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CHRONICLE

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MAY/JUNE 2022



A FAREWELL SALUTE TO JOHN TIDYMAN

See page 5

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

May and June are upon us and there are many occasions to relish and be thankful for. Memorial Day, is Monday, May 30th, the federal holiday in the United States to commemorate the U.S. military personnel who have died in the service of their country. Keep in mind the Gold Star Families, that have missing family members, and should be remembered often.

Earlier on Sunday May 8th, we can celebrate our moms and Sunday June 19th our dads for Mothers and Fathers Days. Lest we forget, remember to fly the colors on Tuesday June 14th, for Flag Day. Add Armed Forces Day and D-Day, and we are pretty busy memorializing!

The above list of great things to celebrate is a prelude to a very special day in Northeast Ohio this coming July. Saturday, July 23rd is a very special day indeed.

On July 23rd at 1:30 pm, The Korean Wall, the wall engraved with the names of every Ohioan Killed In Action in the Korean War will be dedicated. Korean War Veterans will join us and be



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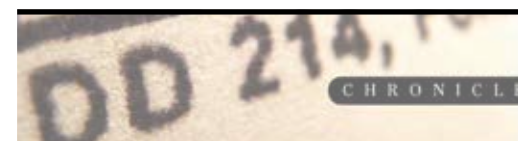
If you've ever been to the Ohio Veterans Memorial Park before, we know that we will see you on July 23rd. If you've never been to the Veterans Memorial Park, July 23rd will be a great time to see what should happen for Veterans of the United States Armed Forces. The un-

veiling of the wall will take place within the hour.

You just won't want to miss a day filled with the gratitude, pomp and circumstance for our celebration of what has been called the Forgotten War. There is no charge for this Very Grand Day! THE FORGOTTEN WAR IS NO LONGER FORGOTTEN IN OHIO!

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Donald C. Stark, publisher



VOLUME 12 NUMBER 3

*The Newspaper for Veterans
and All Who Love Them.*

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DD214 Chronicle is committed to its readers: Veterans of every generation and all who love them. The printed newspaper is delivered across northern Ohio without charge to more than 500 locations: libraries, colleges and universities that welcome veteran students, VFW and American Legion posts, city halls, Veteran Administration offices and health care facilities, organizations in support of veterans, advertisers, political offices, and Veteran Service Commissions. DD214 Chronicle also maintains dd214chronicle.com and DD214 Chronicle/Facebook.

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A farewell to the inimitable John Tidyman

By Brian Albrecht

Well John, it was an inspiring send-off. We gathered on an unseasonably sunny March day at the Berry-McGreevey Funeral Home in Westlake to honor and remember you, John H. “Tidy” Tidyman—writer, author, Vietnam veteran, loving husband, protector, ardent raconteur and a man who met life head-on, with cigar and golf club in hand.

All your siblings, save your late brother Robert, were there, bringing childhood memories of a family raised by Robert and Marie Tidyman in Cleveland and later Lakewood. Among their many bonds to you was your signature sign-off: “Iloveyougoodbye.”

Your brother Paul recalled that as a kid you were “daring. Brash. Full of himself and very socially aggressive in a positive way. I remember when he was 6 or 7 and he came home and just started yelling, ‘Hey! Hey! I’m home. Can anybody hear me? I AM HOME!’”

Brother Jim remembered the games the Tidyman siblings and friends played, such as “bootlegging” (grabbing a back car bumper for a low-speed crouching slide on snow), tomato raids on local gardens for car-pelting ammo, and the nighttime “five-man Olympic mooning team” that treated passing motorists to a display of derrieres by flashlight.

“John was a bit more reckless than I was in terms of taking chances,” Jim recalled. “He also was somewhat of a protector to any neighborhood kids who were getting bullied.”

Paul Murphy, a friend who’d known you since the third grade, said you developed an independent streak early on, that lasted a lifetime. “His theme song could’ve been ‘I did it my way.’ Sometimes that bit him in the ass, and sometimes it worked out for him,” he noted.

Your sister, Kathryn, said your disdain for abusive authority extended to your first and only year at a Catholic high school. “He was very independent-minded,” she said. “He just wasn’t going to take any s--- from anybody, so he



Photo courtesy of Annabelle Tidyman

John Tidyman shares a moment with his wife Annabelle. The couple were married for 19 years and “there was a true love between us,” she said. “Now he’s gone, but I’ll always have that love.”

John Tidyman (1949-2022) co-founded DD214 Chronicle in 2010. The publication, named for a veterans’ discharge form, featured stories about vets and the issues they faced.

was always getting pummeled or slapped. He was very stoic about it. He never showed that it hurt.”

Your youngest brother Richard said that your larger-than-life persona was something he admired and avoided, leading to a strained relationship until a reconciliation late in life.

About a year ago he visited you and “for three hours we laughed, told stories, reminisced, and I cried because I knew it was the last time I’d see him alive,” he said. “That visit healed a part of my heart that nobody else could. We had issues and a few rough spots, but he

came by it honestly, and I love him dearly.”

You transferred to Lakewood High School where you graduated in 1967, then joined the Army.

Your decision may have been influenced by your grandfather, who served during World War I, and father, who was a World War II combat vet. You once recalled, “I wanted to go. I wanted to be like *Gallant Men* and *Combat* [two military TV shows of the 1960s]. I wanted to be that.”

Richard Watts first met you in basic training in Fort Knox, Ky. “He had the devil in his eye,” Watts

said, recalling their first encounter when you challenged the entire barracks to a fight. Watts obliged. “John was marking his territory, establishing who he was,” Watts said. They tussled, but never threw a punch, and became fast friends.

You flew with Watts on a flight to the war in Vietnam, then went into separate units. You wound up with the Americal Division, 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry Regiment, Bravo Company.

You rarely, if ever, talked about your combat experiences. Even with Watts, whose friendship continued after the war.

“The war changed all of us, internally,” Watts said. “Externally we learned to adapt, to survive, or thrive, and John was very good at that . . . (but) he kept everything close to the vest. He had a big heart but he’d never expose it. He had that tough exterior. I loved that surly SOB.”

You once said that the war was “wonderful, tragic, incredibly frightening, a political education and satisfying.”

In a letter to Mike Roberts, former editor of *Cleveland Magazine* (where you worked for a while), you wrote: “the war was a disaster. Militarily, politically, economically, morally, and, for thousands and thousands of families, needless death and mourning.”

Yet, “you and I wouldn’t have missed it for anything. The war was an important part of U.S. history, and we were there, among the blood and bombs, disease and disaster, medics and malingers, lies and fabrications of the first order.”

Roberts recalled, “John had a gift, not only as a writer but as a person who could look at society and see stories that others couldn’t see. He was such a truthful person, introspective in many ways, and a gentle guy.”

Ed Walsh, a playwright who once worked at *Cleveland Magazine*, remembered you as “a really wonderful human being. He was the most honest guy I’ve ever known. He had a style in his writing. He had a voice.”

Continued on next page

TIDYMAN continued from page 3

He misses you. “Oh yeah,” Walsh said. “There’s a little hole punched in my life right now.”

Your writing career started at the *Cleveland Press*, perhaps emulating the example set by your father and grandfather, both *Plain Dealer* reporters.

Then you freelanced for local publications and worked in public relations for the East Ohio Gas Co.

Fellow freelance writer Nancy Peacock said the first time she met you, “I realized he had a very keen intellect. He loved a good conversation. He had a singular personality. He just enjoyed life on a level that few people do.”

You authored eight books, including five devoted to golf. This combined love of writing and golf was also featured in a story you wrote about your favorite stop for a donut fix, Elmwood Home Bakery.

Andy Rerko, bakery owner, still has your story, “West Side bakers’ foursome exchange rolling pins for putters,” hanging on a wall in the shop. The story gave the family business “a fantastic feeling, made us feel good about ourselves,” Rerko said. “I’m sure he touched a lot of other people that way.”

You also enjoyed gardening, a pastime perhaps inspired by your father, and used the “maters” (tomatoes) you grew to make spaghetti sauce for Ed Senko, a buddy since high school where he said “John was always the maverick. You couldn’t put him into a box of any kind.”

But Senko said your biggest gift to him was steering him to the Veterans Administration for PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) treatment. The protector stepped up again. “He felt so much for veterans. He knew what we went through, more so than anybody else,” Senko said.

There were problems and setbacks along the way, possibly due to your own PTSD. But family and friends say you found a shelter from any storm in Ann Marie Stasko, who as a child admired you as “the best-looking brother in the family.”

You met again in 2008, and “we fell so hard for each other,” she recalled. “He was kind, intelligent, everything wrapped up in one, and he loved me from day one. And he always showed it.” She still has more than 1,000 love letters you wrote to her over the years. “He was my whole life,” she said.

She recalled that you both loved just talking, for hours, but not



Photo courtesy of Annabelle Tidyman

The Tidyman kids sit still for a photo in 1956. Pictured are, from left, Bobby, Pauly, Kathy, Johnny, Jimmy, David and Dicky.

about your Vietnam experience. She recalled one time when you touched on the subject, telling her about the time when you were coming home from the war and a bartender refused to serve you because you were underage. “John said, ‘I’ve shot and killed people,’ and got up and left,” she remembered.

For your mutual new chapter in life, you gave her a new name, Annabelle Lee Dowd, and you married in 2013 at University Circle United Methodist Church, despite your cynicism regarding organized religion (claiming you worshipped Ra the Egyptian sun god).

Ken Chalker, the church’s senior pastor at the time (whom you dubbed the “Vicar”), said the couple enjoyed a “mutually supportive and loving relationship. There’s no question she had a powerful impact on some of his rough edges, and likewise John was a supportive, loving presence in her life.”

He recalled that you and he remained friends after the wedding, and said, “It’s been a remarkable experience to be a part of John’s life,” even though you couldn’t resist jokingly commenting on one of his sermons by saying, “Well Vicar, the music was really good.”

Chalker regarded you as irascible, but a steadfast supporter of veterans, as evidenced when you co-founded a publication for vets, *DD214 Chronicle*, in 2010. The publication, named for a veterans’ discharge form, featured stories about vets and the issues they faced.

Terry Uhl, who’d worked with you on a prior weekly radio show for vets, said he helped organize the bimonthly’s business side while

you served as editor and publisher. “He took this project very seriously,” Uhl said. “I think one thing he felt most was an affinity for veterans, particularly Vietnam veterans.”

Given your sense of humor, the effort was not without a little comedy. Uhl recalled that in the early years, you’d make up fictitious bylines for stories you wrote. “I gave up guessing who was real and who was fake,” Uhl said. “I don’t think many of the readers ever caught on.”

Bill Grulich helped with the start-up and delivery of the *Chronicle*. He recalled, “John and I would go around, delivering and joking around, and he would literally run up to people stopped at the traffic light and say, ‘Hey, you want this paper?’ He’d crack me up.”

Fellow veteran Ed Senko said you and the *Chronicle* were “a life-line for veterans to the outside world. That’s what he was. Period.”

Richard DeChant, who serves on the *Chronicle*’s advisory board, said enjoyed talking with you about Cleveland historical trivia (you were a master), and believes your Vietnam experience “drove him in a positive way” to start the publication.

“He was committed to taking care of his own,” DeChant said. “That paper was a voice that reached out and said, ‘You’re not alone. There’s a hand up, here.’”

Don Stark, publisher/sales manager, now assumes that role, and remembered working with you and your fondness for the swimming pool and glazed donuts. “I will always miss his friendship,”

Stark said. “His compliments were frequent and inspiring. He was a terrific boss and partner.”

Once, you’d talked about expanding the *DD214* concept to other Ohio cities.

Then fate, cancer and a stroke, stepped in, and you were forced to step out.

Your wife remembered your last moments on March 9, when “we just held each other and cried, and he kept repeating ‘I love you. I love you.’”

At the service, that end was mournfully echoed in the brass tones of “The Last Post,” played by your brother Paul on trumpet. “It plays well. Has a nice haunting tone,” he said of the song. “There is an air of finality, that we’re going to begin closure right now.”

And yet, “he’s gone, physically, but I still feel his presence,” Paul said. “His spirit was so alive and so vibrant. My feeling is that hey, he did his job and he did it well. He had fantastic experiences. He had a life purpose that, from what I can see, he fulfilled.”

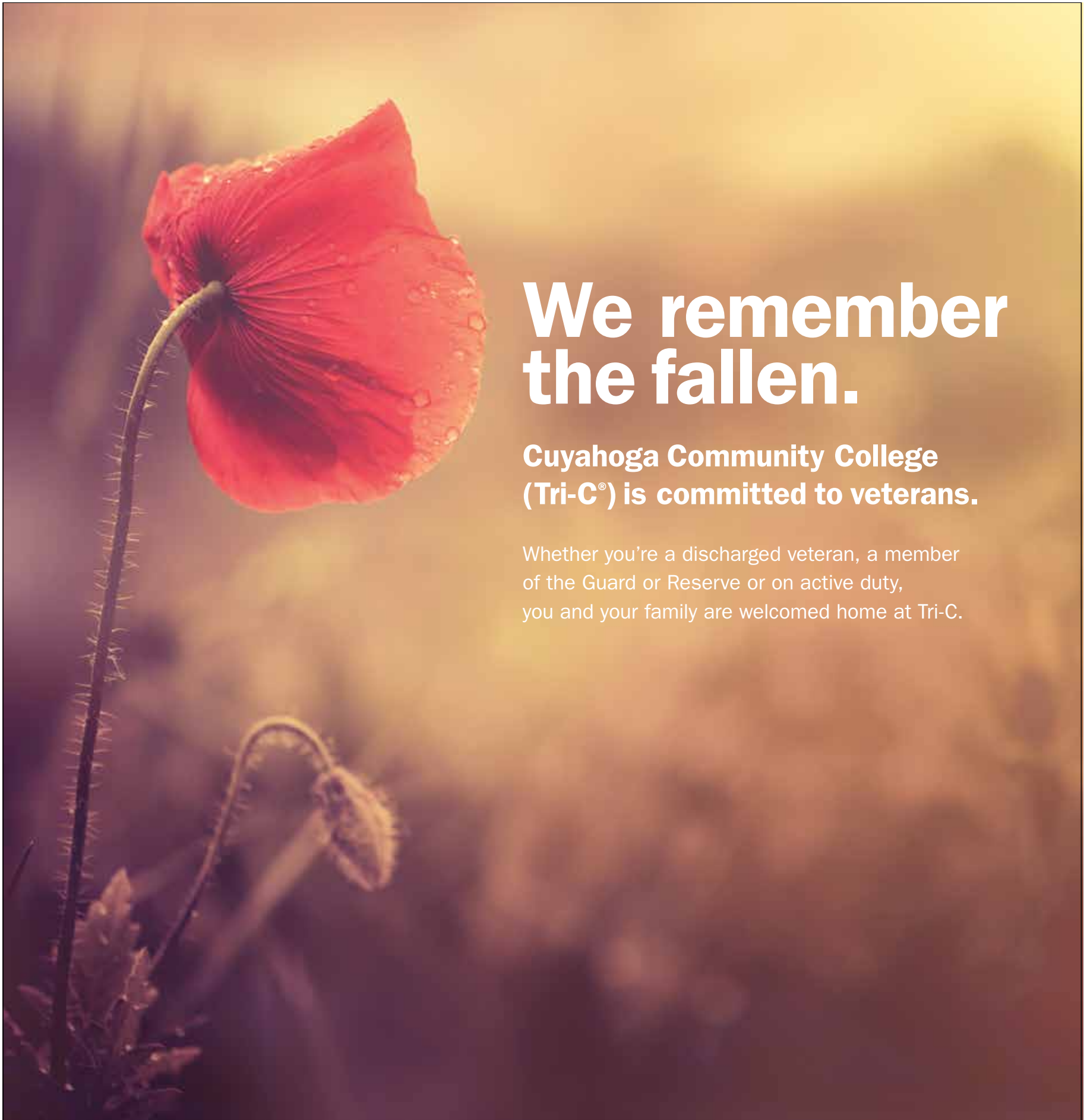
Chalker offered a similar view when he told the assembled mourners that death does not diminish the endurance of relationships.

He noted that Vietnam troops, soon to leave the war, had a saying: FIGMO (finally I get to move on).

“Maybe that’s John’s message now,” Chalker said. “It isn’t over and I’m moving on, and someday we’ll be together again.”

Taps was played. The American flag was folded. An anonymous mourner left a cigar cutter near the box of your ashes.

See you on the other side, John.

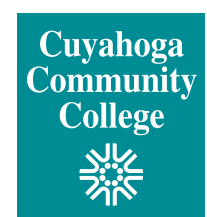


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A City's History Preserved For Posterity: Cleveland in World War II

By Nancy Peacock

Growing up in Cleveland, Brian Albrecht always knew his dad had served in World War II.

"It was pretty obvious when he took off his shirt," Albrecht said. "He had bullet scars across his chest."

It wasn't until his dad died in 1983 and the Albrecht siblings sent away for his military records that they discovered the scope of their father's service. Sgt. Warren Albrecht, D Company, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, won both a Purple Heart and a Silver Star.

"He was a paratrooper with the 82nd Airborne and he parachuted in on D-Day," Albrecht said. "He won a Silver Star and was wounded pretty badly in the Battle of the Bulge. But he never really talked much about the war and that's something I've always regretted. I wish I had sat him down with a tape recorder and said, 'Tell me about it.'"

By the time Albrecht was asked by historian James Banks to co-author the book *Cleveland in World War II*, (History Press, 2015), he had already done years of research. In the 1990s, during his 40-year career as a reporter and editor for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Albrecht had written a series of columns on the 50th anniversary of the war's important milestones.

"One thing I realized as we were working on it was you can't name a major event in World War II that didn't have somebody from Northeast Ohio," Albrecht said. "Pick out a battle, pick out a theater of war, the city played a major role in it."

As the fifth largest city in the United States in 1940, Cleveland was at the heart of the industrial war effort. The book is filled with stories of Cleveland families and individuals' sacrifices. Mona Lowery is just one example.

Lowery was a young Navy bride who worked on an assembly line at Cleveland Welding Company pulling hot, seventy-five-millimeter anti-aircraft shells off a conveyor belt with her bare hands. She couldn't wear protective gloves because she needed to use her fingertips to feel for metallic burrs that would have

caused the shells to misfire. By the end of the war, Lowery's husband had been killed and she had burned off her fingerprints. Losing her fingerprints didn't matter she insisted, because "I was doing it for a purpose."

Many more stories came from archives at the *Plain Dealer*, Western Reserve Historical Society and Cleveland State University. Banks was offered a large stack of scrapbooks from a rare book dealer that included every *Cleveland Press* article related to the war. Albrecht was able to read through the entire four-year collection of newspaper clippings.

"One of my favorite finds was a little item about a local sailor," Albrecht said. "He was on a PT boat that got hit by a Japanese destroyer, cut the boat in half, the crew including this local guy (Raymond Albert) swam to an island. And I'm thinking, 'Gee, this sounds awfully familiar.' Last paragraph, his skipper was (future president) John F. Kennedy." (Tragically, Albert was later killed in action.)

Historian Jim Banks spent his 40-year career as a history professor at Cuyahoga County College's Western Campus in Parma, a site that once housed Crile Hospital. The military hospital opened in 1944 to treat the returning wounded.

The first patient at Crile Hospital was Private Richard Currier. The book describes how he survived being hit by shrapnel that nearly tore off both arms during the invasion of Salerno, Italy. After spending time in a POW hospital near the Swiss Alps, Currier was traded for wounded German prisoners and eventually found his way to the new Crile Hospital for extensive rehabilitation.

Another memorable Crile Hospital patient was Technical Sergeant Jesse "Will" Largent. He was shot down over southern France and broke his leg when he parachuted and hit the ground. He was transported to a German hospital and was surprised when the German commander surrendered to him. The war was almost at an end and the Germans feared French partisans would take revenge on the

German patients and medical staff without the presence of Americans.

What made these two war stories even more memorable for Banks was that both Currier and Largent eventually settled in nearby Medina. Banks had both Currier's niece Linda and Largent's son Jeff as students when he taught at Medina High School in 1964.

"All of this is very convoluted, but that's the way history works," Banks said.

In 1966, Banks was hired to teach history at Tri-C's Western Campus when it first opened in the old hospital facility. Although the hospital was demolished in 1974 and replaced with a modern campus, Banks' fascination with the history of Crile Hospital motivated him to create the Crile Archives.

To view the archives online, visit crilearchives.pastperfectonline.com

"We've tried to memorialize various aspects of the hospital and its relationship to war, healing, combat and community dedication," Banks said. "It is memory that we must never forget in terms of sacrifice."

The book is a fascinating collaboration of how Cleveland's diverse military and civilian population met the challenges of winning a worldwide conflict. Albrecht said he had one goal for writing the book.

"I had interviewed probably a couple hundred World War II vets, but their stories were in the newspaper and the newspaper is gone the next day," he said. "My goal was to get a book in the library so these guys would be there as long as the library was. And I achieved that goal."

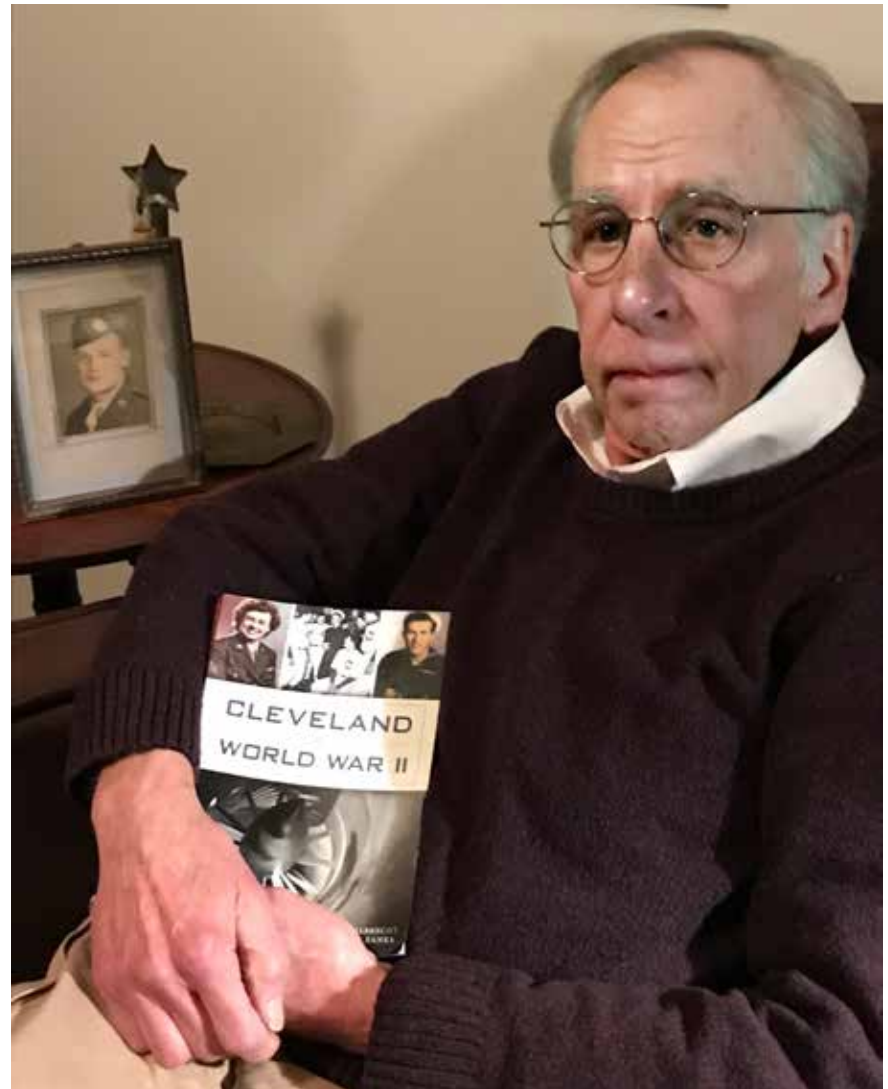


Photo by Gretchen Albrecht

Brian Albrecht, who co-authored *Cleveland in World War II* with James Banks, is flanked by a photo of his father who served as a paratrooper in World War II.



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A U.S. Army veteran, Robert served in the military for three years from 1981 to 1984. He did his basic training at Fort Dix, completed additional training as a supply specialist at Fort Lee in Virginia, and spent most of his tour at Fort Hood in Texas, with a short post in Germany. He opted to further specialize his responsibilities and began driving a 5-ton fuel tanker to supply heavy equipment in the field. In 1984, he was honorably discharged and returned to his family here in Cleveland. Robert says that the Army changed his life immensely, giving him the opportunity to grow up, see the world, and become a better man. “It was a great experience for me,” Robert says.

He returned to Cleveland and to his family, but he explains that he soon became an alcoholic. His

CSA has been providing housing, job assistance, and personal, behavioral and spiritual support for veterans and other men transitioning from poverty, homelessness and addiction for more than 15 years.

addiction led to the loss of several jobs, strained family relationships, and more fear than he ever experienced before. After a very embarrassing situation occurring at his son’s wedding, Robert remembers getting down on his knees and praying. Two days later, he was in treatment.

When Robert arrived at CSA in the spring of 2019, he was terrified. “I was afraid of relapsing because I’d never done this before,” Robert says. It was his first attempt at recovery after an ongoing struggle with addiction and several attempts at rehabilitation, until one final 10-month stay at a local inpatient treatment center—longer than most average stays at such

facilities—seemed to be different.

Robert was admitted to Fulton House, one of the four CSA housing sites and one devoted exclusively to veterans, and he recalls being very lonely at first. The house was very quiet and he didn’t know any of the other guys. The men at Fulton House were all going about their business, going to work in the mornings and to AA meetings at night, and Robert felt very out of place. “Then I started talking to guys here, and I did what my sponsor suggested and go to meetings and just be helpful.” That simple change in mindset made all the difference. Robert settled in, working during the days at a job he’d been trained for by the Veterans

Administration, going to AA meetings all over town in the evenings, and following the advice of his sponsor and CSA Program Manager, James Johnson. Soon he started noticing a change.

In a monthly one-on-one session, Mr. Johnson recommended that Robert start to save his money to pay down his debts and prepare for his eventual move from Fulton House into independent living. Prior to arriving at CSA, Robert had built up a considerable amount of debt, including back-debts owed to the gas and electric companies and other debtors. Robert heeded that advice, and the affordable rent at Fulton House and the support of the CSA staff allowed him to pay them off a little at a time. Now he’s debt free and “Ready for the real world,” as he describes.

“This place saved my life,” Robert says, “and I’m thankful they’ve let me stay as long as I did. They must have seen something in me.” And to the new guys just coming into one of CSA’s houses, Robert says, “Do what you’re told. If you have issues, take them to the staff. Tell them about it and they’ll help you. Don’t

Continued on next page

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be shy. Get to know the guys here, and make sure you make all your meetings!" It's advice that Robert took to heart to help his own transformation.

Since leaving Fulton House, Robert has his own place, continues to be employed by the Veterans Administration, is actively involved in the AA program, and routinely serves as a mentor and role model for other CSA residents trying to find their ways through the challenges of a broken and battered past.

CSA has been providing housing, job assistance, and personal, behavioral and spiritual support for veterans and other men transitioning from poverty, homelessness and addiction for more than 15 years. CSA provides affordable, short-term supportive housing, identifies and secures local work experience and employment opportunities, and offers training that fosters personal, behavioral and spiritual development, all to promote the eventual independence and self-sufficiency of the men they serve. They assist men most in need and help them

realize their full potential by relying on Christian-based principles to provide housing and job assistance, and address the additional issues—primarily substance abuse, addiction and recovery—which are preventing them from leading productive lives within our community.

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Smoky Receives Animals in War & Peace Distinguished Service Medal

by Jerri Donohue

Decades after Smoky's wartime contributions, the Yorkshire Terrier has received the U.S. Congress's recently established Animals in War & Peace Distinguished Service Medal.

The award was created by House Resolution 935 to recognize "the roles and contributions of United States service animals and their valiant human handlers." Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA 40), one of its sponsors, made the medal presentation remotely in a ceremony held in the Rayburn House Office Building on March 9. Smoky was one of three dogs to receive the honor.

Hinckley resident James (Jay) Wynne accepted the medal on behalf of the Wynne family.

Wynne's father, William A. Wynne, acquired Smoky in March 1944 after she was rescued from a foxhole in New Guinea by another American serviceman. Cpl. Wynne, who was serving with the U.S. Army's Fifth Air Force 26th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron, took Smoky on aerial search and rescue missions. In off hours, he taught his little dog tricks, such as walking a tightrope and spelling her name. (He omitted the "e" to reduce the number of letters.) Smoky quickly became a first class morale booster for the squadron, and *Yank Magazine* named her Best Mascot, SWPA (South West Pacific Area).

The Yorkie earned the title of "therapy dog" when she visited sick soldiers at the 233rd station hospital, including Wynne, who then suffered from dengue fever. Smoky later entertained hospitalized American Marines, sailors and soldiers in Australia, and she performed for wounded Americans in Manila, too.

Still in the Philippines, the tiny dog pulled a telephone line through a 70-foot culvert beneath an airfield. The feat spared

communications personnel from exposure to strafing by Japanese planes. Grateful GIs rewarded her with a steak.

After the war, Bill Wynne brought Smoky home to Cleveland where she died peacefully in 1957.

Anna Wynne, who was celebrating her 14th birthday the day of the ceremony, has been hearing Smoky stories all her life.

"She was less than a foot tall, but she was really strong at heart," she told the crowd.

The ceremony began with an invocation by the Rev. Dr. Margaret Grun Kibben, chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives and included an address by retired Marine Chris Willingham, President of U.S. War Dogs Association, followed by video tributes of the medal recipients. The event concluded with an official parade of dogs and blessing of the animals.

Like his father, Jay Wynne is a former soldier. Deployed with the 1486th Transportation Company of the Ohio National Guard during Desert Storm, he logged 25,000 miles driving an Army truck between Dhahran, Saudi Arabia and U.S. positions in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait. In his acceptance speech, Wynne said that his father knew that Smoky had been chosen for the medal and had hoped to attend the ceremony. Bill Wynne died last April at age 99.

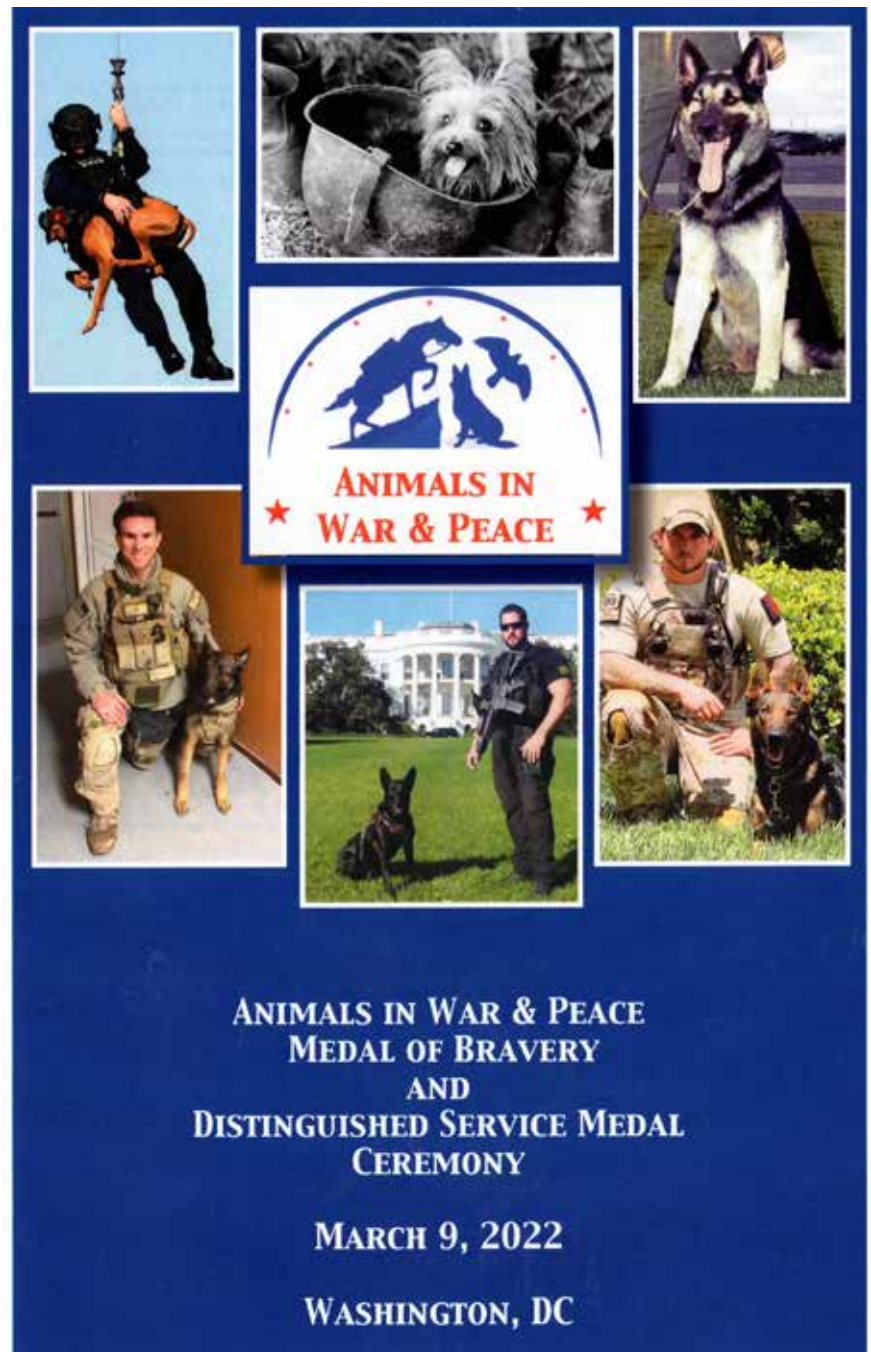
Other recipients of the Distinguished Service Medal were K9 Hurricane (U.S. Secret Service - Emergency Response Team) and K9 Feco (U.S. Coast Guard - Maritime Safety and Security Team.)

In addition, three dogs were awarded the Animals in War & Peace Medal of Bravery: Nemo (U.S. Air Force - Vietnam War), Cairo (U.S. Navy Seal Team Six) and MPC Ziggy (U.S. Marine Corps - Special Operations Command).

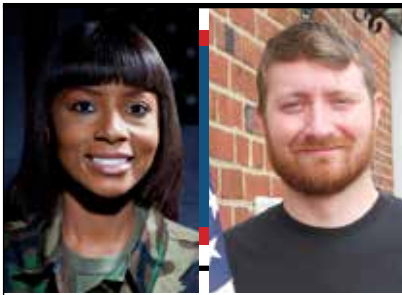


photo by Louise Kraft, courtesy Animals in War & Peace

On behalf of the Wynne family, James (Jay) Wynne accepts the Animals in War & Peace Distinguished Service Medal in a March 9 ceremony in Washington, D.C. Wynne's daughter, Anna, holds a photo of her late grandfather, William A. Wynne with the honoree, Smoky.



Smoky (top center) and five other dogs were honored in a ceremony in Washington D.C. on March 9.



Sergeant Mark Stillion, USMC Bravo Co., 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Tank Battalion, Kent State Graduate Student

by JC Sullivan

Sebring, Ohio veteran Mark Stillion is a remarkable man. Growing up in a family of Marines it wasn't hard for him to make the decision to join them after 9-11. Like so many other patriotic men and women that year he felt a strong obligation to make decision to enlist.

After four deployments to the Middle East, six months after he returned from Afghanistan, he began to self-medicate and spiraled into a lifestyle of addiction to illicit drugs to numb himself from his night terrors, flashbacks and feelings of alienation, loneliness, and hopelessness. "I saw and did things that no human being should ever have to experience."

He sought help with the Department of Veterans Affairs who diagnosed PTSD. He was admitted to the West Los Angeles VA. Following that he entered a year-long program with the PTSD Foundation in New York.

Part of the reason he chose Kent State was because of his

grandmother, Martha Rastetter. She was a graduate of KSU. He had a close relationship as he lived with her all during his high school years. "She was a motivating factor for me to attend KSU to seek a higher education and do well. Another reason I chose Kent State was because I had learned they're also a very veteran-friendly school.

Joshua Rider is the Executive Director of the Center for Adult and Veterans Services at Kent State. "Since 2010 we had a Center for Adult and Veteran Services. We process all VA Educational Benefits at the Kent Campus and assist our other Regional Campus by processing educational benefits for them as well. Since 2010 we also have a Veteran Career Initiative that is funded by KSU alumni that takes place over two semesters. Our veterans love it because it connects them to mentors in their career path. Some veterans live out of the county and even out of the state. It's on-line and in synchronous form so they can engage when they want to.

Kent State was a good fit for Mark and he loves it. "Not every school has a Veterans Services. "Their office is set up for the specific needs of the veteran. I have also been part of the Veterans Career Initiative Program since January 2021. Here veterans learn advanced skills; career and resume' building and interviewing. They really set you up for success for when you leave the program and go back into the real world. "

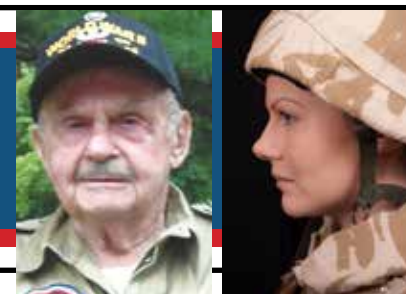
He graduated with a bachelor's degree in education and a Certificate in Addiction Counseling. He is now in a sixty-hour Clinical Mental Health Master's Program. "I'm currently enrolled for nine credit hours and scheduled to graduate in 2025." In addition to all this, he was hired as an Addiction Counselor in Columbiana County, Ohio.

When asked if a book is in the future he chuckled. "I do like to write. I'm thinking about it and it's a possibility. I have quite a bit written down already about different

memories from my deployments. I kept a journal when I returned each time. In it I've recounted a lot of things that happened over there in it."

How does he feel about what Kent State has done for him? "The biggest thing is it has helped me to achieve the goals I had set for myself. As an adult learner, the thought of returning to school several years after leaving the military was very nerve-wracking as I thought about the enrollment process, I didn't know what to expect but ever since day one it has been very welcoming, not only from the Veterans Office but also from the staff and students." He also knows he has a lot to contribute from his experiences that a younger generation has not been through.

Stillion recommends to any combat veterans who are suffering from some of the things he's gone through can find a free program at www.wildops.org.



From Four Chaplains Day, Feb. 3 to Cinco de Mayo!

By Barb Smith

February 3, is recognized as Four Chaplains Day. Throughout the nation organizations honor the four clergy who gave so selflessly of themselves handing off their own life jackets so others may live when on 2/3/43, their ship, the USAT Dorchester, was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat, in the icy waters of the North Atlantic.

Six to eighth graders at Ss Robert & William Catholic School in Euclid, Ohio, under the direction of their teacher, Mrs. Patrice Garukas, spent hours throughout the month of January, studying the story of the Four Chaplains, learning the lyrics to and signing the National Anthem, God Bless America, reciting a poem dedicated to the Four Chaplains, and rehearsing the Playing of Taps.

On Wednesday, February 2, their skills honed, patriotic behavior perfected to host invited clergy and military dignitaries, and stomachs in knots, students were all set to participate in their very first Four Chaplains Day.

On Thursday, February 3, 2022, schools throughout northeastern Ohio were closed due to blizzard-like conditions, prediction of, from 8-12" snow accumulation.

Mrs. Garukas and her prepared

students extend an invitation to the public to attend the Four Chaplains, 2022, ceremony on Thursday, May 5, @ Ss Robert & William Catholic School @ 351 E., 260th St. Euclid, Ohio 44132. Contact 216-731-3060 / rsmith@srwschool.cc



My husband and US Navy veteran, Bob and I recently toured the beautiful Chapel of the Four Chaplains within the Navy Yard in Philadelphia, PA. Thank you to Michelle Noffi, administrative coordinator, Christine Beady, the chapel's executive director, and William Kaemmer, Executive Director, Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, for sharing your time and expertise with us.

As we left the nation's first Navy Yard, the morning fog was so thick that we could not make out the outline of not one of the 27 ships in the harbor. Perhaps we'll have better luck on February 3, 2023, as we plan to join our three new friends at the annual Four Chaplains Banquet.

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Hospice Patients Travel Memory Lane on Flights to Remember

by Jerri Donohue

From his bed, a hospice patient experiences driving down his street, turning into his driveway, and then lingering in his beloved backyard. On another day, a man enjoys the sensation of skimming above the lake and hovering along its shore. Yet another person takes an aerial spin around his former high school.

In each case, The Flight to Remember Foundation created short, detailed films of sites significant to these terminally ill individuals.

“Treating someone doesn’t mean just giving them medicine for physical pain,” said Ashley Davis, the nonprofit’s executive director. “It’s also tending to—for lack of a better word—their soul. Therapy programs, music therapy, art therapy, experiences that help them feel better.”

Since Davis’s husband, Tom Davis, founded the 501(c)3

nonprofit in 2017, it has provided 94 patients with personalized, comforting Flight to Remember experiences. While he enjoyed piloting a drone he’d purchased, Tom Davis recognized its service potential to gravely sick people. Declining health prevents some patients from leaving medical facilities, but scenes filmed by drones can transport them to a childhood home, a familiar neighborhood or a favorite vacation spot. A virtual “flight” produces a sort of time travel, too, taking them back to brighter days.

Always searching for ways to comfort its patients, Hospice of the Western Reserve enthusiastically greeted Tom Davis’s idea. Today 20 other hospices in 12 states also offer The Flight to Remember experience to their patients.

How it works

Without disclosing their patient’s identity, a hospice contacts Ashley

Davis with requests for film of an outdoor location meaningful to that person. She then taps into her network of 250 drone pilots to obtain the necessary, high quality footage. Next, a volunteer works another kind of magic by editing jerky movement and adding music.

The usual result is a six or seven minute long film in a digital file that the foundation gives to the patient’s facility. Patients view these soothing, personalized films on television, tablets, laptops or cellphones.

Continued on page 19



photo courtesy The Flight to Remember Foundation
Tom and Ashley Davis

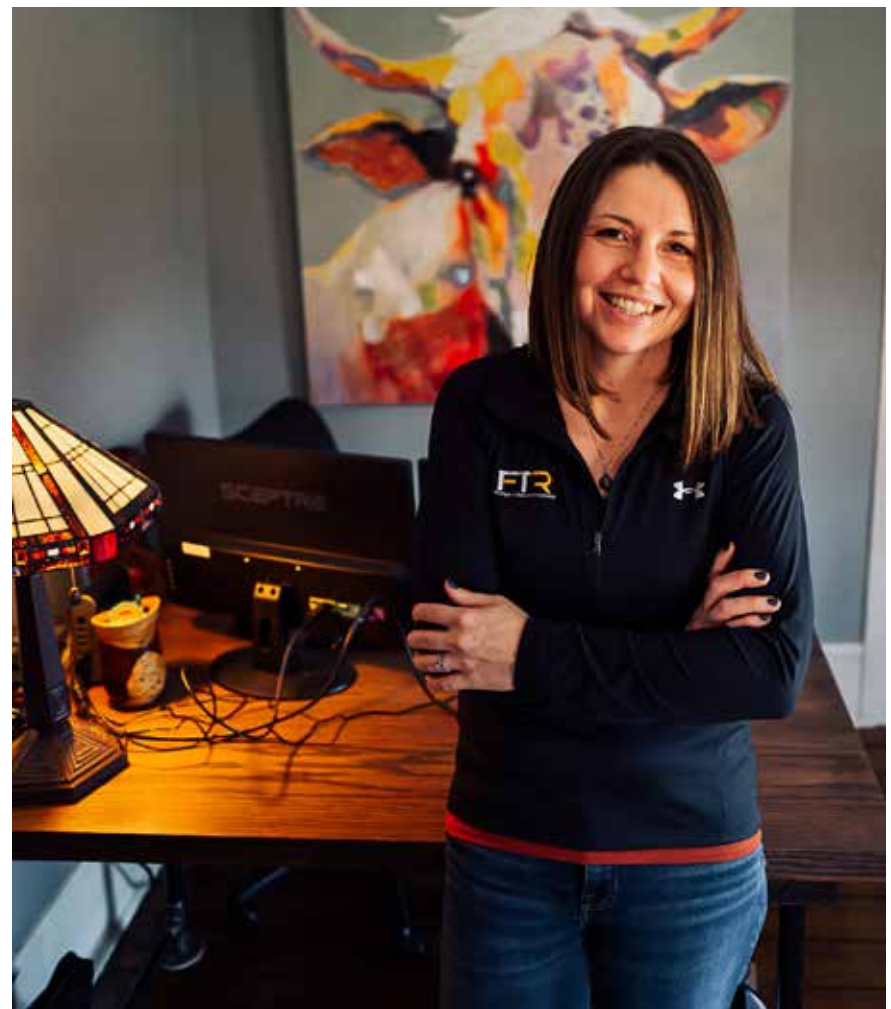


Photo by Billy Delfs Photography
Ashley Davis, Executive Director of The Flight to Remember Foundation, in her office.



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FLIGHTS Continued from page 17

The Flight to Remember Foundation never charges patients or their families. Participating hospice organizations pay a membership fee to help cover operating expenses. Sometimes a person is approaching death so rapidly that the foundation cannot wait until a volunteer is available to meet the need. When turnaround time is only a few days, Davis has to hire drone pilots or film editors. Other times, pilots donate their time but ask for reimbursement of travel costs to assigned locations.

A generous network

“Our volunteers are our best resource by far,” Ashley Davis said. “They are so excited to help people while doing something they love.”

Drone pilots throughout the United States and in several other countries have pitched in. Davis cited the case of an elderly man who had driven an Army mail truck around Munich, Germany immediately after World War II. As he neared the end of his life, the veteran wanted to see that city’s post-war recovery. Davis contacted a German civilian who promptly filmed the designated area.

The films often spark happy

memories and conversations with the patient’s loved ones. Because of a volunteer in Ireland, for example, a man in Arizona was able to revisit the Irish town where he grew up. As he watched his film with relatives here, the patient indicated places on his street where he and his brothers had played as children.

Another patient previously made annual trips to Wyoming with his family. He eventually bought a piece of land there without seeing it in person. Unfortunately, he was stricken with a terminal illness soon after. Although he could no longer travel, the man’s Flight to Remember video gave him a bird’s eye view of his property, while lower shots produced the sensation of walking through it.

Volunteers contribute their time and skills to bring the Flight to Remember experience to these dying strangers, but they never meet the people they help. Hospice employees report the happy response of patients to the films, however, such as the Clevelander who relished the “flight” around his neighborhood and church.

“He played it nonstop for two days before he died,” Davis said.

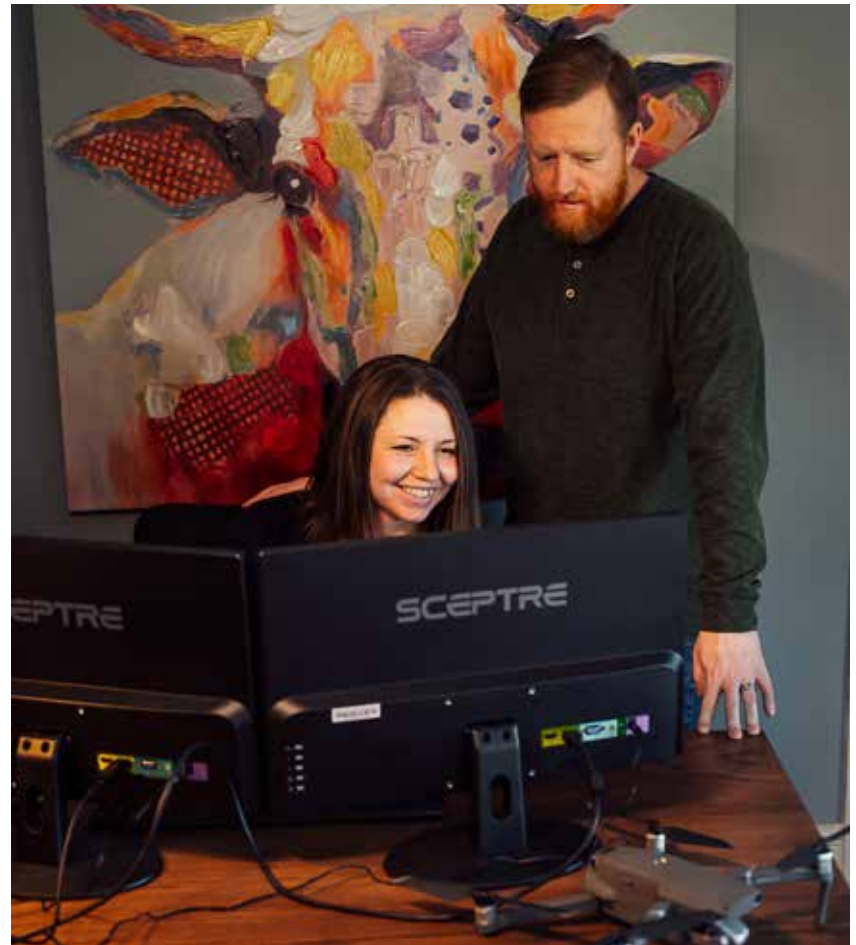


Photo by Billy Delfs Photography

Ashley Davis and Tom Davis watch a Flight to Remember film in the foundation’s office.

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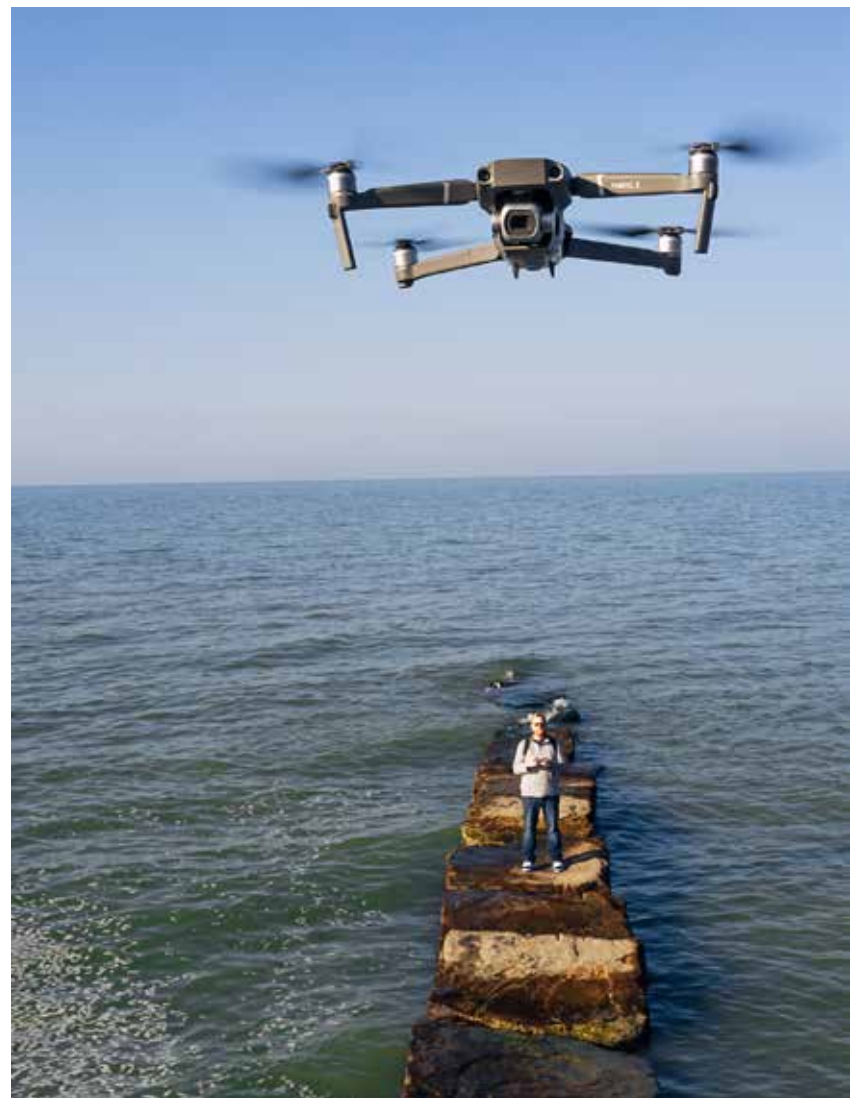


Photo by Billy Delfs Photography

Tom Davis, founder of The Flight to Remember Foundation, pilots a drone to film shots of Lake Erie.




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Joe Burdick Raises Charitable Funds By Raising His Wooden Flags

by Chris Johnston

One afternoon seven years ago, Joe Burdick was enjoying a carefree saunter through a Pat Catan's craft store, perusing the extensive variety of products. The U.S. Navy veteran (1987-1995) stopped to examine an American flag constructed of wood. His first thought, "That's pretty cool. It's different."

Then he turned it over. The "Made in China" tag left him less than impressed. He did not purchase one. He did, however, start telling everyone he knew about this experience, being sure to add: "I could make those. I could do it better." Soon, fatigued friends and family silenced him by responding, "Well then, just do it!"

So, he did. Friends who saw them, especially veterans and first responders, liked and wanted them, so it began to grow into a hobby for Joe, in between building homes. Then he started to receive requests for his wooden flags for gifts and fundraisers.

"It morphed into little side business that was always slanted more towards philanthropy," Burdick recalls today. "I wanted to raise money for charities. I wanted to promote patriotism. I wanted to talk to people about the flag that represents everything that is good in our country, not what is bad, so I started going that."

In 2016, when the Republican

National Conference was held in Cleveland, he saw an out-of-town vendor selling wooden flags "in my own backyard." That incident inspired Joe to step up his game by expanding his menu of flags, enhancing the quality by replacing painted stars with stars carved from wood, and ramping up his social media to get his name out to a larger audience.

Then his wife advised him that if he was going to do this he needed to do it the right way and become an official, full-time business. Burdick Custom Flags was born. He got a tax ID, a company bank account and QuikBooks so he could file and pay taxes. Burdick Custom Flags was born.

He found himself working all day building homes, then driving to a workshop he rented in downtown Cleveland to make flags, so he wasn't getting home until 11 pm. To make his life a little easier, Joe relocated his flag production operations to his home. Requests for flags had "gone through the roof" at that point, and he had just started experimenting with a new style of flag that was wavy.

Last year, Chnanel 5 came to his home as part of a series of stories on local businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In one camera shot, viewers saw the new flag design, and he got more than 20 calls requesting them.

"Everybody wants the wavy flag now, so those really took off," he says. "I hand carve all the stars. I don't use a CNC machine. I love that I can say everything I do is done by hand."

He uses white pine, which is a softer, more malleable wood that allows him to tailor the handmade flags more freely. He also creates state or foreign flags or silhouettes of states, but focuses primarily on the Stars and Stripes. He's made them from 24" in length up to 8-feet wide and everything in-between.

Burdick Custom Flags took another big leap when, at the advice of his daughter to leverage social media, Joe reached out to *Masked Singer* judge Jenny McCarthy, who bought one of his flags for husband *Blue Bloods* star Donnie Wahlberg. When she tweeted that the handmade American flag moved him to tears, McCarthy's 1.2 million followers all learned of Joe's handmade American flags. She ordered two more for Christmas presents. Burdick had successfully amplified his brand.

Since then, he has made flags for everyone from Browns future Hall of Famer Joe Thomas and defensive tackle Jamie Meder, *Baywatch* beach beauty Yasmine Bleeth, Julie Michaels of the film *Road House* fame to Danny Vitale who played for the Green Bay Packers,

and Marcus Luttrell, the heroic Navy SEAL better known as Lone Survivor for the book and film of the same name.

Joe donated one of his flags for a recent Lone Survivor Foundation golf outing, and he will donate one for the Lone Survivor Memorial ceremony the he will attend in Houston in September. He donated a flag to the Chris Kyle Frog Foundation. He's also donated flags to raise money for organizations such as the Northeast Ohio Foundation for Patriotism.

"It's great to say I've lost track of how many flags I've made for regular patriots like us, because that's more exciting than any of the ones I've made for celebrities," he says. "I've also raised more than \$200,000 for charity, and that is way more important."

In 2019, he and his son hand-delivered a flag to hang in the U.S. Capitol Building. So, it was even more important for Joe to send one of his flags to honor the Capitol Police for their courageous role in the insurrection on January 6, 2021. Roughly six months later, Joe received a note from Gladys Sicknick, mother of Brian, a Capitol Police officer who died during the rioting. She told him how much she loved the flag, how proud she is to own it, and a little about her son.

"As a veteran, I can truly

Continued on next page

FLAGS Continued from page 21
appreciate what they do every day," Burdick says. "So getting that lovely card in the mail was amazing."

One of his three-foot wavy flags also hangs in Congressman Anthony Gonzalez's office in the Capitol, and there is another in the office of Bryan Bowman, Gonzalez's director of military and veteran affairs, and a larger, four-foot model in his living room at home.

"The flags are incredible," enthuses Bowman, who served in the Army and Army National Guard for 21 years and founded the Serving Area Military (SAM) Center in Massillon, OH, in 2015. "It's a work of love hand-carved by a fellow veteran who put so much time and care into making this beautiful symbol of patriotism."

Other proud moments, Joe relates, include having one of his flags sail on a cruise of the U.S.S. Roosevelt, and sending a flag to the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln for Captain Amy Bauernschmidt, the first female to command a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier on deployment. During the height of the pandemic, he created flags for hospitals throughout Cleveland, as well as several hospitals in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin to honor besieged hospital workers.

In August last year, Marilyn Sowiak, mother of Maxton, the Navy Corpsman from Ohio who was killed in the attack on the Marines as they assisted the evacuation from Afghanistan, contacted Joe requesting one of his flags for her son's funeral. Marilyn and her husband Kip Sowiak came to Joe's house to pick up the flag he donated to them that would hang at Maxton's wake, and they invited Joe to the funeral.

"My heart went out to this family," he says. "His son was barely older than my daughter, so I went. Just knowing they wanted my flag was such an honor."

Prior to his death last October, WTAM talk show host Mike Trivisonno had asked Joe to make more than 50 flags that he wanted to distribute personally to honor police departments throughout Cuyahoga County. He had learned of the beautiful, hand-crafted wooden pieces when his wife Tami gave him one for Christmas.

"Joe brought happiness and a sense or spirit to all of those police stations when he presented the flags to them," says Billy Morris, Parma native and one-time guitarist with the rock band Warrant who catered all of the lunches for the police through his Bay Village-based barbecue food truck business, Smokin' Rock N' Roll.

Morris fondly recalls firing up the national anthem on his electric guitar to kick off each presentation that the three men did at various police stations always starting at high noon. The electric anthem was loud and distorted, he says, and "it put a smile on people's faces and a charge in their hearts."

"It really meant a lot to them," he adds. "Joe signed the back of the flags, and I signed some of them. We got to take pictures with Triv and all of those police departments holding up the flags. It was a real honor."

Another of Joe's treasured stories revolves around a neighbor who, when she learned of his flags, asked him a favor. Shortly before her husband shipped out to Vietnam, where he was killed in battle, he had constructed a fence in their backyard that became a final

memento. She was pregnant at that time, and she kept the aging fence as long as she could.

When her daughter purchased a home, she wanted to find a way to preserve the fence built by the father she had never known. She asked Joe to create one of his now highly acclaimed wooden American flags out of the wood.

"It was no easy task since much of it was rotten," he says. "I wanted it to be as special as I could make it for her daughter's home. It turned out amazing. I did not charge them for it, and the daughter had no idea it was coming, so that's one of my favorite stories."

Joe laughs when he reveals that, though he never met him, the Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise played an influential role in his life. Twice. While attending high school in Lakewood, he wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life. Until he and some friends went to see Cruise's 1986 action flick *Top Gun*. The movie made him fall in love with naval aviation.

After graduating from Lakewood High School a year later, he enlisted in the Navy. Scoring at the top of his Accession Training School, he could choose his duty station orders. So the Lakewood lad selected the Naval Air Station Lemoore, California.

"I got to work on F-18s; I loaded bombs and missiles, rockets and guns, got to go out on an aircraft carrier," he remembers. "It was grueling, but I went to the College of the Sequoias in Visalia, CA, while I was full-time in the Navy. I tried to make the best of my experience. I'd do it again in a minute, if my country needed me."

He served in active duty from 1987 to 1990. Scheduled to get out

in July of 1990, he would have been in the middle of a cruise on the U.S.S. Independence, so he left earlier and moved to Naval Air Station Fallon, Nevada, where he basically did what he'd been doing but as a civilian in the reserves.

When Operation Desert Shield started, he informed his Executive Officer that he would rejoin active duty "for the next war." Soon after, when it was upgraded to Operation Desert Storm, Joe found himself attached to the Seabee battalion at Naval Weapons Depot, Concord, CA for the short time the operation lasted. He ended up back in the reserves at Fallon briefly before being discharged and returning to Lakewood.

Once again, Tom Cruise impacted his life, this time in his role as bartender Brian Flanagan in *Cocktail*. So, Joe next toiled as a bartender for about ten years, picking up other odd jobs, until he committed to home remodeling and, since December 2020, construction management in Northeast Ohio for a home building firm out of Columbus.

Recently, he presented one of his flags to the Akron Police Department, and he and Morris are in discussions to do more flag presentation luncheons for area police departments.

"My goal for 2022 is to continue to raise as much money as I possibly can for as many different organizations as I can," Joe concludes. "I like it when I get paid for one of my flags, but I love when I get that letter or that social media post where a flag brought someone to tears or helped raise thousands of dollars for a charitable organization. That means more than anything."



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Patrol Officer Shane Bartek

End of Watch Friday, December 31, 2021

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Cleveland Police Foundation
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The Ohio Naval Militia is Recruiting

The Ohio Naval Militia (ONM) is an organized military unit that has been serving the State of Ohio and our nation since 1896. The unit serves under Ohio's Adjutant General and is headquartered at the Camp Perry Joint Training Center, Port Clinton, Ohio.

The Ohio Naval Militia is a part of the State of Ohio's Defense Forces which also includes the Ohio National Guard, Air National Guard, the Ohio Military Reserve and the Ohio Cyber Reserve.

Our current mission is to patrol the waters adjacent to the Camp Perry Training Center, to keep vessels from entering the impact area during live-fire exercises. This mission supports the State of Ohio and the U.S. Department of Defense by allowing the range to operate without interruption as armed service personnel perform weapons qualifications as part of their training or prior to deployment.

Additionally, the ONM assists in times of natural disasters or other

emergencies, as called upon by the Governor or the Adjutant General.

If you are 17 or older and want to serve Ohio in a naval defense force, the ONM needs you. Prior military service is welcomed as are those who didn't have the privilege of serving but want to give back to their state and country.

If you would like to learn more about nautical operations and the Ohio Naval Militia and would be willing to volunteer one weekend a month and a week of annual training, please contact our recruiting officer, ENS Bergsman, at 614-654-4424 or joinohionavy@ohnav.us for more information.



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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

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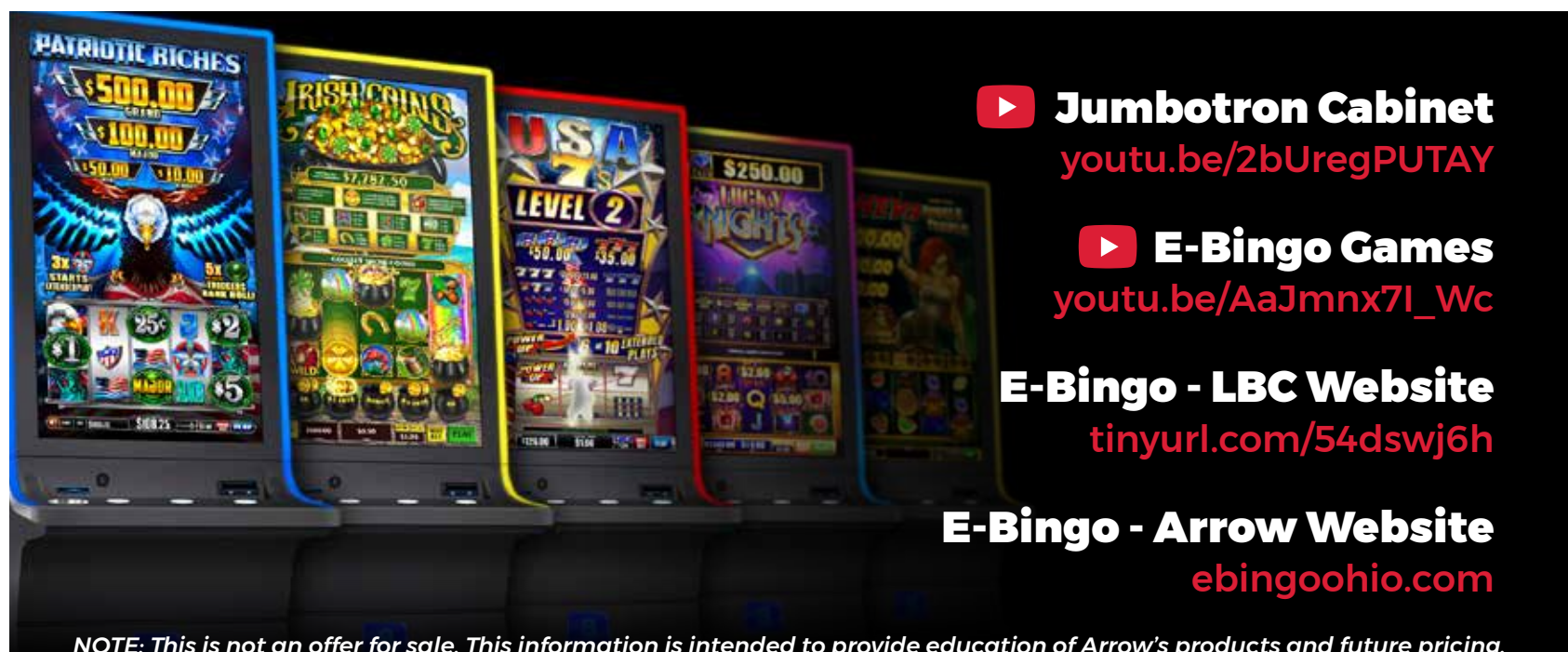
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