. Arnold "Skip" Oliver, 79, born in Brunswick, but now living in Sandusky, was part of



*The Golden Rule during its five-year restoration by Veterans for Peace after it was sunk in a storm off the California coast.*

As for his own role in the project, Oliver joked, "It was the best money and time I ever wasted."

Oliver said the Golden Rule's current tour – traveling up the Eastern coast, through the



*The Golden Rule made its first anti-nuclear war protest cruise in 1958.*

this restoration effort that he said replaced about 80 percent of the boat, plus added such modern technological gear as radar, depth sounders and chart plotting.

"There were a lot of talented people, and a lot of us, like myself who were rank amateurs," Oliver recalled of the work. "We thought we could rebuild it in year for \$50,000. It took five years and \$250,000."

Great Lakes and down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico – has been dubbed "The Great Loop."

The cruise is a salute to the boat's original mission. "We're trying to honor their spirit, saying no to nuclear annihilation of the biosphere," said Oliver, a professor emeritus of political science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin.

As he once wrote, "The Golden Rule will again ride the waves as a living museum and floating classroom, educating future generations on the risks of nuclear technology, the importance of the ocean environment, and most importantly, peacemaking." During the Golden Rule's visit here, crew members hope to meet with Cleveland Mayor Justin Bibb. The boat will be docked at the North Coast Harbor Marina, 1020 E. 9th St. Free tours of the boat will be offered. For details



*The path of the Golden Rule's latest cruise has been dubbed "The Great Loop"*



*The Golden Rule, one of the original protest vessels of the 1950s, gets a nautical salute after its restoration in 2015*

utter beauty, sails perfectly, and will carry us to magical places. Some of these dreams are readily achievable, while others are less realistic, if not downright quixotic. This [the Golden Rule] is a story about a sailboat dream that some might say is right up Don Quixote's alley."

Oliver, who served in the Army in Vietnam and Germany from 1967-71, has been a Veterans for Peace member since 1995.

He recalled, "I was formerly a pretty conservative young guy, pretty clueless until I got sent to Vietnam. It took about two weeks before I figured out that this was a bad mission, we shouldn't even be there, and I got more convinced the longer I stayed in Vietnam."

He said that later, as a political science professor who taught about peace studies and international relations, "I was always concerned about nuclear weapons, very concerned. If you read up on things like the Cuban missile crisis, it's really pretty scary stuff. If it doesn't scare you, you're probably not paying attention."

visit [www.vfpgolden-ruleproject.org](http://www.vfpgolden-ruleproject.org). Subsequent stops in Ohio include Sandusky and Toledo.

Oliver has sailed since 1985, primarily in western Lake Erie, and once wrote of the allure of plying the wind and waves: "Sailors dream of boats. We conjure up images about the craft that is a thing of

Others in the Veterans for Peace and Golden Rule initiative have various reasons for their involvement, according to Oliver.

“The group is kind-of a big tent. We do have people on the board who are not anti-war, they just like old boats and want to help,” he said. “Others are militant environmentalists who see the entire nuclear chain as being horrible. A third [segment] is concerned

about the possible dire consequences of even risking having those weapons used.” That sentiment is particularly acute in light of the current war between Russia and Ukraine. “To me, the idea of tiptoeing on the edge of nuclear confrontation over Ukraine is too dangerous to risk,” Oliver said.

Hence, the continued importance of the message of the Golden Rule.

Oliver said the boat’s future in delivering that message is inevitably limited, hoping that when that mission ends the Golden Rule could find a new berth in a maritime museum, given the historic nature of these old, pre-Fiberglass wood boats. “They’re classic boats from that era. But we don’t have the ability to keep this going forever,” Oliver noted.

Until then, there’s still something special about the Golden Rule, said Oliver, who has previously sailed aboard the vessel.

“I’m kind-of a romantic guy,” he said. “If you put your hand on her hull, she will speak to you, she will whisper to you” And what does she say? “Peace,” Oliver said.




*The Golden Rule is shown with one of the original crewman, Navy veteran Albert Bigelow.*



*The Golden Rule is continuing its original 1958 role of delivering an anti-nuclear message this year, including a visit to Cleveland on August 4-8*

*\*\*Photos and illustration courtesy of Veterans for Peace and Arnold “Skip” Oliver*



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# For This Vietnam Veteran, The Battle for Peace Never Ends

By Louis H. Pumphrey

As a drafted Vietnam veteran and long-time member of Veterans for Peace, I took special interest in Nancy Peacock's compelling report about the 2022 book *Paths of Dissent: Soldiers Speak Out Against America's Forever Wars* (May/June), edited by retired U.S. Army Colonel and Boston University professor emeritus Andrew Bacevich and Daniel Sjursen, who was a U.S. Army combat officer in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Bacevich was more than a little starry-eyed in reflecting on our recent horrifically-costly wars, seeing silver linings behind war clouds, saying, "Failure brings change. One of the real tragedies of the Iraq War and Afghanistan War was they did end in failure."

Excuse me, Mr. Bacevich and fellow Vietnam vet, what "change" occurred in the wake of the failed Vietnam War? What change came about during the 28-year interim between that shameful misadventure in Southeast Asia that ended in 1975 and the ignoble invasion and war in Iraq that began in 2003? Short answer: None.

The reason for no change can be found, ironically, in Bacevich's own words: the "persistent indifference of the American people," (although the context of his observation was about the dearth of interest Americans have for our military, its deployments and its missions.)

If Americans have little interest in our military, as Bacevich contends, why on earth would they have any interest in the government making changes to future war policy--in the wake of failed wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq?

Peacock noted in her essay that brothers Pat and Kevin Tillman joined the U.S. Army in 2002, serving in Iraq, then Afghanistan. Pat was killed in a "friendly fire" incident, but the government characterized his tragic death otherwise.

Kevin said in his article in the book--one of 15--"the government lied to us--his family-- and to the American public with a manufactured story about his dying by enemy fire, then used him to promote more war. For maximum effect, they awarded him a Silver Star, one of the highest military honors. It was all based on fabricated witness statements and false narrative."

The promulgation of lies by our federal government is nothing new, of course. President George W. Bush lied about Saddam Hussein having weapons of mass destruction when, in fact, Bush was the one with WMDs.

President Lyndon B. Johnson lied about the USS Maddox being attacked by North Vietnam in the Gulf of Tonkin, which prompts the questions, "What on earth were we doing in the Gulf of Tonkin anyway? Is that body of water U.S. territory?"

Johnson used the lie to escalate the war in Vietnam, with the blessing of the U.S. Congress.

For many years, I have promoted peace as much as possible to large groups of people, wearing either my embarrassingly-tight 1968 U.S. Army Class A dress uniform in warm weather or in cold weather, my 1966 army field jacket dating from my days at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.



Louis H. Pumphrey

My various peace initiatives over the years involve carrying a red-and-white striped flag on a pole with a peace symbol on the navy-blue field in lieu of the 50 stars.

A middle-aged woman heading to an Indians game a few years ago with her male companion said to me at the northwest corner of East 9th Street and Carnegie Avenue, "What do you say to people who say your flag disrespects the American flag?"

As is my wont, I smiled sweetly at her and said, "Well, I have a different perspective. I was in Vietnam for a year and from my perspective, it doesn't disrespect the American flag. It respects peace. People who have not been in a war--have not experienced the bitter taste of war--will never, ever respect peace to the same degree I do. It's impossible. It just can't happen."

She smiled but neither she nor her companion said anything, as they headed to Progressive Field.

But I had given them something to think about.

Before a different Indians game, a woman walked by with a male companion, then she doubled back and said, "My brother said we have to have war before we have peace." Again, I smiled sweetly and said, "If we never had war, wouldn't we always have peace?" She said nothing and walked away. I'm sure she told her brother.

Some people have said to me, "Thank you for serving our country." I sometimes reply, "I didn't serve my country. I served deceitful, lying, fear-mongering, war-mongering politicians and their war-profiteering bed partners. Those truly serving our country are the 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 are the real war heroes. Not those who kill and destroy. That's not heroic. It's barbaric."

While promoting peace to Browns fans a few years ago, heading to FirstEnergy Stadium, a young man stopped and, referring to my flag, said, "Where are the stars?" I said, "They're in hiding. They're ashamed, embarrassed and disgusted with all the death, destruction, instability and chaos we have caused in the Middle East."

He said, "Good answer."

*Author Pumphrey, an award-winning former reporter, is a founding member of the U.S. Peace Memorial Foundation. He lives in Shaker Heights.*

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# HELOCs: Accessing Home Equity without Losing your Low Rate First Mortgage

Home equity lines of credit (HELOCs) and refinancing are both popular options for veteran homeowners looking to access the equity they have built in their homes. However, in the current financial climate, using a HELOC may be a better choice for many homeowners than refinancing. In this article, we will examine why using a HELOC may be a more advantageous option than refinancing for many people.

One of the primary advantages of a HELOC is that it offers a flexible line of credit that homeowners can draw from multiple times – similar to having a credit card, but secured by your home's equity. This means that homeowners can access their equity for almost any reason—bill consolidation, home improvement, education, etc.—pay it back over time, and then still be able to use it again if future needs arise. This makes HELOCs ideal for people who want long-term access to their equity, even if only planning to use it for limited purposes or timeframes.

Another advantage of a HELOC in the current market is that it allows a homeowner to borrow against their home without sacrificing the low rate first mortgage that they may currently have on their home. Traditional refinances require that a first mortgage be paid off at closing, with any remaining funds being distributed to the homeowner. That works when current rates are the same or lower as previous rates, but it doesn't make much sense to replace an existing 3% loan with a larger loan at 6% just to access a relatively smaller amount of money. Better to use a HELOC that, even with a higher rate for that smaller amount of debt, makes much more financial sense in the big picture.

In addition, HELOCs also offer more flexible repayment terms than refinancing. With a HELOC, homeowners can often choose to make interest-only payments for a period of time, allowing them to preserve their cash flow and avoid having to make large payments in the short term. On the other hand, refinancing typically requires homeowners to repay the entire loan balance over a set period of time, which can be more burdensome for those who are already struggling with debt.

Finally, a HELOC is usually easier to obtain than refinancing. Since HELOCs are based on the equity that homeowners have already built in their homes, they are typically easier—and faster—to obtain than refinancing.

In conclusion, using a HELOC is often a better choice than refinancing for many veterans in today's market. With its flexible line of credit, advantageous overall rate scenario, more flexible repayment terms, and ease of obtaining, a HELOC offers many advantages over refinancing. Of course, every situation is unique, and homeowners should carefully consider their individual circumstances before deciding which option is right for them. However, for many people, using a HELOC is a more advantageous option than refinancing, and one that is well worth considering.

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# The Watchmakers: Three Brothers' Story of Survival and Hope

By Nancy Peacock

More than 78 years ago, Allied troops liberated the concentration camps, unveiling a sordid history of Nazi crimes against humanity. Despite the subsequent historic record spelling out the horrors of the Holocaust, the United States is currently experiencing an alarming increase in antisemitic incidents and other forms of hatred. The FBI reports that American Jews make up 2.4% of the U.S. population but are victims of 63% of reported religiously-motivated hate crimes.

The timing couldn't be more relevant for publishing *The Watchmakers*, a memoir of three Polish brothers who survived four years of unrelenting brutality (Citadel Press, 2022).

Like many survivors, co-author Harry Lenga was initially unable to share his personal experiences. Eleven years after moving to the United States, he was plagued by nightmares about the camps. When he ran into a fellow survivor, they shared wartime stories. The nightmares stopped and Harry began the lifelong retelling of the trauma to his family.

From 1989 to 1993, Harry's son Scott recorded 37 hours of oral testimony. Together, they were able to reconstruct the vivid details that helped the brothers survive. The odds were against them. Of the 3.4 million Jews living in prewar Poland, only 40,000 to 50,000 survived the German occupation.

Long before the Nazis marched into Poland, the Jews were ostracized. "Jews and Poles lived side by side in separate civilizations," Lenga said. "You were reminded minute by minute that you didn't belong. The Poles hated us. All the Jews felt it – even in the good times."

When the German occupation forces immediately enacted antisemitic laws, every Jew was without legal protection. Harry's father Mikhoel was a skilled watchmaker and had taught his sons the trade. One night, he received word that in the morning, all Jews in their town would be deported. Knowing his own fate, he gave his three sons all the watchmaking tools, watches and spare parts.

"You can't imagine how much that helped us later," Lenga recalled. "He bought our lives many times over with those tools and watch parts."

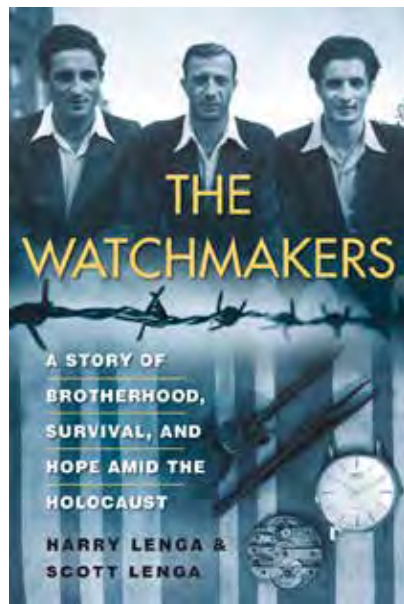
The sons walked all night until they found a work camp where one of the brothers had volunteered earlier. After a few weeks at the work camp, they were transferred to a series of slave labor camps. In each camp, they would offer to fix a guard's watch. Soon they would be fixing other guards and officers' watches and receiving better work assignments, more food or even a separate room to fix the watches.

From October 1942 until April 1945, the three brothers used their watch repair skills to remain together and avoid the constant threat of selection for the gas chambers and mass shootings.

After six months in Auschwitz, they survived another death march and camp reassignment to Ebensee, one of the last remaining concentration camps still controlled by the Nazis. One Sunday morning in April 1945, their living nightmare ended.

"We heard yelling," Lenga wrote. "The Americans are marching in! In our excitement, we climbed down from the bunk beds – in slow motion from our weakened condition – and made our way outside. Everyone was running to the American tanks driving into camp. We cried tears of joy."

After the survivors sang a Jewish anthem, they ran to kiss the American tank. The American captain "climbed down from the tank with tears in his eyes and embraced us," Lenga remembered. "We were stinking dirty. It was no pleasure to be close to us. He was a generous, beautiful personality."



One of the American GIs was wearing two watches on his wrists and only one had the correct time. His watch repair tools were gone by then but Harry offered to fix the watch with tweezers he had made from an earmuff spring and a screwdriver he had made from a nail. When the watch started ticking again, the GI tried to pay Harry but he wouldn't accept payment. The GI insisted and gave him a loaf of American white bread.



"I had never seen white bread before," he wrote. "In the other hand he held a carton of American cigarettes. You don't know what that meant. It was a fortune for me."



Photo: David M. Henschel  
Harry Lenga

Lenga never forgot the kindness and generosity of the American soldiers. He received permission to immigrate to the United States in March 1949 and brought his family to settle in St. Louis. Harry's memoirs end with a sense of optimism that, according to his son, characterized the rest of his life.



Photo: Jordan Polevoy  
Scott Lenga

"It was President Harry Truman who decided to accept the Jewish refugees into the United States," he wrote. "When our ship arrived at the port of New Orleans and the immigration officers asked us our names, my brother Moishe took the name Morris. I took the name Harry, because of Harry Truman."

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# Tony Mazzolini Continues to Receive Aeronautical Honors

By JC Sullivan

You may have heard the name Tony Mazzolini but perhaps not heard the story about his quest to find and restore a WWII B29 Superfortress Bomber. This Air Force Veteran found 'Doc' in the great Mojave Desert, where it had been sitting for forty-two years. Having a passion for vintage aircraft, he decided to try to buy it. He contacted the U.S. Navy.

According to Josh Wells, Executive Director and GM of "Doc's Friends, Inc.", a nonprofit in Wichita, Kansas, the Navy told him, "Well, you can't buy it. We can trade for it." The Navy wanted a Doolittle Tokyo Raider-style B-25. Mazzolini, who worked for Continental Airlines, apparently had connections that the average guy didn't. He found one in South America, graded it and brought it back to Florida where it was restored. NOW, he could take ownership of the B-29 and thus began the quest to restore it, too.

"Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" initially had been part of a squadron of B-29s. It had been in the Mohave Desert for forty-two years. Mazzolini now could take it over from the Navy. It took another ten years to get it out of the Mojave due to bureaucratic red tape and the need to protect the habitat of the endangered desert tortoise. The plane was obviously not air-worthy so Mazzolini called Jeff Turner, the site leader of Boeing in Wichita, Kansas.

Turner told him that if he could get it back to Wichita, they would help him out. In 2000, it arrived there on seven flatbed trailers. Two years, plus fourteen more, and it was finished, thanks to 450,000 volunteers. "This couldn't have happened anywhere else in the world but Wichita," Wells said. "We have retired aviation workers from Boeing, Bombardier, Textron, Learjet, Cessna, and Beechcraft. All of those people needed a place to go after they retired. And they brought their expertise, not to mention all the aviation shops, the parts, widgets, sprocket parts and the other suppliers in the Wichita area who came together to build this airplane. The day we flew in 2016 was something else. There wasn't a dry eye. Lots of fist pumps, high fives and hugs. It was just another story of Wichita's historic past, where we are, being the air capital of the world."

Recently the National Aeronautic Association flew Mazzolini to Wichita, in order to honor him as a Distinguished Statesman: "for demonstrating leadership and perseverance in securing and restoring the iconic B-29 aircraft as a tribute to the patriots whose commitment and sacrifice contributed to the preservation of freedom and peace during World War Two and beyond." Greg Principato, NAA President, said "It is our privilege at the National Aeronautic Association to honor great achievements and great careers."

"Doc" is now housed in the 42,000 square foot B-29 Doc Hangar, Education & Visitors Center at the Eisenhower Nation Airport. It's a real-life maintenance center where volunteers will be actively working to insure preservation. Flights aboard her can be booked.



Nose art



Mazzolini Removing B29



Tony Mazzolini and Doc3



Restored docc taking off

# Kristal Kent Fights Fibromyalgia for Veterans

By Christopher Johnston

From the time she was 15, Kristal Kent thought about going into military service, as many of her family members had done before her. She graduated from Berea High School, then enrolled at Baldwin-Wallace College. She pursued a double major in criminal justice and psychology, but ended up triple majoring when both disciplines required extensive sociology courses, enough to earn a third degree when she graduated in 1999.

Not long after commencement, Kent followed her family's tradition and enlisted in the U.S. Army. She ended up serving with the 256th Combat Support Hospital at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

"I've always been a go-getter type of person, and military service just made sense to me," she recalls. "There was no ah-ha moment. It's just something that's within you. I thought about joining the Air Force, but I changed my mind and went Army. No regrets. I just knew."

Then things took a strange and serious turn for Kent. She injured her knee during a training exercise and required surgery. Five weeks later, while still recovering, she was on base riding in the flatbed at the back of a "deuce and a half," a two-and-a-half-ton military truck, when the driver lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a ditch. She not only reinjured her knee but sustained additional injuries that resulted in a series of surgeries. She eventually developed injury-related arthritis and degenerative disk disease, connective tissue disorder issues, and fibromyalgia.

"In the grand scheme of things, I was lucky," she says with a laugh. "In the course of all that, I was supposed to become a dietitian, but because of the physical requirements of the job, they decided to put me in personnel."

Then September 11 happened. As a response to the need for increased readiness, she was assigned to "scrub" every soldier's personnel objectives. That task included the unenviable job of informing everyone from rank and file to Lt. Colonels that their physical condition did not meet Army standards.

"I had to learn to be diplomatic and say 'Don't kill the messenger, but I'm confident you can do it!'" she recalls. "So, I went through and scrubbed all the personnel jackets and got everybody where they needed to be."

Because of her degrees, when there was an opening in the Practical Operations Center, she was asked to fill it. That was her last job before she was medically discharged in February of 2002. Because of all of her injuries and subsequent surgeries, she was deemed "undeployable."

Although she had been discharged, she volunteered to take over the defunct Family Readiness Department. Her Battalion Commander not only agreed, but strongly believed she should become its new leader and proceeded to have his appointment sanctioned by the 88th Region of the Army Reserves and the Department of the Army. In her five years in the role, Kent reinvented that group to

be an extended arm of support for the soldiers and their families.

Among several programs and initiatives she launched, Kent started a food pantry for nonperishable foods, seeking donations from officers to support the program, and collecting donations of canned goods from local grocery stores so that soldiers could shop and take whatever they needed, no questions asked. She also created resource lists with an "email tree" to send new information; she set up Family Day, an annual weekend educational event, to provide information for soldiers and their families regarding what to expect when they were scheduled for deployment. She had JAG onsite to review and assist with all of the necessary legal documents and services they would require throughout the entire process, such as wills or to designate guardianship for children.

After leaving that position, Kent went on to work in social and human service jobs for 20 years, primarily in the mental health and intellectual disabilities areas in various roles,



*Kristal Kent camo*

including care coordinator, case worker and adult advocacy coordinator. She would soon leverage all of those skills in a different advocacy capacity.

In 2014, specialists from three different medical facilities all diagnosed her with fibromyalgia and, independent of each other, confirmed that her symptoms started appearing after the truck crash at Fort Leonard Wood. Previously, they had treated her symptoms as part of her arthritis. Although the FDA had approved a blood test for fibromyalgia in 2013 and a majority of health insurances cover the test, some doctors – even today – don't understand or know about the condition, Kent says. Since her diagnosis, she saw that lack of comprehension as an opportunity to advocate for those suffering from fibromyalgia, especially her fellow veterans.

"I realized with all of my knowledge and experience in advocacy, patient support and healthcare coordination for patients," she says, "if I'm running into these barriers, what's happening with individuals with fibromyalgia, especially veterans, because it took an even longer time to get the VA to recognize it. They're just now starting to understand the legitimacy of it."

Jennifer Testa, a good friend who served in the same Army Reserve unit and then worked together with Kent as civilians, says: "I've known Kristal for more than 20 years now. She has always advocated for individuals in need, the mental health community, veterans, developmentally and physically disabled. Kristal has always been passionate about ensuring others in need have the proper resources and assistance."

Despite the chronic debilitating effects of fibromyalgia, Kent remains an assiduous advocate for veterans dealing with the neurological medical condition – many of whom got it as a result of chemicals they were exposed to in their Gulf War combat or other service-related experiences. Currently, she is working with fibromyalgia advocates and veterans to obtain state proclamations from Governors, and several, including Colorado and Ohio, have been approved.

"It raises public awareness and helps legitimize our work on an official state government level when you have naysayers but you have different governors or mayors

saying this is a real movement," Kent explains. "In 2021, my one advocacy initiative, Veterans Voices for Fibromyalgia, received a commendation for advocacy and awareness efforts that I've been doing with the Ohio State House of Representatives, so we've come a long way."

For the past three years, Kent has served as Team Lead for Capitol Hill Fibromyalgia Legislative Advocacy.



*Kristal Kent fibro banner*



*Kristal Kent close up*

cy Days, during which she and her team hosted online meetings with Congressional Reps and Senators for several days in May. Later this summer, she and other fibromyalgia advocates will meet in person with legislators in Washington, DC.

“I am currently working on a VA Policy advocacy initiative, but I can’t disclose any details on that because I’ve been speaking with Congressional Reps about it,” she says. “I can tell you that it’s a policy that will further protect veterans’ healthcare patient rights and allow additional avenues for veterans to rectify patient rights grievances in a more timely manner or with additional options to escalate major patient rights violations.”

Additionally, she is hosting her 9th annual social media Fibromyalgia Awareness campaign for 2023, and she also represents veterans as a member of the Patient Leadership Council for the Social Health Network. Her work includes creating informational videos about skills needed to an advocate and understand the process of legislative advocacy.

One of her fun projects has been collaborating with filmmaker and U.S. Navy veteran Moe Taylor of BrainDagger Films. She served as a director and co-producer of the documentary Veterans and the Scourge of Invisible Illness. The film has received several awards and been selected to be shown in half a dozen international film festivals.

“Kristal is just an awesome woman all around,” Taylor says. “She is extremely gung-ho about everything she does.

She truly does want to help everyone she can and has the tenacity to make a difference in so many people’s lives.”

For all of her activities, Kent says she most treasures helping veterans, with whom she shares an unbreakable bond and robust camaraderie that’s akin to having another family.

“My oath of enlistment never ends,” she concludes. “That’s why you’ll see so many veterans in difference spaces – sometimes quietly, sometimes openly – continuing their service to each other.”

You can reach Kristal Kent at [vets4fibro@gmail.com](mailto:vets4fibro@gmail.com)



*Kristal Kent Well Behaved*



## **New Lorain County Veteran Housing Project**

### **Permanent Supportive Housing for Veterans**

Family & Community Services is excited to have begun construction on an extension of its veteran services programming in Lorain County through a new permanent supportive housing project that will bring 16 units of veteran specific housing stock to the area surrounding the Samuel L. Felton Jr. Valor Home. These units will aim to serve homeless veterans and veteran families who are in need of wrap around services with the goal of maintaining long-term permanent housing. Family & Community Services thanks our community partners for their support with this project and we look forward to working together as construction begins and we move forward to housing veterans!

If you are a veteran in need or know of an area veteran in need, please contact **885-234-7310** for assistance. We are still in need of raising approximately \$150,000 in support of this project. If you are interested in being a sponsor or supporter, please reach out to Matt Slater, Director of Development at [m Slater@fcsserves.org](mailto:m Slater@fcsserves.org)



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# Goodbye Tanks...Hello Drones

By Jacob Arnett

Hello drones? The idea of observing a swarm of battle drones coming at you from above seems like something out of a big budget Marvel comics movie with a lot of action and a minimal plot, the kind Hollywood makes again and again...and again. But this isn't Hollywood... this is Ukraine. A quick Google search of footage from the war gives you hundreds, if not thousands, of videos of drone attacks on personnel, infantry fighting vehicles, and tanks. One Russian-operated drone dropping an RKG-3 grenade with an impact fuse onto a tank's poorly protected turret causes catastrophic damage, sending a shaped charge into the tank and a wall of fire through the interior, exploding munitions and killing men. The United States Marine Corps has long known the vulnerability of our main battle tanks. Even as far back as when our Marine infantry battalion was fighting in Western Iraq, they were being phased out of combat service. Insurgents even managed to take out one of our M1A2 Abrams tanks with a well-placed roadside explosive device outside of Haditha. So, in 2021, the USMC deactivated its last active-duty tank battalion, 1st Tank Bn, in preparation for its transition into facing more modern adversaries (let's go ahead and say China).

The main driving factor in all of this is the rapid advance we are seeing in drone technology. Taking out a multi-million-dollar tank with an improvised roadside bomb could sometimes be referred to as luck. Using an inexpensive drone and an inexpensive, military-grade munition to destroy a tank is now modern tactics. Our unit, in 2005, had been issued a rudimentary, man-portable drone called the "Dragoneye". It was propeller-driven and launched from a type of slingshot device. With its accompanying laptop, it was intended to gather real-time images over the battlefield and return to its Marine infantryman. This was not very often the case, however, and former Sgt. Donald Bosley could tell you all about the patrols going outside the wire to retrieve the downed UAV, not before observing the crashed drone being beaten with sticks by local Iraqi kids outside the city of Hit. Fast forward to 2012, and I am drinking a Green Beans coffee just off the flightline on Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, watching unmanned USAF MQ-9 Reaper drones taking off and landing every 10 minutes as the sun is setting over the western mountains outside the base. These incredible machines never ceased to amaze me, and I contemplated how far we had come in just a handful of years. Armed with Hellfire II missiles, Sidewinder missiles, and even Stinger air-to-air missiles, they were remotely operated by Air Force pilots back in Creech AFB, Nevada, just a little drive out of Las Vegas, where I call home. From unreliable to 14 hours of autonomous flying time, drone technology has advanced at an incredible pace.

Militaries around the world have realized the potential of drones and the race to adjust to modern warfare has been heating up. The USMC, for example, has recently announced major changes to their fighting structure and capability not seen since perhaps the introduction

of rotary-wing airframes to the Corps. Continuing to use the U.S. Marine Corps as my focus study, the Commandant of the Marines, Gen. Berger, has issued something of a ten-year plan, with yearly updates, called Force Design 2030. This series of official PDFs can be found at [marines.mil/Force-Design-2030/](https://marines.mil/Force-Design-2030/). Most of the key changes to the Marine Corps and its fighting focus are directly attributed to the deadly efficient and cost-effective drone technology we are seeing used on the Ukrainian battlefield. The Marines plan to make major changes such as decreasing the overall manpower of the infantry, increasing reconnaissance troops and mobile anti-armor weapons, losing 3 Heavy-lift helicopter squadrons, 2 Light Attack helicopter squadrons, 3 Medium tilt-rotor squadrons (after all of that drama to get the Osprey in the air, this feels remarkable), and it will be adding 6 active-duty drone squadrons.

One of the more controversial decisions made by Headquarters Marine Corps was the seemingly abrupt decision to disband the Scout Sniper Platoons in favor of the new-



MQ-9 Reaper in Kandahar

ly formed Scout Platoon, which adds 8 more Marines to the platoon and will focus its mission more on reconnaissance and information gathering, rather than the traditional hunter-killer role of the Scout Snipers. While the Marines haven't made public much of the specifics of the Scout Platoon's role, a recent training exercise, conducted by 2nd Battalion 7th Marines Scout Platoon on 29 Palms MCB in California, showed a coordinated effort between instructors at Advanced Infantry Training Battalion-West and 2/7, implementing the use of ground sensors and drones in simulated combat environments. Mike Larson, the company commander for Weapons Company, 2nd Bn., 7th Marines said "The training allows our scout platoon to assist the commander's decision-making ability and also extend the battlefield through employment of small unmanned aerial systems." (via [29palms.marines.mil](https://29palms.marines.mil))

As controversial as it is to eliminate a storied program like the Scout Snipers from the USMC, the reality on the ground coming out of Ukraine must have influenced the decision to do it now. Think of the Marine Corps Scout Sniper in combat, low crawling through brush or moving among ruined buildings under the cover of darkness, he and his spotter using thermal scopes along with the most modern night vision tech-

nology. The deadliest men on the battlefield. Now, think of the drone operator, 19 years old and straight out of his training school, safely positioned a kilometer away. Using real-time thermal imaging to track every move of this sniper, in bad weather with fixed wing support grounded, he tracks these men from the incredible optics on a nearly silent drone, hovering just out of audible range nearby. Perhaps the drone operator calls in an artillery strike? Or perhaps the drone itself is equipped with a grenade he can drop directly on the sniper position once they've settled in to observe potential targets. Video from Ukraine has proven that these aren't hypothetical situations, they are the reality of modern infantry combat.

It gets even scarier for the modern grunt, as Ukrainian officials have reported that the Russians are effectively using high-explosive Iranian-made "kamikaze" drones called the Shahed-136, (my limited Arabic/Farsi allows me to tell you Shahed means "Martyr"), which have a range of 1250 miles and can stay flying above a target for long periods of time before coming in for a strike at the right moment.

(Business Insider, 3JUN2023) The United States has our own kamikaze drone, called Switchblade, which fits in a Marine's backpack, fires from a tube, and can travel 80km in 40 minutes to detonate on impact and destroy enemy tanks and combat vehicles. Weapons like this can effectively replace the unbelievably expensive Javelin missile system (\$216,000 per shot) and create a sense of constant fear on the battlefield, perhaps not seen since the days of mustard gas. The Biden Administration has acknowledged that we do have a number of troops on the battlefield in Ukraine, Special Operations troops and most likely some amount of OGA guys ("Other" Governmental Agency) working as field service representatives for these drone operations, and recording the effectiveness of their tactics on the battlefield. These men will be helping write the tactical doctrine and training manuals for soldier and Marine Drone Operators who will soon be passing through infantry training schools to field our military of the future. As for me, I'm glad I have not had to face this technology on the battlefield, and so I'll be here at home, looking out for the IQ-309 "Beer Runner" drone to get me my six-pack of Guinness from the Speedee Mart, please.



Ukrainian drone dropping munition

# Neil Sterba - Civilian of the Year

By Martin L. Flask  
Submitted by Chuck Preto

Mr. Neil Sterba is currently employed by AMG, which is more commonly known as Affiliated Managers Group, Inc. AMG is one of the largest asset management firms in the world, with over 700 billion in assets under management. Neil's role is that of Director and Regional Manager of the Ohio Valley region for AMG.

Neil has been married to his wife, Laurie, for over 31 years. They have one son (Alex) and two daughters (Emily and Phoebe) and they recently became grandparents to a lovely grandson.

Neil is a 1977 graduate of St. Edward High School, where he played basketball and baseball for the Eagles. After high school, Neil traveled to Centre College located in Danville, Kentucky, where he double-majored in Government and Economics. He was a four-year starter on the Centre basketball team and helped lead the Colonels to the school's first NCAA Tournament and Final Four in 1979. Neil ranked among the top 10 Colonels in nine different statistical categories by the end of his Senior Year and he was inducted into the Centre College Hall of Fame in 2007.

Turning back the clock to the year 1951, Neil's father, John Sterba, who was a World War 2 veteran, started placing flags on graves of veterans interred at Holy Cross Cemetery, located in Cleveland. That year, approximately 300 flags were placed on military graves. John kept after it year after year with help from his wife, Arlene, and their five children. In addition, fellow members of the Catholic War Veterans Post 579, along with their families, also helped with the grave decoration. In short, a tradition had been started that still lasts today.

Stories and traditions are endless regarding flag placing at Holy Cross, such as the year the flags were glued as opposed to stapled and after a night of high winds the cemetery was adorned with (flagless sticks! Or the year some enterprising youth removed flags and were trying to sell them to cemetery visitors. Traditions started to develop, such as the Korean War Veteran group that began decorating a section of the cemetery devotee to Korean War Veterans. Or John Sterba's wife Arlene, who always ended her decorating at the grave of Stanley Kaput so she knew that she was "Kaput" so she finished.

In 2006, 82 year old John Sterba was masterminding the effort to place approximately 14,000 flags on veterans' graves at Holy Cross. He started on a Plain Dealer interview about his concern over who was going to take the leadership role of the flag decorating after John passed in 2009, Neil assumed the role of coordinator for the Memorial Day grave. In shock that torch had been passed to the next generation and as Neil said in a Plain Dealer interview, "It was the right thing to do because his father would have wanted it".

Fast forward to today: Neil, with the help of his sister and brother-in-law and staff at Holy Cross, have developed spreadsheets of veterans and gravesites for the entire cemetery, along with the corresponding maps. Each year, the lists and maps are updated to account for the newly deceased veterans which usually number between 400-500 names. Neil estimates that 17,400 flags will be needed for the 2022 effort. The maps and lists are an integral part for volunteers who join in the decorating effort every year, rain or shine, on the Thursday before Memorial Day. After checking in at the registration table, volunteer teams usually consisting of 3 to 5 people are given a section, along with maps/lists and enough flags to finish their section. Volunteers usually spend 2 to 4 hours at the cemetery, although several make a day of it.

As the CWV Post 579 has diminished in size, Neil has built a network of volunteers that consists of family, friends, churches, civic organizations, and local high schools such as St. Ed's, St. Ignatius and Magnificat. In addition, businesses such as Bank of America, Huntington Bank and other companies have teams that join in the effort. With interest in grave decorating so great, Neil has been forced to limit the number of volunteers in order to ensure there is enough work for everyone.

According to Neil, the volunteers come out of a sense of tradition and civic pride, but above all patriotism. They do not lose sight that they are honoring our veterans, the people who fought to maintain our freedom. Yet, according to Neil, there is still another reward for those who happily and proudly endure the grave decorating task and the vagaries of the Cleveland weather: It's the overwhelming sense of pride and goodness that one feels when looking at 17,000 flags across the Holy Cross landscape. In one last fitting tradition, the Sterba family saves John Sterba's grave for the last flag to be planted, which Neil handles usually around dusk. That's when all the familiar sentiments of continuing a tradition that his father started over 70 years ago, come rushing back to him.



**Martin J. Flask -  
2021 Cuyahoga County Veteran of the Year**

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# U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club's Ashtabula Chapter Combines Fun, Mission

By Jerri Donohue

They love their Harleys, Yamahas and Suzukis - - and their fellow veterans.

"We come together for the love of motorcycles," said David Benedict, Midwest Regional President of U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club (USVMC). "We end up hitting it off because we are vets. We join this club because we - as veterans - are like-minded people and believe in our true brotherhood."

A 501(c)3 nonprofit since 2008, USVMC has chapters throughout the United States. It welcomes male veterans of all branches and active duty personnel who completed 180 days or more of military service. Benedict heads up the Ashtabula chapter, formed in 2020.

"Some of us live in Ashtabula County and we were part of a chapter in Lake County," Benedict said. "It got pretty big and so we split off to cover a wider area."

The chapter's growing membership currently consists of veterans of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, and includes veterans of the Vietnam War, the Gulf War and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Benedict served in the Navy from 1990 to 1996.

Members of U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club support and defend the U.S. Constitution, noting their military oath to do so never expires. The organization supports veterans and their causes, and it also uses community service to give the general public a positive image of both veterans and bikers.

For Feed Our Vets, a local food pantry, the Ashtabula Chapter supplies boxes, unloads trucks of donations, and participates in the food distribution.

"I couldn't get by without them," said Tracy Bidwell, the pantry director.

At Thanksgiving, the chapter distributed 35 turkeys to families of needy veterans, and 25 hams at Easter. Every year it adopts struggling families at Christmas.

The motorcyclists also help individual veterans throughout the year.

When they heard about a vet who prepared all his meals on a hotplate, the chapter brought him a stove. They've also replaced refrigerators, washing machines and clothes dryers. One member rebuilt a veteran's furnace and the group has constructed wheelchair ramps for elderly vets.

"If we need a mechanic, a carpenter, a computer guy, there's one in the club somewhere," Benedict said. "It's a giant network."

The chapter frequently helps in emergencies.

"We address the need at that moment," Benedict said. "We take everything on a case-by-case basis."

A veteran who is a single Dad couldn't get his kids to medical appointments because the family car had broken down. The chapter delivered the automobile to a garage, paid for repairs and returned the vehicle to its owner, all on the same day.

In another situation, a female veteran who was raising her children alone suddenly had the opportunity to move them into a safer place to live. She lacked the money necessary for a security deposit and her first month's rent, and so USVMC helped cover these expenses.

The club's hands-on approach often focuses on long term problem solving.

"If you're a U.S. veteran, then you're our brother or sister and we're going to do what we can for you," Benedict said.

To pay for these projects, the chapter holds raffles and auctions and it sponsors motorcycle rides. Civilian bikers will join them for the next one, on Saturday, September 23. USVMC members from other chapters also will participate.

"It's a nationwide brotherhood," Benedict said. "We know each other personally and we support each other's activities."

For information on the Ashtabula chapter or its September 23rd ride, contact Benedict at [cheech.usvmc@gmail.com](mailto:cheech.usvmc@gmail.com)



U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club logo



U.S. Veterans Motorcycle Club group

"We're big on helping veterans help themselves," Benedict said. "If you're just throwing money at a problem, you aren't fixing it."

The bikers sometimes help homeless veterans transition into housing. In addition to providing furnishings, they talk to the veterans, identifying other needs and encouraging them to get in touch with resources to assist them.

"We want to help them get what they need to keep going [forward]," Benedict said.

If the vet needs medical care, for instance, someone in the club will drive him or her to the local Veterans Administration medical facility. If the person struggles financially, they will help devise a budget.



U.S. Vets Hams, Turkeys Ready for Delivery

# Buds Home CLE Heroes

By Christopher Zurawski

It was the middle of the night and just days before Memorial Day. Bud, a WWII Navy Veteran became homeless because of a tragic house fire. The home he lived in with his granddaughter, her husband and great-granddaughter was burning to the ground. The heroic North Olmsted firefighters made certain the family was safe. However, Bud and his family could not return to their home because of the severe fire damage. Their insurance company quickly placed them in an Air BnB. Just when things could not get any worse, the family found out they needed to be out of the Air BnB by Friday at noon. This was just days away and a seemingly impossible task.

Bud was a resourceful man. He and his granddaughter Mallory knew Veterans are tightly connected and always help one another. So, they reached out to VFW Post 2533 in Cleveland, where Bud is a member. Jim Riley, a past commander and the VFW Veterans Service Commissioner for Cuyahoga County sprung into action. He began reaching out to several Veteran Service Organizations for support. Purple Heart Homes, NEOPAT, CAVA and CLE Heroes quickly began reaching out to their supporters to gather supplies and support for the family.

CLE Heroes—a real estate project of Northeast Ohio Homes (NEO Homes) brokered by eXp Realty, LLC began searching it's inventory to find a home for Bud and his family. This was a challenge for several reasons. The temporary home needed a bedroom on the main floor for Bud, be handicap accessible/ADA compliant, allow a dog and be close to the great-granddaughter's high school. This was not an easy task given the current state of the housing market.

After scouring the area, Christopher Zurawski and his team found a home meeting all the requirements. Bud and the family did a quick walk-through of the home and fell in love with this completely renovated ranch home in Westlake.

Now for the contract—another hurdle of negotiations and stress due to the market. We went up against several other offers—some even higher. What made us stand out from the rest was the owner's (Rob's) gratefulness for Bud's service during WWII and the Saint Ignatius bond. The insurance company assisted in meeting the contingencies and we were able to close the deal within 24-hours.

Bud and his family were no longer threatened with displacement. CLE Heroes/NEO Homes, VFW 2533 and the other service organizations worked diligently to gather resources and people to get Bud and his family into a permanent residence without any issues.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXuDbA-n2IA>



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# I Kissed the Hand of Freedom

By Barb Smith

For the entire Memorial Day-month of May, 2023, Bob and I travelled throughout Belgium and the Netherlands by backpack and shoulder bags via trains, a taxi, and buses, to pay homage to our WWI and WWII American and Allied heroes. We were also fortunate to have local friends in both countries meet us at the train station, bus station, or hotel, help load our bags into their trunks, take us to our hotels and tour us around. On May 21, friends John and Rani picked us up at the train station in Weert, NL, our first meeting since our trip in October. We hugged, snapped selfies, heaved bags into the trunk of their gold Volvo, and were off.

"I have a great surprise for you," John said. "We'll take you to your hotel, then have a bite to eat. At 3:00 pm, we are going to meet a 100-year-old Dutch Resistance fighter. She lives in our hometown of Maarheeze. Her name is Greta Albers!"

We pulled into Marishof, a lovely senior-living home and were greeted by our first surprise, Rene Vos, of nearby Budel. Rene is the local historian and has authored books of the Second World War and one about the air war over the municipality of Cranendonck. Rene: "See my website: [renevosbudel.nl](http://renevosbudel.nl)" (While penning this article, I logged into Rene's website, surprised to see photos of us during our recent visit!)

Rene continued: "Mrs. Albers recently turned 100 years old. She and her husband, Derick "Dick" Albers helped many pilots and Jews escape. Mrs. Albers has received many awards for her work in the resistance and recently, her own bench in the park where her husband Dick unveiled a monument, in 1985, for the help that the people of Maarheeze gave to the resistance group, the Vrijbuiters, "Freedom Fighters."

Rene added: "Immediately after the liberation, Prince Bernhard ordered the formation of a regiment consisting of persons who had been actively involved in the armed resistance. Dick signs up as a volunteer and is one of the first to leave with the Regiment Strootroepen (3RS) to the former Dutch Indies. A special bond develops between Prince Bernhard and Dick. Dick remained committed to veterans' associations

and youth education. When he dies, after an eventful life, Greta receives a condolence card from President Reagan: "Nancy and I are keeping you in our thoughts and prayers. Please take care and God bless you."

"Wow! I exclaimed. "The many times throughout our three-week tour in Belgium and the Netherlands, walking through museums, visiting memorials, and participating in solemn ceremonies commemorating soldiers and civilians fighting for freedom, in mere moments we were to enter the home of a brave woman, who in her youth put herself in daily peril."

But first, we turned and watched as a pristine, Willy's Jeep pulled into the parking lot. The residents sitting outside on the patio, were as surprised as we were. "I'd like you to meet Frank, my friend, who drove twenty minutes to meet you!" "Three cheek kisses in the Netherlands," I said. Bob shook Frank's hand. We took a slow walk-around Frank's labor-of-love, and complimented him on his American flags and other period add-ons.

We followed Rene into

office, talking to my mother, probably trying to be her boyfriend. Germans also used the same post office. Mother would hide him around back behind the apple trees. My dad put himself at great risk; without papers, he would have been shot. For harboring a criminal, mother too, would have been shot." Greta giggled as I sang, "Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree."

"There was a farmhouse outside of town, and an orchard, with many apple trees. Jews and soldiers lived there. The barking dog would alert them, to those who approached. My parents would bring them mail from Amsterdam. There was a large apple orchard behind the farmhouse with plenty of places to hide. That's the first time my mother came face-to-face with a black man, a soldier. She opened her mouth! His appearance was reminiscent to the black helpers of "Sinterklaas," except that his black did not wash off, like "Black Pete."

"My mother was a telephone operator at the post office. Encrypted messages would go out over the radio: "The sparrow has given birth to three babies." This meant that the Freedom Fighters, had gotten the Jews from the Netherlands, to Belgium, then to either France or Spain in submarines, landing safely in England, whereas rescued Allied soldiers or airmen, upon arrival, could once again hop on a plane and rejoin the fighting."

"Nearby, the Resistance were guiding and hiding three pilots to safety. They ran to the ditches alongside the right side of the road. Nazis approached. The heavy woman got off her bike, and parked on the left side.

She lifted her skirt and started peeing. She took all the attention away from the ditches and put it on herself as the Nazis watched. She was very brave."

"There was a food coupons distribution center in nearby Valkenswaard, not

*Continued next page...*



WWII Dutch Resistance Fighters  
Greta & Derick



Derick & Greta Albers

Greta's suite. Mrs. Albers and son Jos were awaiting our arrival. I reached over to shake her hand and kissed it. "I love America," she smiled. "We love you, Mrs. Albers." Jos: "Mother was 17, in 1940, when the Nazis occupied the Netherlands. My grandfather had a post office as part of his home, where my mother worked, at age 23. My father was there in the post



Greta waving

Continued from page 21...

far from your hotel, Barb and Bob. My father and the Resistance group robbed two large postal bags of food coupons. Hunted by the Nazis, they fled to Belgium and buried the bags in a field deep into the ground. Many years later, my father and I searched for the bags. Many things had changed, decades after the war. Perhaps they will be found, someday soon, when the land will be excavated for a home or business.”

## A Family of Service

Greta's eldest of three, son Ed Albers, worked in Holland, restoring stained glass, before coming to the US, in 1975. On 9/11, he mounted his Harley and sped to the Twin Towers, one of the early civilian responders permitted by firefighters to assist. According to his wife, Karena, “Having his father part of the Dutch resistance colored Edward's life always. He always wanted to be the rescuer.” It was dark. He was pushing, lifting, heaving, pulling, comforting. He ran into a fallen wire and was knocked out for a few seconds.

Undaunted by the excruciating pain in his back, he kept lifting, pushing, pulling, rescuing...until he couldn't. A couple days later when his arms and legs didn't work, the doctor confirmed that he was suffering from several broken vertebrae. He was never the same. Ever.

In 2015, a fire broke out in Ed's Manhattan apartment due to a faulty extension cord, causing the death of Ed and his beloved canine companion, a German shepherd, named Captain.

Ed's mother, Greta, sister Yvonne, and brother Jos attended his memorial. Jos showed us Ed's cremation urn. “It is against the law in the Netherlands, but Ed will be buried with my mother.” Greta beamed, her eyes never leaving the wooden box.

Jos, the middle child and devoted son, visits Greta often. A retired police officer of 47 years with the local department, PTSD visits Jos daily.

Yvonne, the youngest of three, and an IRS agent, was absent during our short visit. She loves spending time with her mother, and makes sure that Greta arrives to the community room for BINGO.

Our thirty-minute visit was much too short. Jos and I promised to keep our newly-established friendship alive with photos, texts, stories, and songs, and phone calls to Greta's beautiful voice, via WhatsApp. Bob and I stood.

“We present this Honor and Remember Flag to you, Ms. Greta. In America, this is a tribute given to Gold Star families, mothers, fathers, and all family members who have lost their child so that others may live. Please accept this as a token of appreciation from America, as you, too, have lost “sons,” during the fight

for the liberation of the Netherlands, and at great risk of losing your own. Thank you, Ms. Greta!” “I remember parachutes with chocolates and candy.” I LOVE America, she tearfully smiled.

We exchanged thanks and hugs, and headed to the parking lot.

Frank was still there, standing next to his Jeep, The Bonny Lynn!

“I had invited him in to join us, but he didn't want to leave his Jeep,” Rene said.

“Hop in, Barb & Bob. I'll drive you to the park to see the monument and Mrs. Albers' bench: “Gift from the city of Cranendonck for the 100th birthday of Miss Albers-Dings. Born, 27th of March, 1923.”

“Thanks, Frank!” In 1985, son Ed, a renowned artist, had designed the emblem for the bronze plaque on the resistance monument, a memorial of stone and brick: “Maarheeze 1940-1945 OUT OF GRATITUDE TO THE MAARHEEZE COMMUNITY” The shape of the monument has a special symbolism: the oblique sides indicate the uncertain time of war, the monument also disappears into the ground, which refers to the underground resistance group. The text on the red marble base reads: “IN MEMORIAM THE ROYAL AIR FORCES ESCAPING SOCIETY”

The very next day, John surprised us again, when he



Greta Albers-Memorial Bench

pulled into the long driveway of a bucolic expanse of tree-covered property with a fairy tale mansion, and a gentleman there to greet us.

“Through the paned, glass windows, you can see the concrete,” Hans said. We entered the meter-thick entrance of this concrete bunker, the 50-degree, cool air, reminiscent of riding into the tunnel of the anthracite coal mine tour in Ashland, Pa. The ceilings were perhaps 10ft, high, plenty of head space, enough to accommodate the tallest of Dutch gentlemen we know, Henk, at 6'8.” The Germans were known for building large, and sturdy...enough to last a 1000-year Reich, Bob, the retired HVAC instructor, said as he studied overhead, the massive steel pipes of the ventilation system. Hans chuckled.

Hans continued: “This bunker was built by the Nazis, as their communications command center, complete with electricity, and was used for just the last six months of the war.” “Greta,” I exclaimed. Communicate from this bunker would have been sent to Greta's post office and into her ears,” I added. In one dimly lit room, rested a heavy wooden box on a wooden table, opened to reveal the black Bakelite handset of a telephone, the quarter-inch dark braided cord still connecting the phone to the radio of the:

Fern- Betriebs- Great FL 40

Sender-Seite

App. No. 35362

In 1907, Leo Hendrik Baekeland, a Belgian-born chemist and entrepreneur, invented Bakelite, the first fully synthetic plastic.

In 2005, German Bakelite manufacturer Bakelite AG was acquired by Borden Chemical of Columbus, Ohio, now Hexion, Inc.

I removed the two-pound phone from its secure cradle with my two hands.

I held the phone. I looked at this weapon of war that the Nazis had once used to exterminate local citizens and beyond. I slowly brought the phone to my ear. “Greta?”



Rene Vos- Dutch author, historian

# Armed Forces Day Community and Veteran Resource Fair: Celebrating Service and Support

By Brian Anglin

**Introduction:** On May 20th, 2023, the Rid-All Green Partnership, in collaboration with the support of NEOPAT (Northeast Ohio Foundation for Patriotism), the Cleveland Cavs, and Councilman Starr, hosted a remarkable Armed Forces Day Community and Veteran Resource Fair. This event served as a poignant tribute to the brave men and women who have selflessly served their country, while also offering valuable resources and support for veterans and their families. The event proved to be an exceptional occasion that highlighted the power of community and solidarity in honoring and assisting our veterans.

**A Gathering of Gratitude:** The Armed Forces Day Community and Veteran Resource Fair was a true testament to the gratitude and admiration felt by the local community towards its servicemen and women. The event was open to the public and attracted a diverse crowd, including veterans, active military personnel, their families, and enthusiastic supporters. It served as a platform to express appreciation for the sacrifices made by our armed forces while fostering a sense of unity among attendees.

**Comprehensive Veteran Resources:** The fair offered a wide range of resources tailored specifically for veterans, ensuring that their needs were addressed comprehensively. Local organizations and support groups set up booths to provide information on healthcare services, mental health counseling, educational opportunities, job placement, and housing assistance. These resources aimed to empower veterans and help them navigate the various challenges they may face after their service, emphasizing the community's commitment to supporting their successful transition back into civilian life.

**Partnerships for Patriotism:** The collaboration between the Rid-All Green Partnership, NEOPAT, the Cleveland Cavs, and Councilman Starr demonstrated the power of partnerships in creating impactful events. The Rid-All Green Partnership, renowned for its commitment to sustainable agriculture and community development, provided an ideal venue for this celebration. NEOPAT, a prominent local organization, played a vital role in coordinating the event and extending its support to veterans in need. The Cleveland Cavs, a professional basketball team with a strong presence in the community, showcased their dedication to social causes by actively participating in and promoting the event. Councilman Starr's involvement emphasized the significance of political support and civic engagement in ensuring the welfare of veterans and their families.

**A Day of Celebration and Remembrance:** The Armed Forces Day Community and Veteran Resource Fair was not solely a solemn affair, but also a joyful celebration of the indomitable spirit and bravery of our military personnel. Attendees enjoyed live music performances, cultural displays, and interactive activities for all ages. A highlight

of the event was the heartwarming testimonials shared by veterans, allowing the community to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and the challenges they faced.

**Conclusion:** The Armed Forces Day Community and Veteran Resource Fair, organized by the Rid-All Green Partnership with the support of NEOPAT, the Cleveland Cavs, and Councilman Starr, stood as a shining example of community support and gratitude for our veterans. By offering comprehensive resources and fostering a spirit of celebration, this event demonstrated the commitment of the local community to ensure the successful reintegration of veterans into civilian life. It served as a powerful reminder that when individuals and organizations join forces, they can create a profound impact on the lives of those who have valiantly served our nation.



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### 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:**  
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More information, please contact:

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**Thank you!**

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