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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021



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Editorial Statement

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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STAND AT EASE By Don Stark, Publisher / Sales Manager

After all is said and done, work-wise; my happiest moment is to read and help proof the journalism we are so fortunate to regularly have displayed in the DD214 Chronicle. Fortunate for much more than the skills owned by our writers, it is the energies that they share with me, in regard to their interviewing, and the choices of questions for those veterans and their families that have gone through so much. A trust relation is needed to assign and also accept many of our columns. I am so pleased to share that trust with our entire writing staff. This November/December issue is filled



with thoughts and stories and laughs and tears, that most of our readers will understand and cherish. As the holiday season blooms, keep warm thoughts and prayers abundant for our Military, for our first Responders that care for our ill and dying, for our Gold Star Families, and for the government of our Beloved United States of America

Reach out and touch somebody's hand, preferably across the aisle! Looking forward to an improved year in 2022!

Best in the New Year,
Don Stark

Prayer and Wondering

By Rev. Richard J. Watts, Chaplain, DD214 Chronicle

Many years ago, my wife said to me, "You do wonder, don't you?" She said that because I often started a conversation with, "I wonder ..."

Wondering. It is a combination of curiosity and hope. I wonder what God will look like. I wonder how the Cleveland Guardians will perform next season. I have long wondered about good and evil.

Is wondering a way of thinking? Maybe so.

You wonder, don't you? Some would call it daydreaming. If daydreaming didn't have such a bad reputation, it would be an equally desirable activity.

You daydream as I do. You add lots to my brief list. Maybe you wonder what the future holds for your children. Or the future of electric cars. Or when we will win the fight with cancer.

Among the many gifts from God, is wondering that gift we rarely think about? And yet wondering has been a major force in the development of mankind.

Would we have pasteurized milk? Zippers? Computers? Ice cream? Men on the moon? This list could go on and on.

Instead, let's be grateful we wonder, and thank God for curiosity and the talents to use curiosity as a springboard to greater knowledge.

Let us pray. "God, thank you for Your many gifts. Today we add "wondering" to that long list. Allow and encourage us to wonder and to learn

from that. Allow us to wonder about good and evil, hatred and love, war and peace, kindness and indifference. Let us wonder so that we may better see Your hopes for us. Thank You."



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U.S. Air Force photo

Unserviceable uniforms are tossed into a burn pit to keep them from being used by the enemy. Burn pits were extensively used in Iraq and Afghanistan but may have posed health hazards to service members exposed to toxic smoke.

Are burn pits the next Agent Orange in treating the invisible wounds of war? Help tell the story

By Brian Albrecht

With the fall of Afghanistan in August, scenes of a desperate American evacuation from Kabul airport after nearly 20 years of combat and 2,400 U.S. deaths evoked memories of a similar withdrawal from Vietnam 46 years ago, ending another long conflict that cost 54,000 lives.

Among the many parallels of those wars is a sense of déjà-vu that lingers in the invisible wounds caused by use of the defoliant Agent Orange in Vietnam, and the possible effects of burn pits used to incinerate waste during the fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During the war in Vietnam, from 1961-1971, a host of toxic chemical herbicides were applied to more than 4.5 million acres of countryside in that nation (plus Laos and

Cambodia) to deprive the enemy of forest cover and food crops. Agent Orange, named for the color of labels on 50-gallon storage drums, represented the bulk of the 20 million gallons of herbicide applied.

In the process, an estimated 2.4 million veterans (and reportedly 4 million Vietnamese civilians) were potentially exposed to the poisonous effects of dioxin in Agent Orange.

After the war, veterans were stymied in submitting disability claims to the U.S. Veterans Affairs Department for diseases they believed were caused by Agent Orange exposure. The VA argued that there was insufficient scientific evidence to link the two.

It took 20 years of court battles, plus intensive lobbying by veterans

and service groups, before the Agent Orange Act of 1991 established that certain diseases would be treated as the result of wartime service. Today, some 14 health conditions among Vietnam veterans including Hodgkin's and Parkinson's disease, leukemia, ischemic heart disease, prostate and respiratory cancers qualify for VA disability compensation.

Veterans advocates say a similar battle is now being waged on behalf of veterans exposed to burn pits during the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Open-air burn pits, typically using jet fuel as an accelerant, disposed of medical and human waste, chemicals, munitions, petroleum, plastics, electronics and more. The resulting smoke carried a mixture

of toxic dioxins (including the same contained in Agent Orange) and pollutants.

Some estimates say that upwards of 3.5 million service members could have been exposed to burn pits. At its peak usage in Afghanistan, burn pits were disposing of 400 tons of waste each day.

Reports of respiratory problems allegedly caused by burn pits surfaced among active duty troops in 2009, and later among veterans making VA disability claims for health conditions they blamed on burn pit exposure.

The Rhode Island law firm of Chisholm Chisholm & Kilpatrick Ltd. (CCK), which has represented more than 10,000 vets in legal actions, said 16 commonly reported

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page
health conditions blamed on burn pit exposure include prostate, lung and respiratory cancers, hypertension, COPD, asthma and multiple myeloma.

President Joe Biden has speculated that his son Beau's deployment to Joint Base Balad in Iraq, where a 10-acre burn pit torched 147 tons of waste daily, may have contributed to his fatal brain cancer.

But again, the VA has cited insufficient scientific evidence showing a link between burn pits and disease. The VA reported that from 2007-2020, 12,582 veterans had claimed conditions related to burn pit exposure, but only 2,828 of those claims were granted service connection for conditions specifically related to burn pits; a rejection rate of 78 percent of all burn pit claims.

However, the VA has embarked on a campaign of research and actions including creation of the Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits Center of Excellence in 2019, and the Airborne Hazards and Open Pit Registry in 2014.

The registry collects data from veterans regarding potential burn pit exposure, and so far 224,226

veterans and service members have registered (4,879 from Ohio). Some 91 percent report being exposed to burn pits, and 32 percent said they saw a health care provider during deployment from respiratory symptoms due to poor air quality.

Additionally there are several bills pending in Congress regarding efforts to establish varying degrees of a "presumptive" connection between certain diseases and burn pit exposure for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

CCK noted that several members of Congress have expressed a desire to keep burn pits from becoming "the Agent Orange of this generation of soldiers."

As U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) once stated, "After the Vietnam War, it took the U.S. government years to recognize that there was a link between Agent Orange and its devastating health effects on our soldiers.

"With an increasing number of service members returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan citing illnesses, we can't make that same tragic mistake again by failing to identify the devastating health effects associated with burn pits."

CCK reports that the outlook for

Congressional action on burn pit bills looks promising.

The effort has won the support of national commentator/humorist Jon Stewart, who once remarked, "I would challenge any congressman who says, 'Well, we're going to wait for the science to be settled,' to dig a hundred-yard pit in the middle of town where your constituents live, and burn everything in that town with jet fuel."

DD214 Chronicle is working on a more extensive look at this issue for its January/February publication. If you, or anyone you know, has been affected by Agent Orange or burn pit exposure, or you have a comment on the matter, please contact Brian Albrecht at brianalbrecht889@yahoo.com, and include your phone number.



U.S. Army photo

A helicopter disperses defoliant during the war in Vietnam, harming not only the environment but potentially service members and civilians.



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Nine St. Edward's Eagles Who Made the Ultimate Sacrifice in Viet Nam

By Nancy Peacock

Terence Barrett didn't set out to write a 350-page book about nine St. Edwards High School alumni who lost their lives in Vietnam.

"I had been collecting information about three of them because I knew them personally," Barrett said. "Two of them were friends from grade school and I thought so much about them over the years. But I knew that there were others."

Barrett, a 1967 graduate of St. Edwards High School in the Cleveland suburb of Lakewood, is a licensed psychologist and teaches at North Dakota State University. He served seven years in the U.S. Marine Corps and retired from the North Dakota Air National Guard after 20 years of military service.

In June 2020, Barrett broadened the scope of his research to include all nine St. Ed students who died in Viet Nam.

"I enjoyed doing the research and the writing," he said. "A lot of things got set aside and I was finished by April of this year."

The title of the book *Our Eagles in Vietnam: Sacrifice Plus Purity of Intention* (Aftermath Research, 2021) is a reference to the St. Edwards Eagles school mascot. The subtitle comes from a phrase that Barrett said just about every St. Ed's student could recite.

"Brother Charles Van Winkle taught junior year religion class," Barrett said. "He would either start or end the class with 'Sacrifice plus

purity of intention equals growth in happiness.' As I was writing this, he kept coming to mind so I decided this would be the subtitle."

The sacrifice of St. Ed's young men began in 1963.

"Bruce Farrell was killed my freshman year at St. Eds," Barrett

said. "I'd only been at St. Ed's two months when he died. Vietnam was not a big thing at the time. There was a memorial mass for him, but I was a freshman just trying to find my way in high school."

Farrell had graduated in 1953 and had earned his medical degree from Saint Louis University School of Medicine in 1961. He was allowed to defer military service until after residency training. He became a Navy Flight Surgeon assigned with the Marines. He was killed on October 8, 1963, a month after arriving in Vietnam.

"Bruce had already figured out that it was not good that we were in Vietnam," Barrett said. "He never had any hesitation about being in the military but whatever he saw when he got to Vietnam, he was very discouraged about our

presence there."

The next fatality of a St. Ed's student happened just before Barrett went to college. Terry Lavelle graduated St. Eds in June 1965 and enlisted in the Marines in July. Using Marine Corps records, Barrett provides a highly detailed record of

Lavelle's service. Lavelle arrived in Vietnam in June 1967.

"The battles they were in were brief," Barrett said. "Someone would step on a mine, grenades would go off. The biggest impact was when a friend was killed. They were hoping that everyone would get through to the end, knowing

that someone was probably going to die."

Lavelle was killed by multiple fragmentation wounds on August 25, 1967.

"It was just before I went to college that Lavelle died," Barrett said. "The next seven were dead before I finished my sophomore year. It was just one after another."

Denis Chmel, Class of 1964, had completed his first two years at John Carroll University when

Marine recruiters on campus told him that the last two years would be paid for if he took a break and served a two-year hitch in the Marines. Chmel enlisted in September 1966. His parents were angry that he had chosen the branch of service most likely to send him to Viet Nam.

Chmel arrived in Viet Nam in April, 15, 1968. He died June 15, 1968 after being hit by a mortar round.

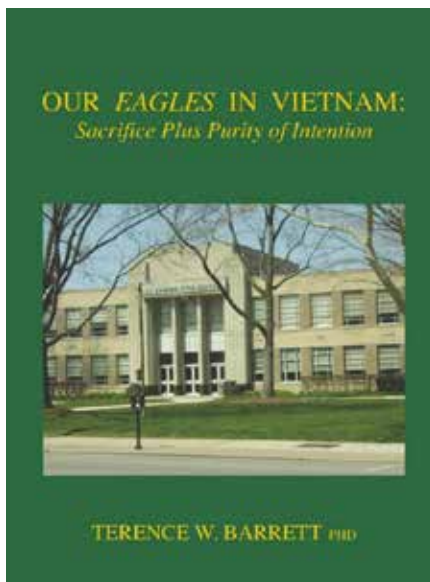
"His father was really angry about his death," Barrett said. "His parents didn't want the flag that was presented to them at the funeral. They didn't want his medals. They felt like there was no reason for their son to be there."

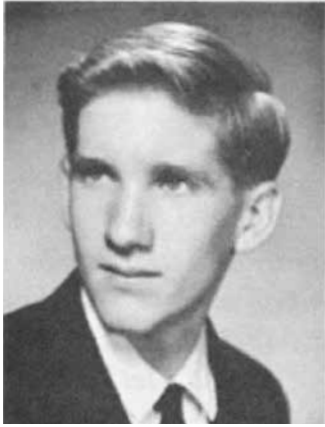
Robert Kemer was the youngest of four boys in his family. His older brothers had gone to St. Ed's and followed in their footsteps. Kemer's father was a fireman who died when Bobby was 9 years old.

"The death of his father affected the rest of his life," Barrett said. "He wanted to go into the military as a volunteer, come home and join the fire department."

Kemer graduated in 1965. Although he had allergies that exempted him from service, he enlisted in the Army in 1966. By the end of that year, he was in Vietnam. Halfway through his one-year tour of duty, Kemer stepped on a booby-trapped mine and was killed instantly.

Continued on next page





Daniel Arthur Keene



Elmer Gerald Sikorski



Denis Michael Chmel



Terrence Patrick Kilbane



Timothy Richard Ptacek

Continued from previous page

Three of the St. Ed's Eagles in Vietnam lost their fathers before they finished high school. Elmer Sikorski was 11 years old when his father died.

"Elmer was the oldest of two boys," Barrett said. "He's like the man of the house now. If you're the eldest child, whether son or daughter, you're taking on a role that was the parents' role. 'Do I go to the dance, or do I stay home and help mom with the housework?' I felt that of all of them. If they were put in circumstances like that, they would have met the challenge."

Sikorski enlisted in the Marine Corps right after he graduated in June 1963. He became a combat engineer, assigned to a wing support squadron. He married his high school sweetheart in 1967 and re-enlisted for a four-year tour. The couple's son Kevin was born December 24, 1967. Three

days before his son's first birthday, Sikorski was one of five Marines killed in a 122mm rocket attack. He was one of 17,539 married men killed in Vietnam.

Terry Kilbane graduated from St. Ed's in 1966 and started college at Cleveland State University. In May 1968, at the peak of the Vietnam War, he received his draft notice. In late May, he married his high school sweetheart. By October, he was in Vietnam. On February 6, 1969, Kilbane walked into a three-sided ambush. It isn't known whether he received the letter from his family with a photo of his new daughter.

"He was really looking forward to being a dad," Barrett said. "He was going to serve his time, come home and become a Cleveland fireman like his father. There's something about St. Edward and being of service. It isn't just that you get to live your life. You make a difference

and be of service."

James Witt became a St. Ed's student his senior year. He spent his first three years at Akron Hoban High School, which was a rival of St. Ed's. Then the family moved to Rocky River just before his senior year.

"He was one of those funny kids that could find humor in something to make everyone laugh," Barrett said. "He was a prankster. He liked to go out and do pranks."

He enlisted in the Marine Corps before the start of his second year at Miami University.

"When he left for Viet Nam, he thought he would come home and get married," Barrett said. "He had a girlfriend. He was going to serve his time and come home."

Witt arrived in Viet Nam on January 7, 1969. On Valentine's Day, he was hit by multiple fragmentation wounds from an enemy hand grenade. As he was evacuated,

he assured his men that he would be back. Then his body went into shock.

Two days later, his 13-year-old brother Bob looked out his bedroom window as two men in uniform approached the front door. After he woke up his dad, he saw his mother returning home from Mass.

"Mom, don't come in the house," he remembered thinking. "Your life is never going to be the same."

"Jim's brother Bob did a lot to keep his brother's memory alive," Barrett said. "He tracked down a lot of Jim's platoon mates and the Witt siblings were invited to the platoon reunions. His platoon mates all talked about Jim with such admiration. No matter how many years go by, these young men are remembered as good men, caring men and good companions and friends."

Continued on page 18

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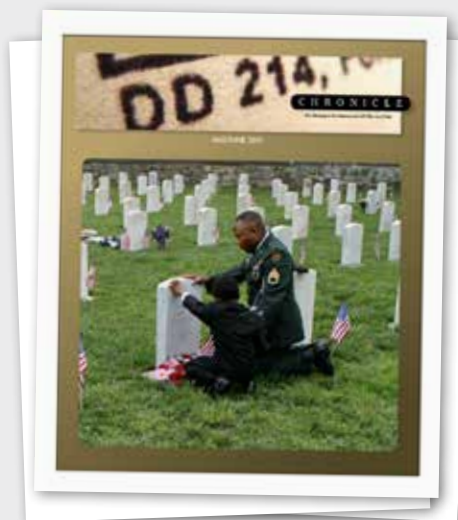
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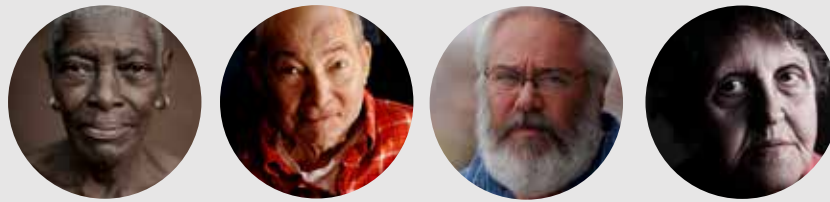
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Akron Woman Promotes Legacy of United Flight 93 Heroes

by Jerri Donohue

Almost 20 years after his son, Todd Beamer, died on September 11, 2001 fighting hijackers of United Flight 93, David Beamer addressed the HALO Foundation's annual gala in Akron.

"The real reason I'm here is two words—Sharon Deitrick," Beamer told the crowd at Guy's Party Center on September 2. "She is a force for good! You can see the results of her leadership and the way she mentors these young people."

Founded in 2003, HALO (Hope Always Lives On) has enabled hundreds of children and teens from Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland to visit the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania.

"Our mission statement is to create student leaders based on the example of the heroes of Flight 93," Deitrick said. "And to be able to do that, they need to know the story of Flight 93."

Beamer described his son and the other passengers and crew on the flight as "free people" who had plans for that day.

"None of those plans included going to war," Beamer said. "None of them included interacting with our enemies. But they did."

Because of a late departure, the unlikely heroes learned through cell phone conversations that planes had flown into the World Trade Center. They realized their hijackers, too, would inflict devastating harm unless stopped. They made a plan, voted on it and then acted.

"They did the right thing," Beamer said. "They fought back, the first counterattack in this war."

Although all aboard perished



Photo by Jerri Donohue

Akron Mayor Daniel Horrigan proclaimed Thursday, September 2, 2021 as "Sharon Deitrick Day" in recognition of Deitrick's past and present efforts to honor United Flight 93 passengers and crew and to promote their legacy.

when the plane crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, Beamer calls their efforts a success because the plane did not reach its target - since identified as the Capitol during a joint session of Congress.

First anniversary

Deitrick became acquainted with the Beamers and other relatives of the Flight 93 heroes soon after the terrorist attacks. She had been traveling to Somerset County, Pennsylvania, for a decade. Located half-way between her Akron architectural design firm and her clients in Washington, DC, a local inn provided a convenient meeting spot.

She knew several area residents,

including a woman who worked for the county commissioners. She told Deitrick that relatives of the Flight 93 heroes wanted a first anniversary memorial service on the site of the crash - which then was inaccessible. Deitrick wrote up a business plan detailing all aspects of the anniversary project, including building a road and securing transportation and lodging for the families. Impressed, the county commissioners promptly asked her to serve on their steering committee for the event.

"I became the only fundraiser and I had never done fundraising in my life!" Deitrick said.

Most people declined to

contribute because they already had donated to other Nine-Eleven charities. Deitrick, however, was learning a lot about the Flight 93 passengers at planning meetings with their relatives. This strengthened her resolve to raise the needed \$500,000.

Fed Ex and other companies helped by selling a medallion designed by Deitrick and some friends. One side features the American eagle, 40 stars and the hills of Pennsylvania. The reverse side lists the passengers and crew.

Not only did Deitrick raise the necessary money, but she also secured President George W. Bush's presence for the anniversary service. A friend who worked in the White House helped Deitrick speak with the person who oversaw the president's schedule. After her impassioned phone call, President Bush agreed to meet privately with the families at the crash site, his first visit to the scene.

The 2002 ceremony included music by the Johnstown Orchestra, speeches by family members and a missing man formation flyover to honor Flight 93 co-pilot LeRoy Homer, a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate and veteran of Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

A permanent memorial

President Bush later signed a bill designating the crash location as a national memorial site and part of the national parks system. Because donations—not government money—financed it, the memorial task force tapped Deitrick for its fundraising campaign.

Continued on page 13



DD 214 CHRONICLE
★ FEMALE VETERANS REPORT ★



Visions of War

Clara Barton

Headquarters 2nd Division, 9th Army Corps
Army of Potomac

Clara Barton organized medical care for the U.S. Army during the Civil War and later founded the American Red Cross.

Dec. 12, 1862, 2 o'clock A.M.
My dear Cousin Vira,
Five minutes time with you and God knows what those five minutes might be worth to the maybe-doomed thousands sleeping around me.

It is the night before a battle. The enemy, Fredericksburg, and its mighty entrenchments lie before us, the river between. At tomorrow's dawn our troops will essay to cross, and the guns of the enemy will sweep those frail bridges at every breath.

The moon is shining through the soft haze with brightness almost prophetic. For the last hour I have stood alone in the awful stillness of its glimmering light gazing upon the strange sad scene around me ...

The camp fires blaze with unwonted brightness—the acres of little shelter tents are dark and still as death. No wonder for as I gazed sorrowfully upon them, I thought I could almost hear the slow flap of the grim messenger's wings, as one by one he sought and selected his victims for the morning sacrifice ...

Oh, northern mothers, wives and sisters, all unconscious of the hour, would to Heaven I could bear for you the concentrated woe which is so soon to follow ... God pity and strengthen you every one.

Already the roll of moving artillery is sounding in my ears. The battle draws near and I must catch one hour's sleep for tomorrow's labor. Good night, dear cousin ...

Yours in love, Clara



Louisa May Alcott

Louisa May Alcott, author of *Little Women*, served as an Army nurse during the Civil War. In March 1869, she published "Hospital Sketches," taken from letters hastily written in the few leisure moments of a very busy life.

When I hurried back to my patient, he seemed asleep; but something in

the tired white face caused me to listen at his lips for a breath. None came. I touched his forehead; it was cold; and then I knew that, while he waited, a better nurse than I had given him a cooler draught, and healed him with a touch. I laid the sheet over the quiet sleeper, whom no noise could now disturb; and, half an hour later, the bed was empty. It seemed a poor requital for all he had sacrificed and suffered— that hospital bed, lonely even in a crowd; for there was no familiar face for him to look his last upon; no friendly voice to say, "Good-bye," no hand to lead him gently down into the Valley of the Shadow; and he vanished, like a drop in that red sea upon whose shores so many women stand lamenting.

Nicole Goodwin

Iraq War veteran diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder

When I first got back, I just wanted to jump into a job and forget about Iraq, but the culture shock from the military to the civilian world hit me. I was depressed for months. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. The worst thing wasn't the war, it was the coming back, because nobody understood why I was the way I was.



2nd Lieutenant Lynda Van Devanter

Army Nurse Corps
71st Evacuation Hospital, Pleiku
67th Evacuation Hospital, Qui Nhon
South Vietnam

Author: *Home Before Morning*

Lynda Van Devanter served in Vietnam from June 1969 to June 1970. This letter was written to her family on December 29, 1969.

I've been working nights for a couple of weeks and have been spending a great deal of time in post-op. They've been unbelievably busy. I got wrapped up in several patients, one of whom I scrubbed on when we repaired an artery in his leg. It eventually clotted, and we did another procedure on him to clear out

Continued on next page

FEMALE VETERANS REPORT Partially Sponsored by
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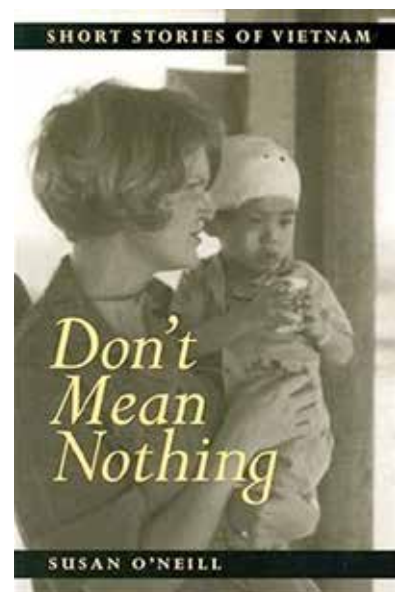
FLIGHT 93 continued from p 11
Having established the nonprofit HALO Foundation, she launched “93 Cents for Flight 93” to involve school children. By then she had discovered that most kids did not learn about Flight 93 in school. Even today, whenever Deitrick gives a talk on the subject, she asks her audience how many planes crashed on September 11, 2001.

“Less than ten percent have said ‘four,’” Deitrick said.

Friends and business associates put her in touch with schools around the country, where teachers then presented a lesson on Flight 93 and individual children donated 93 cents for the memorial. Word spread. Donations arrived from France and Germany. In honor of passenger Alan Bevan, a native New Zealander, a school in his home country participated. An adult sent a check for “40 times 93”. A 93-year old woman sent one for \$4

VISIONS continued from previous page
the artery—all this to save his leg. Well, in my free time I had been working in post-op and took care of him. I came in for duty Christmas Eve and was handed an OR slip—above-the-knee amputation. He had developed gas gangrene. The sad thing was that the artery was pumping away beautifully. Merry Christmas, kid, we have to cut your leg off to save your life.

We also had 3 other GIs die that night. Kids, every one. The war disgusts me. I hate it! I’m sick of facing, every day, a new bunch of children ripped to pieces. They’re just kids—18, 19 years old! It stinks! Whole lives ahead of them—cut off. I’m sick to death of it. I’ve got to get out of here....



2nd Lieutenant Susan Kramer O'Neill

Army Nurse Corps, OR Nurse
85th Evacuation Hospital, Phu Bai
27th Surgical Hospital, Chu Lai
12th Evacuation Hospital, Cu Chi
South Vietnam 1969-1970

Author: *Don't Mean Nothing*

Most novels, memoirs, and short stories published about Vietnam were written by men. Hospital personnel—and female veterans

in particular—served in a war that was substantially different from the one fought by male soldiers.

To begin with, the goal of “our” war, though considered supportive to “theirs,” actually contradicted it. Soldiers were trained—and expected—to kill the enemy. We were trained, and expected, to save anyone who came through the hospital doors, which often included the enemy.

They lived with the guilt of killing; we, with the guilt of surviving. They lived surrounded by blood and death in which they had a direct stake; we faced a daily onslaught of maimed and dying men, women, and children dropped on us by helicopters from an alien world.

The key to that survival was to bear in mind that it “Don’t Mean Nothing.” It was an all-purpose under-dog rallying cry—a sarcastic admixture of “cool,” comedy, irony, agony, bitterness, frustration, resignation, and despair. Work all day on a soldier who dies? Work all day on a soldier who gets sent back into battle? If you couldn’t control it, you could at least declare that it “don’t mean nothing.” This hip, feigned indifference was the humor of the impotent, a small bunker in the real war—the war against insanity.

2nd Lieutenant Norma J Griffiths,

Army Nurse Corps, ER Triage Nurse
67th Evacuation Hospital, Qui Nhon
South Vietnam 1969-1970

Let us think no more
of the “war to end all wars”
for only in complete destruction
of all
would that be possible

So let us think
of the Peace to end all wars
And perhaps
finally, working with the right tool
We can create the goal.

and change, reminding Deitrick of Christ’s parable of the widow’s mite.

Meanwhile, the HALO Foundation continued forming student leaders.

Except for the pandemic year of 2020, the nonprofit has annually gathered and delivered clothing, toiletries and toys to overlooked communities devastated by natural disasters. This tradition began with Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In local classrooms, Deitrick tells the story of Flight 93 and asks the children what sacrifice they, too, might make. Their generosity always amazes her. Student volunteers then sort, pack and load the donations onto trucks.

The nonprofit’s leadership program provides 3-day retreats for students in 7th through 12th grade. (A day for fifth and sixth graders also includes the trip to Flight 93 National Memorial.) Retreat attendees have a Zoom meeting with

relatives of the Flight 93 heroes, participate in team building and hear presentations by football coaches and top executives.

HALO offers matching grants to public and parochial schools to visit the Flight 93 Memorial, requiring them to teach the story of Flight 93 in advance and to raise half of the cost of buses and meals. Usually relatives of Flight 93 crew or passengers meet students at the site to answer questions.

At the HALO gala, David Beamer saluted Deitrick for this work and for her positive impact on young people.

“Todd Beamer became Todd Beamer because lots of people influenced his life, not just his Mom and Dad, but his teachers, his coaches, his ministers, his youth leaders,” Beamer said. “We all have roles to play and influence we can have on young people’s lives. Show up. Play it. Do it.”



Sharon Deitrick and some friends designed this medallion honoring the Flight 93 heroes. The limited edition medallions are available for \$35 each through the HALO Foundation, 134 Western Ave., Akron, OH 44313. Or call 330-376-9110



Photo courtesy of Sharon Deitrick

Peggy and David Beamer at the HALO Foundation’s 18th annual gala. David Beamer was in California on business when his son Todd died in the crash of United Flight 93. With all aircraft grounded immediately after the terrorist attacks, Beamer and a colleague drove cross-country to New Jersey to attend the memorial service.



DESERT STRIKE aka Chasing UFOs

by John (J.C.) Sullivan

We weren't back from Germany to Fort Hood, Texas very long when suddenly, without warning, we saddled up again and were on troop trains to the Mojave Desert of Arizona and California. Before we'd left for Germany during our last overseas deployment the year previous, we'd heard scuttlebutt about it. We had second set of armor there on an unused section of an autobahn that had been maintained on a regular basis. We eventually learned our entire Division would be airlifted there to participate in a NATO operation. This time, however, it took us by surprise. And unlike our previous deployment, our armor went with us.

Desert Strike was supposedly a mock war between Nazona and Calonia and the fight for control of the Colorado River. That's what I believed for years. The entire

operation took the lives of 30 men, two whom were with the 1st Cavalry of our 2nd AD. Near Parker, AZ and the Colorado River, Pfc. Jerry C. Lodwick, Kalamazoo, Mich., and Pfc. Douglas C. Harper, Tallahassee, Fla. were in sleeping bags on the ground behind their tank. The unknowing driver backed up, crushing them both from the waist down. They didn't survive for long. According to reports they were the ninth and tenth men to die since maneuvers began. Harper is pictured in the image of the tank and troopers. He was the trooper on the left in the 2nd rank.

Our 2nd Armored Division wasn't the only unit operating in the Mojave. It was a colossal operation also involving the 18th AD (also from Ft. Hood), the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, a California National Guard Armored Division

and the U.S. Air Force. (Some years later, I was sitting in my Family Room recliner watching a show on UFOs when suddenly something in me ticked. The story was spinning headlines of western U.S. newspapers about numerous UFO sightings. I jumped up to get closer to the TV to see the dates. Holy Moley—May, 1964. (I proudly date myself) So, THAT'S why were sent there ... our presence would comfort the citizens of the region. And no, we never saw any UFOs.

Recently our government is finally beginning to reveal stories of UFOs they had previously dismissed as 'Weather Balloons' and the like. As a nation we need to know just what the hell is going on.

In speaking with an anonymous source, I was referred to a book by a friend of his father titled *Roswell, the Day After*. Older readers will know

Roswell is in the New Mexico desert. It was the site of a UFO Crash. In 1947.

According to Corso the Army had remnants of the spacecraft. The story, initially published by a local newspaper, was picked up by other media outlets worldwide that it was a spacecraft. The official story was immediately changed that it was a 'weather balloon' so the Communist governments of China and Russia would not learn of the technologies being discovered and reverse-engineered.

Corso was visited by 'men in black' on more than one occasion and advised to keep his mouth shut. He claims that the citizens of Roswell who witnessed matters were advised to do the same. I found everything in the book believable.

Sullivan, internationally published, writes from Nortfield Village, Ohio



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ST ED'S continued from p 9

Of the nine classmates, Daniel Keene's tour of Viet Nam was the shortest. After graduating from St. Ed's in 1962, Keene went to Kent State and pledged the National Society of Pershing Rifles, a military-oriented fraternal organization. He was married in April 1968 and enlisted in the Army in October of that year. While home on leave in March, he confided to a friend, "I know I won't be coming home."

By April 4, he arrived in Viet Nam. On April 20, he celebrated his first wedding anniversary. On April 27, he was killed by multiple

fragmentation wounds.

"He was killed in a place that only the Army soldiers knew about it because it wasn't big in the news," Barrett said. "He was in the Hobo Woods. That was a huge Viet Cong area. All kinds of tunnels and they would just pop up and start an advance to wherever our soldiers were. It would have been his first engagement that he was killed in."

Keene's brother Patrick had just gotten off night shift as an Air Force military policeman in Thailand when a captain pulled up in a Jeep and told him his brother had been killed in action. Patrick

suddenly became the sole surviving son of his widowed mother.

"Call your mother," the captain said. "Tell her you're coming home."

Of all the Eagles he memorialized, Barrett knew Tim Ptacek the longest. From kindergarten through 8th grade, Ptacek was a classmate of Barrett at St. Rose.

"Summers we would be on the playgrounds together," Barrett recalled. "There were five or six of us that spent a lot of time together."

Tim left St. Ed's after freshman year, finishing high school in Bay Village in 1968. To shorten his service commitment, Tim enlisted in the Army in October. After a short leave home for Christmas in 1968, Ptacek was in Viet Nam by March. On May 21, 1969, six days after his 19th birthday, he was shot in the right eye and died. He had a girlfriend and was looking forward to coming home.

Barrett fondly recalled his friends' sense of humor.

"Tim Ptacek and Terry Kilbane could really make me laugh," he said. "I believe Americans can find humor in just about anything. It is part of our character, the way we get through things."

Ultimately, *Our Eagles in Vietnam* serves as Barrett's way to honor his

fellow Edsmen.

"I've enjoyed doing this because the memories of these men mean something to me," he said. "Putting their stories into a book was meant as a tribute to those nine. Also, the book is for the alumni, the families, and for the school because I think the school had an impact on who they were. It's also a tribute to their fathers and mothers who sent them to St. Ed's."

For Barrett, the tragedy is not only that so many of his classmates died but also the life they were deprived of living.

"I think they would have all been responsible citizens and made a difference when they came home," Barrett said. "I base that on the men who did come home and the lives they made when they came home."

In spite of his efforts to honor his classmates, there is an unfulfilled wish that remains with Barrett after more than 50 years.

"I wish there had been no Viet Nam."

To order a copy of *Our Eagles in Vietnam: Sacrifice Plus Purity of Intention*, go to www.amazon.com/Our-Eagles-Vietnam-Sacrifice-Intention/dp/B092C4H94P

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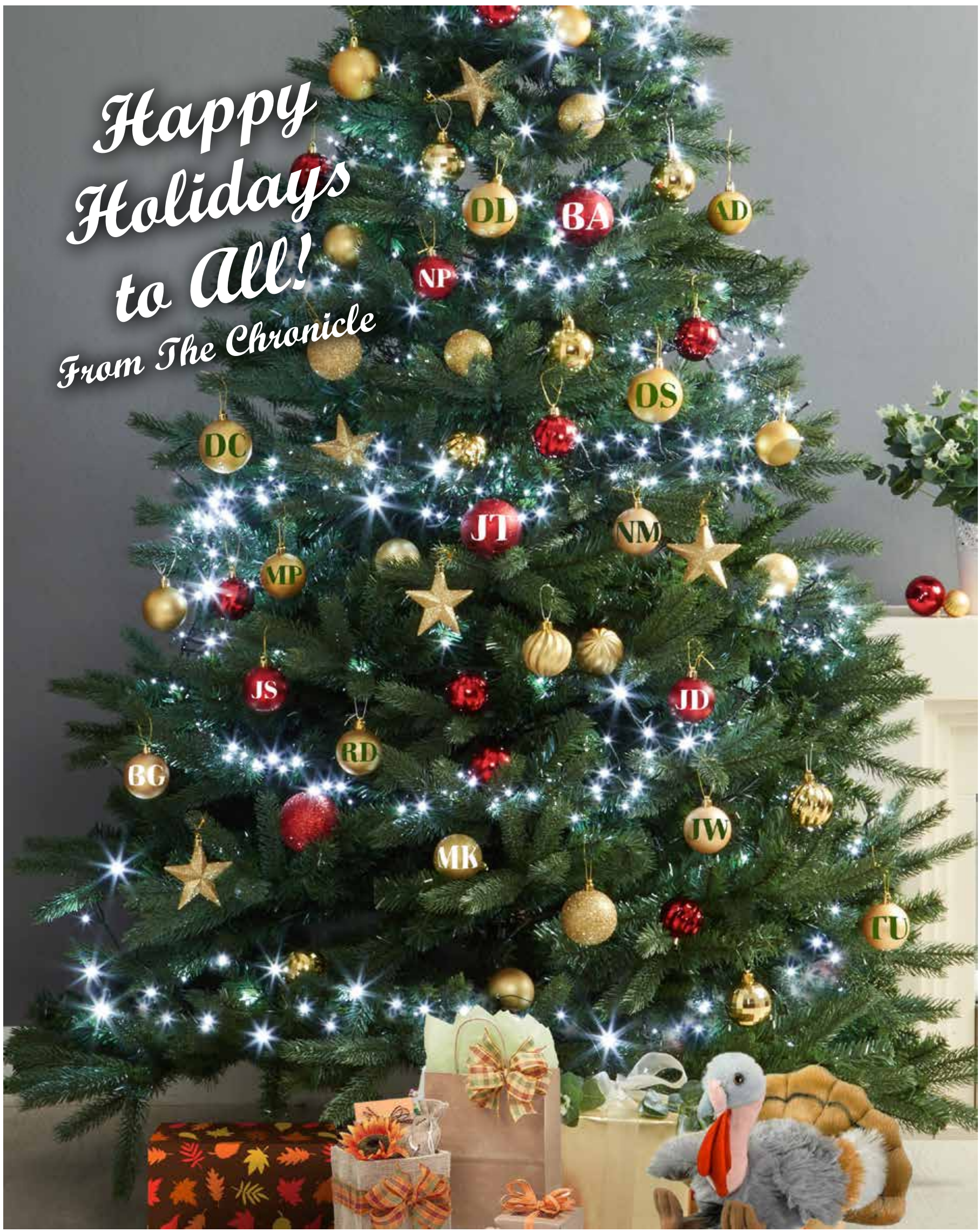
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