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*See pages 14 and 15  
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## STAND AT EASE By Don Stark, Publisher / Sales Manager

We at the *DD214 Chronicle* prepare our publication from all over Northeast Ohio and beyond. I wonder often, how and when each publication will get to the printer, and I'm always excited to see the finished product.

Over the first nearly thirteen years, we have had a conglomerate of able and interested volunteers and employees that are very seldom thanked enough. Our publisher's emeritus, Terrence J. Uhl, and John H. Tidyman, put us on the map. Our writing staff of Jerri Donohue, Brian Albrecht, Chris Johnston, Barbara Smith, Nancy Peacock, J.C. Sullivan, and Jacob Arnett keep us proud to display our columns to our Veteran family readership. Our volunteer writers, Terry Barrett and Louis Pumphrey, continue to submit their thoughts as well, from time to time. Lest I forget, we have a delivery system of a dozen or sometimes more men and women that help us get to our over 600 locations. Volunteer Frank Bird, Annabelle Lee Dowd,



Bill Grulich, DL Meckes and Kathy Szomoru keep us up and running with mailing, invoicing, delivery routes, web and all social media and the art that puts our paper together. When we need to review and discuss our growth and results, we have our advisory board consisting of Dick Clough, Mary Reynolds Powell, Richard DeChant,

Bill Royer, Joe Wilgus and Bill Grulich. Thanks everyone for all that you have done and continue to do! Happy Holidays!

We Are Becoming New! Look for way more social media, a much more active web, and lots of new ways to reach out to our millennial Vets, beginning in the upcoming new year.

*Thank-You!*  
Donald C. Stark, Publisher



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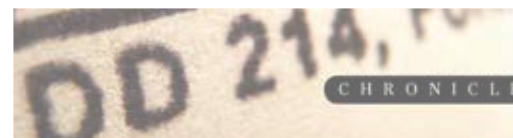
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DD214 Chronicle is committed to its readers: Veterans of every generation and all who love them. The printed newspaper is delivered across northern Ohio without charge to more than 600 plus locations: libraries, colleges and universities that welcome 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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# Vietnam Vet Met Prince Charles and Years Later, So Did His Son

By Louis Pumphrey

Since his mother's funeral is tomorrow in London, the thought came to mind that it might be time to dust off this nearly 45-year-old anecdote from when the Prince of Wales visited Cleveland in 1977.

The unexpected death of Queen Elizabeth and immediate ascension by her son, Charles, from Prince of Wales to King of England precipitated the memory of meeting Prince Charles on October 20, 1977, in Severance Hall following a Cleveland Orchestra concert.

He had come to the U.S. on his first official visit and Cleveland was one of the cities on his cross-country itinerary. While here he visited Cleveland Clinic, a Republic Steel plant in the Flats, and the Marshall Law School of Cleveland State University. He also attended a Cleveland Orchestra evening concert in Severance Hall.

My wife Barbara was a member of the Junior Committee of the Cleveland Orchestra which helped raise funds in support of the orchestra. She and her spouse (that would be me) were invited, along with other members of the Junior Committee and their significant others, to attend a reception in honor of the prince following the concert.

I really do not have much in common with Prince Charles and so I was at a loss what to talk about with him. But about two weeks before his visit to Cleveland, I heard on the radio that his sister, Princess Anne, was expecting a baby. Voila!! I had something to talk about with Prince Charles.

Following the Cleveland Orchestra concert, when my wife and I were in line to meet the future King of England, a "gentleman" elbowed me out of the way to meet Prince Charles and Barbara became discouraged, rapidly losing interest in meeting the royal. I prevailed, saying to her, "This is a once in lifetime opportunity," so we stood our ground. Eventually, Clara Rankin, whose husband, Alfred, headed the Musical Arts Association that oversees the orchestra, introduced me to Prince Charles.

He said to me, "Are you a member of The Musical Arts Association?" (If he knew the balance in my passbook savings account, Prince Charles would not have asked me that question, as members of the Musical Arts Association are well-heeled captains of industry and commerce.) I said to Prince Charles, "No, my wife is a member of the Junior Committee". He turned to Barbara and--apparently told there was some tension between the Junior Committee and the Women's Committee of the Cleveland Orchestra, composed of older women--teasingly said to Barbara, "Tell me, are there any problems between the Junior Committee and the Women's Committee?"

Looking Prince Charles squarely in the eye and smiling demurely, my quick-thinking wife said, "Oh no, the Junior Committee gains much wisdom from the Women's Committee." "Ohhh...well-put...well put!!" said Prince Charles, surprised and impressed with Barbara's clever response. As he started to walk away, I leaned toward the prince and said cheerily, "I understand you're going to become an uncle pretty soon!!" Well, if looks could kill, I would be six feet under by now. Prince Charles' face froze, and he tersely said to me, "Yes, but don't remind me."

My innocent observation simply brought to the fore the fact that Charles' younger sister was already married and starting a family. More than three years would pass before the Prince of Wales would marry Diana Spencer. It's clear in retrospect Prince Charles was very, very sensitive to the fact he was not yet married and he was not in a position to produce an heir to the British throne. My offhand comment simply rubbed salt in that wound.

He was impressed by Barbara, depressed by me. Oh well.

*Here's the kicker:* Nearly 30 years after I talked with Prince Charles, so did my son, Lou. He worked as a doorman at The Four Seasons Hotel in Philadelphia IN 2007 and he held the door open for the future king of England and Camilla who were visiting the city. So, two generations of Lou Pumphreys talked briefly with the Prince of Wales and new king of England. (Prince Charles asked my son if he'd have to work all night and Lou said no--that he had to work only one more hour and the Prince said, "Oh, are we counting?")



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The screening is simple, safe and takes approximately a half hour. The participant is asked a series of questions and/or tasks that take a very short time to complete. The cognitive tests are conducted to determine if a more comprehensive medical evaluation is needed. It is NOT used to diagnose any illness and it does

NOT replace a consultation with a physician.

After the screening is complete, participants are given a customized memory packet of information that is designed specifically to answer any questions or concerns that arise during the assessment.

### Why are memory screenings important?

A memory screening is the most important step a person can take to discover if they have a memory problem. Some memory problems that are caused by vitamin deficiencies, thyroid issues or depression can be readily treated. Other memory problems might result from causes that

are not currently reversible, such as Alzheimer's disease. In general, the earlier the diagnosis, the easier it is to treat one of these conditions.

If mild cognitive impairment is detected early enough, it could afford a person the opportunity to seek treatments that may slow the memory changes or participate in a clinical trial. It could also allow them the opportunity to take a more active role in developing their health, legal and financial plans.

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# City and New Namesake Ship Linked Through USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation

By Brian Albrecht

## **The USS Cleveland is . . .**

- A vintage cruiser that sailed the globe during World War I.
- A World War II combat cruiser that fought in both the European and Pacific theaters.
- An amphibious transport dock that saw action in four overseas conflicts.
- All of the above plus more.

All of the above. The “plus more” is the latest namesake vessel currently being built in Wisconsin, with an unusual civilian nonprofit support group, the USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation, already in place to create a hometown nautical link with the ship now and into its future missions.

The 378-foot-long, 3,500-ton USS Cleveland LCS-31 (littoral combat ship) is part of a program started by the Navy in 2002 to create a fleet of 52 vessels designed to operate in coastal waters. Equipped with missiles, drones, deck-mounted guns and helipads, their missions would include stopping small boats and other seaborne threats, carrying troops, mine detection and anti-submarine warfare.

Two versions were created utilizing a monohull design (Freedom class) by Lockheed Martin, and a trimaran hull configuration (Independence class) by General Dynamics. The USS Cleveland is the 16th Freedom class ship, and

the anticipated three-year construction started in 2021. Due to numerous problems with its predecessors’ engineering, cost overruns and technology, the planned LCS fleet has been trimmed to 21, and the USS Cleveland will be among the last of its kind built.

But when it sails, it will join an illustrious group of ships named for the city, starting with the first USS Cleveland (C-19), a cruiser commissioned in 1903 that sailed the world, supporting American diplomacy and disaster relief until 1929.

The second USS Cleveland (CL-55) was also a cruiser, commissioned in 1942, that fought in such World War II campaigns as the invasions of North Africa, Guadalcanal, the Philippines and Okinawa, before being decommissioned in 1947.

The the third USS Cleveland (LPD-7), an amphibious transport dock, served from 1967-2011 in military deployments to Vietnam, Desert Shield, Desert Storm, and

Operation Iraqi Freedom. It also aided in clean-up of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, and recovery/salvage of an Alaska Airlines flight that crashed in the Pacific in 2000.

When the new USS Cleveland sails, its crew of 100-150 will be linked to backers in its namesake city through the USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation ([www.usscleveland.org](http://www.usscleveland.org)), a planned \$5 million effort to secure the ship’s place in local history now and potentially in perpetuity as part of a downtown naval park.

When compared to other civilian committees created for the commissioning of new Navy ships, then usually disbanded, the foundation (founded in 2018) is “unique” in its budget and scope, said CEO Mike Dovilla, of Berea, a native Clevelander, three-term Ohio Representative, and a commander in the U.S. Navy Reserve.

The volunteer unit, which has already raised more than

60 percent of its funding goal, has planned a mission combining significant events, such as the ship’s anticipated commissioning here in 2024 (the first time a USS Cleveland has been commissioned in its namesake city), and ongoing programs.

The foundation provides an opportunity to enhance patriotic civilian/military relations in Northeast Ohio, contribute to economic development (through tourism and ship visits) in Cleveland, and link with area schools, according to Dovilla.

The USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation has already partnered with the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington, D.C. to sponsor a replica of the Lone Sailor Statue. The statue, only the 18th in the world, was dedicated in 2021 at the Great Lakes Science Center, its temporary location. The foundation is working with Cleveland and other local nonprofits to move the statue to



*The second USS Cleveland CL-55 saw duty from 1942-1947, fighting in several World War II battles. (USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation)*

a permanent site at Voinovich Bicentennial Park next year.

Dovilla said the foundation currently consists of more than a dozen leadership volunteers and corporate partners. He described the appeal of the foundation as a combination of hometown and patriotic pride. "Clevelanders love anything that ties into the city, and this is something that connects people in terms of a patriotic element, service to a cause larger than yourself," he said. "Those kind of things excite people."

"We have been very intentional in reaching out to different parts of the community, different age groups," he added. This outreach includes planned programs linking the ship with area school students.

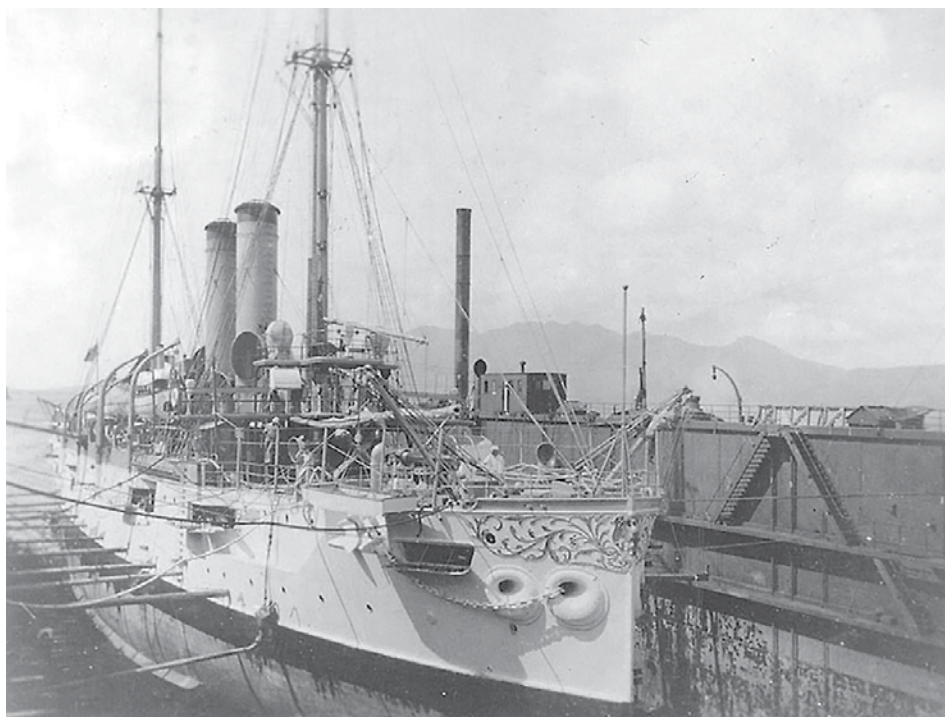
Dovilla said his own interest in the ship and foundation reflects a way of linking his own naval service and experience as a former state legislator, to the community. "It's just a nice fit for my skill set and a way to give back to the community," he noted.

He acknowledged that difficulties have plagued the LCS (littoral combat ship) fleet → dubbed by some sailors as "little crappy ships," and a fleet of "lemon ships" by one Congressman.

But Dovilla expects that those challenges will be largely resolved by the time the USS Cleveland, which will be homeported in Mayport, FL, sees active service. His expectations were echoed in a recent Navy report that said the ships are now "on trend to meet design requirements."

Once the USS Cleveland is commissioned, the foundation has planned an extensive program of support for the crew, including:

- Providing welcome-a-board sea bags containing Cleveland items for new sailors.



The first USS Cleveland C-19 served from 1903 to 1929. (USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation)

- Offering special recognition for promotions, advancements, retirements, and major events in sailors' lives (such as marriage, birth of children).

- Sponsoring a sailor during his/her tour of duty on the ship, by a Cleveland-based entity, such as an individual, family, company, school class, civic/fraternal/veterans organization, church group, etc.

- Hosting an annual Thanksgiving dinner in Florida for the crew and families, and conducting an annual holiday toy drive for children of crew members.

- Shipping care packages to the ship when she is deployed.

Offering career transition support to sailors approaching the end of their service, with the goal of connecting men and women who have served on the LCS 31 with employers in



The USS Freedom, first of the design variant being used to build the USS Cleveland which is due for completion in 2024. (U.S. Navy photo)



Commissioning ceremonies for the USS Minneapolis-St. Paul LCS 21, sister ship to the USS Cleveland, were held earlier this year in Duluth, Minnesota. (U.S. Navy photo)

northeast Ohio, thus attracting veterans to live, work, and raise families in Cleveland.

The foundation hopes that this relationship becomes an enduring part of the future.

If and when the Navy decides to retire the ship, the USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation would negotiate a purchase with the goal of returning it to Cleveland.

The ship would be docked at the Great Lakes Science Center to become a permanent museum and memorial to all four Navy ships that have borne the Cleveland name.

To that end, foundation members have already toured

similar attractions such as the naval park in Buffalo, NY, according to Dovilla.

He noted that decommissioned Navy ships are usually "sold (to a foreign navy), scrapped or sunk. "Ours would be the fourth S. We're going to save her."



The Freedom variant of Littoral Combat Ships, a design being used for construction of the USS Cleveland. (U.S. Navy graphic)



The logo of the USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation combines the ship and the skyline of its namesake city. (USS Cleveland Legacy Foundation)



## Freedom House Transitional Housing Veterans - Portage County

Freedom House renovations are almost complete – Freedom House has served us well over the past 15 years, but the space did not meet the number of emerging needs we are experiencing – specifically accommodating women veterans, creating safer spaces for physical distancing and COVID mandates for all veterans served. Thanks to funding provided from the VA and the community FCS has been able to take on renovations at Freedom House, creating individual bedrooms/bathrooms for each veteran. These improvements will help us meet the two major needs of women veterans: 1. Safe, transitional housing to reside in while searching for permanent housing 2. Programming that targets the specific needs of homeless women veterans and their children.



### Donor Tree of Life Sponsorship Levels

Freedom House has three levels of giving that will be recognized on our **Donor Tree of Life**, which will be displayed in the main living area. All donations will be used toward the capital campaign to help us reach our fundraising goal of \$125,000.

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# An Annual Tax Credit for Homebuying Veterans in Ohio

Many Ohio veterans are not aware that the Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA), the State of Ohio's leading agency for on affordable housing, offers a veteran-friendly direct federal tax credit for homebuyers through the Mortgage Tax Credit (MTC) program. This program is generally targeted toward first-time buyers and can be worth up to \$2,000 per year for as long as you own a home. However, there are special guidelines that allow veterans to qualify for this tax credit even if they are not first-time buyers.

## What are the benefits of the MTC?

The purpose of the mortgage tax credit is to make buying a home easier and more affordable for first-time and other eligible homebuyers. In short:

- Qualifying buyers will be issued a Mortgage Credit Certificate when they buy their home allowing them to receive a tax credit for a portion (20%-40%) of the interest paid on their mortgage each year moving forward.
- The tax credit is limited to \$2,000 per year and may be claimed for the life of the loan as long as it is still your primary residence

For instance, let's assume you purchase a home by borrowing \$150,000 at a 6% interest rate, and you qualify for the maximum credit percentage of 40%. Using round numbers, you would have \$9,000 of interest in the first year, and 40% of that would be \$3,600. As the maximum credit per year is limited to \$2,000, however, that is the maximum amount of the credit you could claim.

## What are the special rules for veterans?

In general, the MTC program applies to a "First Time Buyer", meaning someone who has not had an ownership interest in a primary residence in the past three years. However, the State of Ohio provides an additional definition for "First Time Buyer" specifically for veterans, expanding it to include "qualified military veterans who have received an honorable discharge from the U.S. Military, even if they have previously owned a home.

This means that qualified veterans may qualify for the MTC program and its annual \$2,000 tax credit even if they are not technically first-time buyers. If a veteran stays in a home for ten years or more, that could make the tax credit worth upwards of \$20,000 total.

## Are there any other rules to qualify?

It is important to note that the Mortgage Tax Credit is only available for mortgages obtained through specific lenders approved through OHFA and the State of Ohio. Additionally, the MTC must be approved prior to buying a home; it cannot be obtained after taking ownership. Lastly, there are additional qualification limits regarding income earned per year, purchase price, and other factors.

To learn more about this program or to see if you would qualify, veterans may visit the OHFA website at [www.myohiohome.org](http://www.myohiohome.org), or contact Steve Weixel, Producing Branch Manager at Guaranteed Rate, at 216-926-5181. You can also send an email to [steve.weixel@rate.com](mailto:steve.weixel@rate.com). Steve Weixel and Guaranteed Rate are approved for lending in Ohio for the MTC program, as well as for other programs offered through OHFA.



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# RIDE with VALOR

By JC Sullivan

Russell Scot Rhoda is a U.S. Army Veteran paramedic and a member of American Legion Post No. 2 in Cleveland, Ohio. As a retired Berea, Ohio firefighter, one might think he would stay home and enjoy living in his Strongsville log cabin and tend to the crops planted there but that's NOT Rhoda. He has been another type of firefighter...the forest kind. Although he no longer actually fights the fires, he is frequently found in the western U.S. helping those affected with food, lodgings, etc.

It's easy to understand why in 2018 he began the Ride with Valor organization. Being a trained U.S. Army Paramedic veteran with three years active duty and five more in the active Reserves certainly qualifies him. Additionally, with both a father and an uncle who are disabled veterans, it was impetuous for him to do something. And, of course, he's a member of the very large and active motorcycle community!

"With so many veterans needing help but not getting it either because they didn't realize it, they were qualified but weren't getting it through the Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly VA) or they tried them and still didn't get approved for help; there are just so many veterans that are in jeopardy of losing their homes or ending up in a nursing facility. So, I started trying for Grant Funding and donations for ADA modifications to do modifications to doors, windows, toilets and the like that made it easier for veterans to stay out of a nursing home."

Rhoda started to do homework, finding out what resources were available. He did this for about seven years before he started Ride with Valor. It got to the point that more and more people found out what he was doing. "I needed to incorporate and make it a 501c3. There were so many people willing to donate or help

we needed to give them a tax benefit for doing so."

Ride with Valor takes possession of abandoned houses and updates the windows and utilities, like electrical and plumbing...whatever is needed. Then it's completely remodeled it so it's a beautiful home in great condition where they can move a veteran into it. On their third home now, they're about take possession of a fourth. "We don't want them worrying about leaking faucets and the like but to focus on getting healthier. By fixing up the house we are eliminating all the potential issues so we can leave them to focus on being physically and mentally sound."

Rhoda says they work with different companies for potential job placement and introduce them to credit counselors. "We do everything we can to reintegrate them into being whole again."

Their first couple of fundraisers were organizing motorcycle rides. They invited the American Legion and VFW riders to join them. "They love it because they love veterans and the majority of them are veterans. It's now gone from me trying to get grants to people donating their first house to us in 2020 and it just took off from there."

They now have Case Managers who work with the veterans themselves beginning with the application process and determine what their needs are to what it's going to take to make their lives easier. They welcome all volunteers; there's no formal membership. In an average year they get 100 – 200 volunteers. Ride With Valor's goal is not to just to fix one problem a veteran may be having. That's why they focus on transportation so veterans can have that freedom to be able to do things with their family. If food insecurity is a problem, they can't concentrate on getting better. If they're not in a safe, affordable home, none of the other things are easy to come by. Ride With Valor doesn't fix their problems for them, but instead gives them the resources. Ride With Valor works with veterans in these subsidized homes they're remodeling and moving veterans into. They go from Section 8 Housing to eventual home ownership.

"Our first home went to a disabled, young female veteran with two high school-aged daughters. The VA called us about them. They were living in an abandoned house. We helped her with job placement and VA assistance. Someone in the veteran community stepped up and said we've got this house that needs a lot of work but we're willing to donate it. The house and material were donated. Our goal is not to make money on the project. We went from the studs up and completely remodeled this house into a home. Her daughters are now in college. We're now working on eventual home ownership. Once this is done it will help fund the next one."

Many disabled veterans have difficulty getting transportation anywhere they need to be. "Although we've been donated a wheelchair-accessible van, Ride with Valor's biggest calls have been from disabled veterans looking for long-term transportation. Having such a vehicle certainly gives them a sense of independence and most importantly would enable them to get to their essential appointments, shopping and employment."

It's such a long process for disabled veterans to secure a van by conventional means. The title for any van that is donated will be given to a disabled vet. After that they are responsible for upkeep and insurance. They are then given information on who can retrofit it to suit their needs. At some point, if they receive a new vehicle, they return the donated vehicle to Ride with Valor to be issued to another disabled veterans.

We asked Rhoda about how they promote the work they do for veterans as many people have a negative knee-jerk reaction to motorcycles. They overcome this image by showing them their accomplishments. Interested riders, volunteers and/or donors can call them at 216-280-5824, visit their webpage at [www.ridewithvalor.org](http://www.ridewithvalor.org), email [admin@ridewithvalor.org](mailto:admin@ridewithvalor.org) or visit their Facebook page Ride with Valor.

Sullivan is a US Army veteran of the 2nd Armored Division who served stateside and in Europe.



# Hospice of the Western Reserve Celebrates Veterans All Year 'Round

By Jerri Donohue

At The Grande Pavilion skilled nursing facility in Bedford, Navy veteran Ronald McNeil sported a Hospice-Veterans Partnership lapel pin presented to him by the Warrensville team of Hospice of the Western Reserve. Set against the outline of the state of Ohio, the pin features an American flag and a blue one emblazoned with the words "Honored Veteran."

Nathan Gradisher, Provider Relations Manager for Hospice of the Western Reserve, said that McNeil was one of 50 veterans the non-profit has honored in private ceremonies since initiating its Peaceful and Proud program almost 15 years ago. "It's something we do year 'round," Gradisher said.

McNeil's personalized ceremony recognized him for his service during the Korean War. The former sailor served aboard the USS Okanogan, a transport vessel that ferried and disembarked troops and evacuated prisoners of war, refugees and wounded military personnel. McNeil also spent two years in occupied Germany with the Navy's Telecommunications Unit.

Conducted by a veteran volunteer, each ceremony includes patriotic music and readings, the anthem of the honoree's branch of service, and highlights of his or her time in the military. Every veteran also receives a certificate of appreciation and a gift such as a red, white and blue blanket made by auxiliary members of George E. Hayward VFW Post 9295 in Mentor. The pins are provided by Ohio Hospice-Veterans Partnership, hospices that work together to support vets. Most patients receive hospice care in their own home, or in a nursing home. When the ceremony takes place at the patient's bedside as death approaches, that person might not seem engaged. "But it's amazing how many veteran patients we've cared for who - despite the fact that they haven't really acknowledged the ceremony at all - will still salute at the end," Gradisher said.



Hospice nursing assistant and Army veteran Gene Gordon presented Ronald McNeil with a certificate of appreciation for his military service from Hospice of the Western Reserve. (photo courtesy Hospice of the Western Reserve)

## Peaceful and Proud

The *Peaceful and Proud* program operates through a committee of clinical staff and volunteers and is guided by an all-veteran advisory council. The "We Honor Veterans Program" of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization designated Hospice of the Western Reserve a level five partner, the highest possible. The Ohio non-profit also holds a leadership role in the National Partnership for Healthcare and Hospice Innovation's Veterans Forum.

Before the COVID pandemic, Hospice of the Western Reserve often held Veterans Day ceremonies at its facilities, complete with honor guard and speakers. Other years, it found sponsors for large scale off-site luncheons for veterans. In public events held throughout the

year, the organization has honored more than 900 veterans at senior centers, VFW and American Legion posts and Valor Home in Lorain County.

Recognizing veterans is a just one aspect of the Peaceful and Proud program."The entire agency is trained on meeting the needs of veterans," Gradisher said.

When a veteran enrolls in hospice care, he or she completes a military history questionnaire. These details help nurses, nursing assistants, social workers and others who interact with that patient. They ask about the



Peaceful and Proud volunteer Victor DeMarco, a Vietnam veteran and former flight surgeon, conducted Ronald McNeil's recognition ceremony. Nursing assistant and Army veteran Gene Gordon presented McNeil with his Hospice-Veterans Partnership pin.

Marine veteran Keith McNeil, who served in the Persian Gulf, attended his father's ceremony. Ronald McNeil passed away several weeks later. Standing behind the Navy veteran are (l-r): Victor DeMarco, Keith McNeil and Gene Gordon. (photo courtesy Hospice of the Western Reserve)

veteran's service, thank the vet, and - especially for Vietnam veterans - welcome them home.

All employees, even those in human resources, finance and other departments, learn the roles of the various branches of service, the difference between enlisted personnel and officers, and other essential information. "They have a basic understanding of military service to the extent that a person who hasn't served can," Gradisher said.

Hospice workers also become acquainted with veterans service organizations and other resources in the community that can assist their veterans. Gradisher hosts Veterans Virtual Cafe, free

hour-long interactive presentations by groups such as Rolling Thunder, Honor Flight and the USS Cleveland Foundation. Accessible by cell phone, iPad, etc., Veterans Virtual Cafe gives vets the chance to connect over topics that interest them. Any veteran enrolling in hospice care can choose to meet with a volunteer who also served in the military. Some former servicemen and women, who kept their stories to themselves, open up to other veterans as they near the end of their lives. "They really love to talk to each other," Gradisher said. "They understand their experiences and speak the same language." When they become comfortable talking about their military service, patients

often decide to share those memories with their loved ones, too.

Like other nonprofits, Hospice of the Western Reserve lost volunteers during the pandemic. Now Gradisher is recruiting veterans all ages to visit those receiving hospice care. "I'm not a veteran but I have a great passion for this work," he said. "It's a community that served us and we want to make sure that we serve them."

To learn more about volunteering, or to register for the December 15 Veterans Virtual Cafe, contact Nathan Gradisher at [NGradisher@HospiceWR.org](mailto:NGradisher@HospiceWR.org), or call him at 216.832.9390.



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# Kent State's May 4th Memorial To Receive Special Attention for Veteran's Day

By Jacob Arnett

Kent State's Annual Veteran's Day Commemoration which takes place Thursday, November 10th, will be a little more special this year. The commemoration will begin at 11:00 AM outside of the Kent Student Center, followed by the appreciation luncheon indoors. Different for this Veteran's Day is that from 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM, volunteers will be replanting some of the 58,175 daffodils which are part of the memorial that represents every servicemember killed in the Vietnam War.

Joshua Rider is the Executive Director of the Center for Adult and Veterans Services at KSU, and he spoke with the Chronicle about this year's activities. "We are gathering a group of KSU staff and alumni, veterans, fraternity and sorority groups, and other volunteers to tend to the daffodils on Blanket Hill as some areas are in need of replanting and special care. Our campus grounds crew and the Division of Philanthropy and Alumni Engagement are of course helping as well to deliver a much-needed improvement to this memorial and address some areas which have unfortunately become patchy or blotchy, due to nature and other factors." He goes on to say, "right now it's just not a good memorial, so we are coming together from 1:30 PM to 5:00 PM on the 10th to give it the respect and care it deserves."

The events of May 4th, 1970 galvanized the country's mindset in relation to our willingness to engage in foreign wars. Some of the events of that time created a schism in the minds of many young military age men and women who had been faced with the impossible decision to choose between supporting the troops or

supporting the war. We've done better since then as a society in terms of distinguishing between those who are called to duty and those who call the shots. It's hard to grasp how it would have felt as a serviceman or servicewoman to come home from a brutal conflict and feel treated as a social pariah. We veterans still face some vitriol from our American brethren from time to time today, but most Americans now tend to agree that soldiers do not get to choose the wars they fight in. When Kent State Professor Emeritus Brinsley Tyrell delivered his final design which ultimately became the May 4th Memorial, he stated that his vision for the memorial was, according to a 2019 interview and quoted in the May 06, 2022, article by Phil Soencksen of Kent State Today, "to bring people together and help them heal."

While I was not alive for this era, I did attend Kent State University in 2003-2004 in the Criminal Justice program, while serving as an infantryman in the Marine Corps Reserve. A friend of mine, Thomas Keeling, was a fellow infantryman with 3rd Battalion 25th Marines. He also attended KSU in the Criminal Justice program there. Sadly, we lost LCPL. Keeling in Iraq along with 4 other Marines from my unit when the vehicle he was driving struck a massive roadside bomb which killed everyone on board, including the M1 Abrams tank crewman they were evacuating from a previous blast. When I heard the news, beyond my sadness, I couldn't help but think of the times we had plenty of Milwaukee's Best Ice at his place on the Kent State campus or enjoying Liberty from the Marines out in Las Vegas after grueling training in the Mojave Desert. He

had just graduated from Kent, and now on June 9, 2005, at age 23, he was gone.

Thomas Keeling is one more reason to pay attention to the past sacrifices the young men and women of Kent State University have made, both in war and in making their voices heard. Knowing this history, from my perspective as a veteran student, I felt KSU went out of their way to make sure their military and veteran students were given all the support they needed to feel comfortable on campus and find their place and their path. I found the professors at KSU to be very accommodating to my needs as a "citizen-Marine", knowing that I was deploying to Iraq at the end of

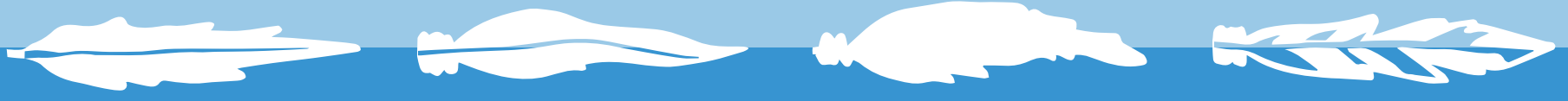
American and Indigenous Cultures and also celebrating veterans. Veterans have increasingly sought different ways to assimilate back into society after the trauma of war, and perhaps there is more we can learn from our Native American brothers and sisters and their heritage as we have operated as a tribe of sorts in the military, living a communal lifestyle and relying on each member of our tribe to help us get home together and alive, and to complete the mission. One of the toughest environmental transitions a veteran makes is to leave his brothers in arms, his team, and operate on his or her own in a highly individualized society. The organizers of this event certainly believe there is a helpful connection in there, and invite

you to enjoy food, drumming, and historical education. This event will take place in the Student Multicultural Center Lounge (Room 206) on the Kent State campus.



the semester. Having many family members who served in Vietnam, some who were combat wounded, a small thing like a memorial is something worth beautifying. "May we never forget."

On more note, Saturday November 12th, the Student Multicultural Center will be having an event which will be highlighting Native



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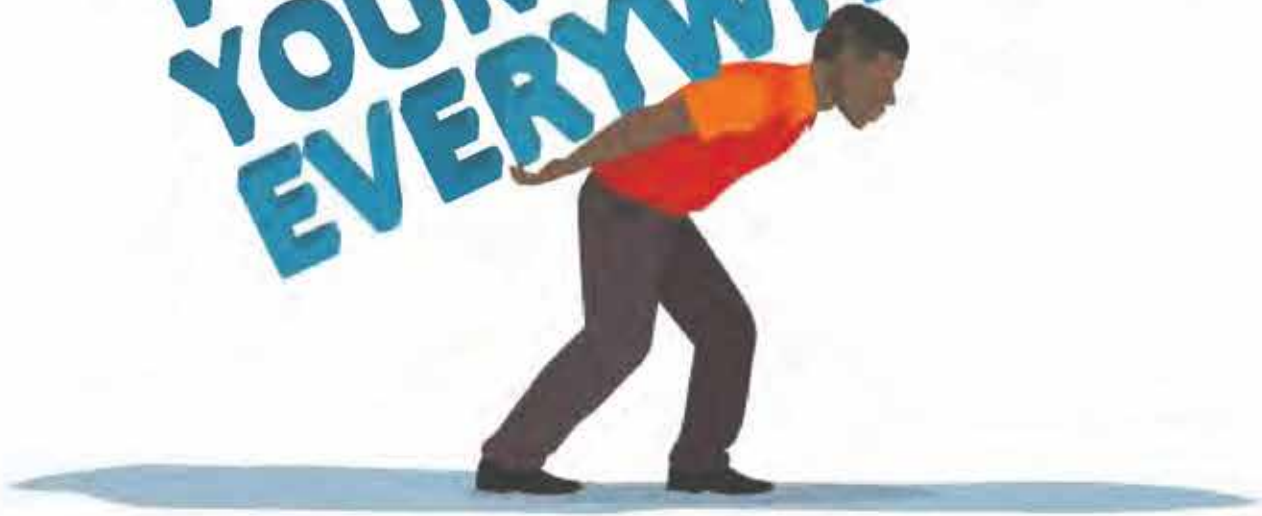
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# Clinical Study Offers Hope To People With PTSD

By Nancy Peacock

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can turn any traumatic event into a lifelong affliction. What Elisa Poggi wants to do is offer hope to those who struggle with PTSD symptoms.

Poggi, MSW, LSW and owner of Insight Clinical Trials LLC in Cleveland, is the principal study coordinator for a pharmaceutical clinical research study to address the devastating effects of PTSD.

“When people have PTSD, they have reactive symptoms,” Poggi explained. “They re-experience things. They may have flashbacks, they may have distressing thoughts, and recurring memories or dreams. Antidepressants don’t stop those things.”

What researchers like Poggi are searching for are treatments that target the specific symptoms that haunt people with PTSD.

“They may be easily startled, tense, on guard, hypervigilant; they may have negative thoughts about themselves or the world and feel isolated,” she said. “Again, antidepressants don’t target those symptoms. What these medications are doing is to target the actual symptoms of PTSD.”

The medication Poggi’s company is studying is classified as a TRPC4/5 inhibitor, which has the potential to improve symptoms in patients with PTSD.

“These medications are trying to address the reactive symptoms people get when they are experiencing a memory or triggering event from that memory,” she said.

PTSD can go back as far as childhood. About 25 percent of the people in her study are veterans, but Poggi said she believes there are more veterans with PTSD that go undiagnosed and untreated.

“There are veterans who are first responders who have PTSD now from dealing with the pandemic,” she said. “Maybe people who are veterans and had PTSD are now first responders and have a new case of PTSD. Whatever event is currently giving them issues is the event we are going to address and help them with.”

To identify the event, the doctor in the study will evaluate the person to determine the primary event that is currently causing issues.

“A lot of people who currently have PTSD symptoms are already in therapy, and they are able to continue with their therapy as long as it is not specific therapy dealing with the trauma,” she said. “Because then we don’t know if they are reacting to the therapy or the medication. We really want to know if this medication works for these symptoms.”

To be eligible for the study, volunteers should be 18 to 65 years of age, have been diagnosed with PTSD and have experienced a traumatic event at least 3 months before beginning the study.

Prescreening begins with a 20 to 30-minute conversation between a potential candidate and staff member.

“They come in and meet with us and we ask them about their symptoms and what medications they are currently taking,” Poggi said. “If they seem like a good candidate, we give them information to take home and read.”

All information is written in 5th grade language – an FDA mandate -- so people clearly understand what they are reading. The information includes every possible side effect, what to expect at every visit and explains their rights as volunteers.

“What’s nice about clinical studies is that everything is voluntary,” she said. “At any time, someone can opt out of the study. Someone can sign a consent form and five minutes later, decide they don’t want to and that’s OK.”

Poggi’s study is a Phase 3 study, which is the last phase of study before the pharmaceutical company submits it to the FDA for approval.

“Phase 3 is the larger study where we try to prove that this medication is better than nothing at all,” she said. “We already know the side effects of the medicine and we already know the dosage. We’re just trying to make sure this this medication works so it can go on the market.”

Not only are the study volunteers able to address their symptoms, but they are providing hope for PTSD victims in the future.

“Every medication we take, including aspirin, was only approved by volunteers doing research,” Poggi said. “Volunteers are the only reason we have medications out there. If we lack volunteers, sometimes it takes 2 or 3 years to find enough volunteers, which means it takes another 3 to 4 years to get it on the market.”

Too many veterans with PTSD symptoms are not getting them addressed. “They sit there in silent suffering,” she said. “That’s true of anyone with PTSD. People tell them to get over it and just move on.”

Poggi said she has always been drawn to the field of research and never wants to leave it.

“I feel that research gives people hope,” she said. “We don’t give up on people with depression or schizophrenia or PTSD. We are trying to find answers.”

For more information, visit [ptsd-research.com](http://ptsd-research.com) or contact Insight Clinical Trials LLC (216) 526-1843.

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**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



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**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.

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# Venerating Veterans

By Barb Smith, Secretary AVMA

Join the patriotic crowd on Friday, 11/11 @ 11am at the Amherst Veterans Mural Wall at 248 Park Ave. in downtown Amherst, Ohio, for the 12th annual Veterans Day program presented by the Amherst Veterans Mural Wall Association. Cleveland's Fox 8 news co-anchor Lou Maglio will be Master of Ceremonies, as he has been since Amherst artist, Mike Sekletar, a dozen years ago, unveiled on the 70' long brick wall the first of four towering tributes, Raising the Flag on Mount Suribachi.

Dress warmly, arrive an hour early, find parking, stop in at the Arabica Coffee Shop facing the Mural Wall to enjoy a warm drink, come mingle with veterans and families, study the engraved pavers along the base of the Mural Wall, and marvel at the new additions to Patriots Park, a three-walled sandstone outdoor art gallery. During the program, eleven newly-installed commissioned paintings will be unveiled for all to see via the jumbotron. Sing along with Lee Greenwood as he injects us with a booster shot of God Bless the USA, leaving the audience with a feeling of gratitude towards our military veterans.

Saturday, November 12, at 7 pm, at the Lorain Palace Theater in downtown Lorain, Dave Mortach announces that country western singer, John Rich will be back to delight the packed house with favorites including his new release, Progress. It will be a show of surprises, including bantering by Bernie Kosar, and quips by Travis Mills. In his book, Tough As They Come, US Army staff sergeant Travis Mills tells how he became a quadruple amputee during his tour in Afghanistan, in 2012, and is among only four others of the thousands critically wounded warriors during the War on Terror, who has survived, and continues to thrive! Proceeds will benefit the Travis Mills Foundation.

## Tonight, Flew By Fallen Feathers Memorial

By Barb Smith, Secretary AVMA

My husband and US Navy veteran Bob and I attended the John Rich veterans concert last year. I was honored to sing the Navy Hymn, just prior to the presentation of the Honor and Remember Flag to the Gold Star family of US Navy corpsman, Max Soviak.

This year, the John Rich concert to honor veterans, coincides with the Annual Veterans Event at MAPS (Military Aviation Preservation Society)

Air Museum in Canton, Ohio. As members of MAPS, we enjoy reading the monthly newsletter, which in the current issue included a summary of highlights of the veterans event. According to Vice Chair of the Board, Valerie Kinney, there will be no dedication of an aircraft this year, but instead, we will recognize all men and women who have served our country during Post 9-11.

Veterans of this era, and Gold Star families are invited to forward information and photos of their loved ones who sacrificed their lives during the twenty year Global War on Terror. A video will be created and shown of Ohio's fallen warriors after the banquet. Max Soviak will be honored via the Fallen Feathers Memorial. His will be the last carved feather to be added to the wall. I wanted to know about the Fallen Feathers Project.

**6pm: Graham Webb spoke with me at length.**

I'm a US Army veteran. No one plays Taps, so every Saturday, at 4pm,

I play TAPS at a local community veterans park. Brad Johnson from Ch 4 out of Columbus interviewed me in my studio.

Graham had spoken with woodcarvers throughout the Buckeye state, asking if they would like to participate in carving a feather resembling one from an eagle. They were chomping at the bit. Graham Webb has carved the last feather for corpsman Max Soviak, the last Ohioan killed

during the Global War on Terror. "I had to do this one." The Soviak family has been invited. I hope they come.

According to Graham, from a previous interview, the Fallen Feather Project is about honoring Ohio Service Members that have fallen during Operation Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. The project consists of wooden feathers carved from wood grown in Ohio by carvers from all over the State of Ohio. Graham said "The Gold Star Families I have talked with are touched that people they do not know would take their time; apply their skills to create a remembrance like this." Each feather will have the name of a fallen serviceman, and is approximately 15 to 16 inches in length. These feathers are as individual and unique as the servicemen whose names will appear on them. They are placed into a 50 caliber

shell casing, then mounted into a major sculpture, with a Bald Eagle at the top. In 2013, there were 273, now there are 300.



Images of front and back of Fallen Feather carved by Bruce DiVacarro, in honor of MSgt. Robert Werst, killed in the War on Terror

### **How did this idea for the Fallen Feathers originate?**

#### **Was it your idea? Yes.**

Patriot Guard Riders show up at military funerals to protect grieving families from harassment. We act as a visual barrier from protesters, also on tarmacs. If no protesters, we lead the funeral procession. We would only go if we are invited by the families. I was the district captain of the PGR, in ten counties in Central Ohio. Of Ohio's 300 killed IN THE War on Terror, I probably have attended 200 funerals, to honor the fallen. I wanted to tell their stories.

#### **Fallen Feathers Memorial has three parts:**

1. The carver uses his or her talents to carve the feather in their own way, that pays honor to the fallen warrior and to find a way to tell their story. The feather must be created from wood native to Ohio.
2. The second part is the wall Scott Dollinger, an architect and myself made the display case from buckeye wood. With a carved eagle on top, missing a flight feather. "The Eagle still flies, still fights, still lives, even with its feather missing. The fallen feather still lives."
3. The third part is the "book." Using the directory located left of the display case is the best way to know the story of the warrior who lost his or her life. Several women.

#### **I stressed that the carvers learn the history of their subject:**

A Jewish policeman wanted to carve a feather for one of the Jewish faith. Both had been previously assigned. "So give me an MP." One of the preassigned fallen was a pilot. The carver did not do the necessary work and put a big crucifix on the feather. The warrior attended Jewish schools all his life, parents emigrated to America, and he was a first generation American, I phoned the artist policeman. He was ecstatic. On the feather that he carved, he took a sterling silver piece that he was given at his bar mitzvah and inlaid it into the feather, representing the fallen pilot is living on. He did full honors. I kept the original feather.

One of the carvers is a Gold Star father. He carved his son's feather from wood that is in the woods where his son played as a child. Overhearing, my husband Bob, was waiting for Graham to state that the Gold Star Dad was going to state that he had carved his son's feather from his baseball bat.

I try to notify at least one person in the family, the only survivor was the son, the carver that did that feather, was a woman, her son, served with the fallen soldier. The son refused the feather.

A mother from CT asked that I carve a feather in memory of her son, also from CT. This is an Ohio memorial. States as PA, have created similar tributes; Carved Feathers. My brother in Flower Mound near Dallas, the only elevation is in the town where the residents mount flags to honor the local fallen warriors.

#### **Why at MAPS?**

The hard part would be finding carvers. Once I went to carving groups, members were biting at the bit, they were wanting badly to carve feathers. Originally, the Fallen Feathers Memorial was located at the Ohio Military Museum in Massillon, OH. All artifacts have since moved to the second floor of MAPS. The Fallen Feathers Memorial is located on the right wall as you enter the main hangar of MAPS Museum. Come visit. Pay tribute. Look up the names of the Fallen in the "book" directory. A gloved docent will unlock the case and present it to you on the horizontal support.

#### **Lorain County Wood Carvers have created 17 fallen feathers.**

Summary of my interview with Bruce Divaccarro, Robert West's woodcarver, moments after Graham Webb excused himself to spend the evening with his wife

#### **7:10 PM: Bruce Divaccarro:**

I'm a bird carver and enter contests all over the country. Later, I would read how he is quite an accomplished carver, having received awards including Best of Show in Shorebirds at the Ward World Championships in Ocean City, Maryland in both 2009 and 2013. He forwarded pictures of his birds. Lifelike!

I have a friend who also carves birds. He told me about the Fallen Feathers Project. I want to do one. I contacted Graham Webb and asked if I could carve a feather for someone who attended Elyria Catholic, the same school as my daughter. No, Lane Tollett's already taken. I do have another. Robert West graduated from Elyria

Catholic. I do a lot of research when I work on a project. My daughter brought home old yearbooks for me to study.

Robert was on the Elyria Catholic state championship football team. I talked to Robert's teammates. I knew a few guys in his class. He was quite a student. A plaque hangs in his honor at Elyria Catholic.

"Where did you acquire your carving skills," I asked. I acquired basic carving skills, when I went to college. I went to Clemson. I was in construction management. At Clemson, construction management was within the college of architecture, where they had a wood shop. Ed Hall, supervisor of the woodshop wanted me to try carving a bird. I still have that bird. We are still friends and keep in contact. I'll be having lunch with him on Veterans Day, then we'll go together to the Clemson game on Saturday. That bird was terrible but I still have it. Tell me about the Ohio native wood you used. The quill is made of walnut. On my way home from work, someone had just cut down a walnut tree. I took a log home, harvested it, and used it for the quill. I used basswood for the rest of the feather, which I use on my birds. Robert West was a MSgt. He was a tank commander and a drill sergeant. I put three notches on each side of the feather to represent the six stripes of the insignia. Have you met Robert West's widow? No, I had thought of it, but never have. I had met Jeannie West in 2017, as I was in charge of contacting the Gold Star families to ask permission to have the likenesses of their fallen included on Mike Sekletar's final of the four tribute paintings, The War on Terror.

**8:30 pm:** I phoned Jeannie West in Colorado who never remarried after her beloved Bob was killed in 2006. Their daughter, Shelby, dad's counterpart was a varsity cheerleader in high school and has since moved to SC, vowing to never marry a military man. We exchanged pleasantries. Jeannie would later text me photos. Jeannie, there's a gentleman living near where Robert graduated from high school who in 2013, had spent many hours working creating a special gift in Robert's memory, which resides amongst others. She was so moved. "I can't wait to meet him, Barb!" They will speak, tomorrow.

Perhaps, Mr. Graham Webb will attend our Veterans Day program in Amherst, Ohio, this year. Perhaps, one year, Mr. Graham Webb will be our keynote speaker at the Amherst Veterans Day program, and perhaps, Jeannie West, Shelby at her side, and Bruce Divaccarro will come up and say a few words, with Robert West and his comrades looking down in quiet contentment from Mike Sekletar's tribute to veterans.



*Barb Smith, Secretary, Amherst Veterans Mural Association, presents Travis Mills with framed copies of the Amherst Veterans Mural Wall and Patriots Park, 248 Park Ave. Amherst, Ohio*

# DATELINE: SAIGON

Excerpt from the book *Hot Type, Cold Beer and Bad News: A Cleveland Reporter Looks Back at the 1960s* by Michael D. Roberts, reprinted with permission of Gray & Company, Publishers. \$24.94, hardcover, 293 pages. Available at ClevelandBooks.com, Amazon.com, and Northeast Ohio bookstores.

Assigned by his editor to “look in on the war” in Vietnam, Cleveland Plain Dealer reporter Michael D. Roberts arrived at Tan Son Nhut on January 29, 1968. The next day, the infamous Tet offensive began. In this excerpt it is three days later, and Roberts is reporting from the streets of Saigon ...

Although the assault on Saigon had been largely repelled, pockets of the enemy formed strongholds throughout the city. Street fighting broke out everywhere as Vietnamese troops dealt with resistors.

AP photographer Eddie Adams and I were caught in cross fire on a narrow street called Nhan Vi. (The day before, Adams had cinched a Pulitzer with his dramatic photo of South Vietnamese chief of national police Nguyen Ngoc Loan executing a Viet Cong captive.) We lay in the gutter listening to the distinctive, deadly sound of the VC’s AK-47s. The buildings around us housed shops shuttered by heavy metal grating.

Suddenly one of the gratings parted. A thin, veiny hand beckoned, and we darted into the shop, two men seeking asylum. Inside we found a mother and father with 10 children, along with the grandmother who had waved us to safety. One of the children practiced his English. He said that the VC had killed many in the neighborhood. The grandmother brought us Cokes and apologized for not having ice. The shooting subsided after an hour, and with the silence we made our escape, thanking the elderly woman

for the hospitality as the rest of the family bowed in a goodbye.

The next day did not get any better, only this time I was with AP reporter Peter Arnett driving through Gia Dinh on the outskirts of Saigon. We were dressed in bright sports shirts and not looking for trouble. Nonetheless, it found us.

As we drove past a group of concrete houses we heard a firefight break out. Again, the distinctive clatter of AK-47s filled the air, followed by the retorts of different sorts of weaponry. Arnett wanted to see who was fighting. It was a group of ARVN forces, South Vietnamese, who had pinned down some fleeing VC. As we made our way toward the South Vietnamese troops, a furious exchange of fire erupted and we took cover in one of the houses. Prone on the dirt floor and deafened by the shooting, I looked up at the roof made of flattened soft-drink cans and saw periodic glimpses of sky. The rounds were piercing the roof. I looked at Arnett’s face and he was perspiring.

“This is bad,” he said. Arnett had been covering the war for six years, so he knew what he was talking about. The firing continued, punctuated by grenade blasts.

Suddenly the door opened and a harried American sergeant, an adviser to the ARVN, began swearing at us. “Get the hell out of here now,” he commanded. “You fools are going to get overrun by the dinks.” We needed no further encouragement. We scrambled to our feet, ducked our heads, and ran for it. I remember running through flowerbeds, looking down and passing a prone Vietnamese soldier firing a Browning Automatic Rifle, a vintage World War II weapon that was far too heavy for the diminutive trooper. The gun was ejecting shells at a furious rate.

Arnett was ahead of me, running toward a five-foot stone wall. I was breathless with excitement and

exertion by the time I reached the barrier. I pulled myself over it and tumbled into a cemetery. The tall, heavy tombstones provided excellent shelter from the fusillade behind us.

Arnett took cover, and I found a place a few tombstones away. Both of us took a while to catch our rasping breaths. It had been an adrenaline-filled you-bet-your-life escape.

I hadn’t fully recovered when I noticed an elderly man with a wispy white beard crawling toward me. In one hand he held a wooden tray with bottles of beer. I could hardly believe my eyes. “Beer 50 piasters,” the man managed in fractured English. “Drink beer, no die.”

From behind a tombstone Arnett yelled, “For God’s sake, don’t overtip him.”

More excerpts are available at ClevelandBooks.com.

## About the Author

Michael D. Roberts got his start as a newspaper reporter in 1962 and joined the Plain Dealer in 1963. He received the Ohio Associated Press Award in 1966 for exposing a forged Rembrandt painting. He reported on assignment from Vietnam, the Middle East, and the newspaper’s Washington Bureau. He joined Cleveland Magazine in 1972 and served as editor for 17 years. He works in public relations and regularly writes for several publications.



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### Veteran Tribute

Cleveland Police Foundation has established a special fund to honor Bill Denihan the long-time government administrator, community activist, and veteran who passed on in June. Bill was an avid painter in retirement and donated many of his artistic creations of Cleveland scenes to raise money for charity.

Please consider donating to the "Denihan Community Art Fund" to help underwrite local veteran artists. Thank you.

Details:

www.clevelandpolicefoundation.org

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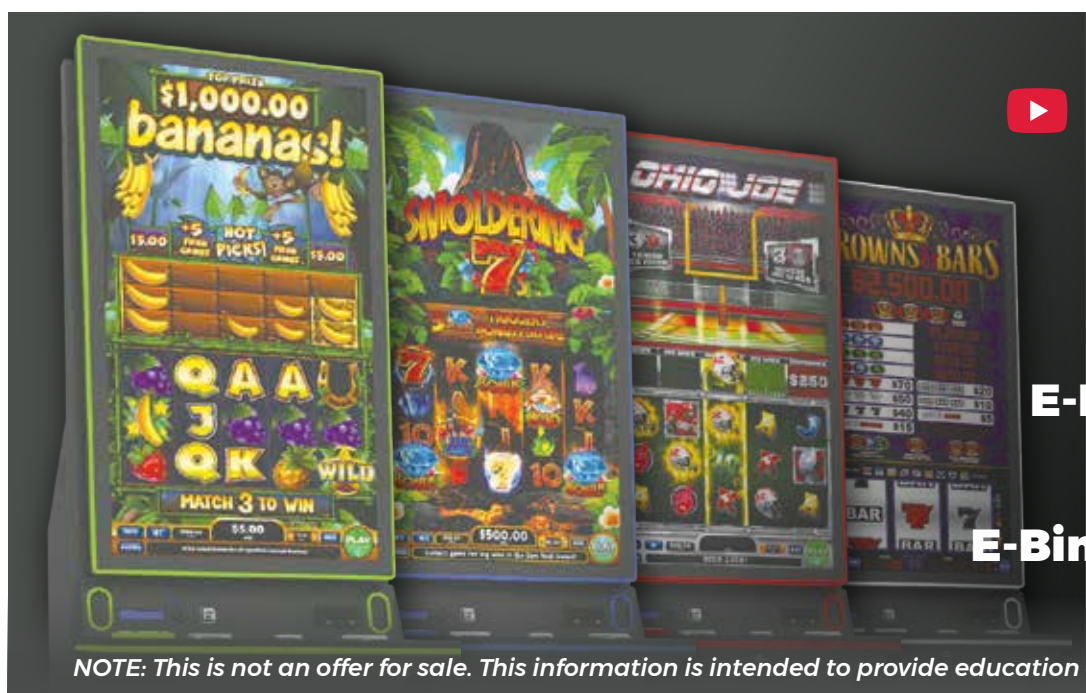
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