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*...see page 8*

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Today we begin a new venture at the DD-214 Chronicle. It will focus on bringing more engagement with our readers and the community through the new website. It features current affairs, events affecting the Veteran community, links, and up-to-date events. Our writers are working to cover what is important to you, our readers. As we grow, we will include more about benefits services and initiatives that make your life better.

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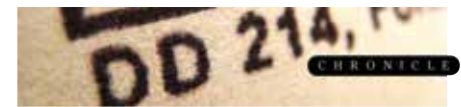
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# Retrieval of The Memorial Plaque From Cleveland's Mt. Carmel Church (East) and Resultant Story

*By JC Sullivan*

While re-dedicating the Irish Cultural Garden on Cleveland's MLK Drive, the late Senator Voinovich said, "I have always found those closest to their roots to be the best citizens." I can't argue with that. Growing up in what has been called 'Ethnicity', Cleveland is home to many who have remained close to their roots. One of those is the Italian Community.

On a recent morning I drove to the Office of MCR Inc., Willoughby, and founder Frank Piunno, Sr. I was there to photograph the plaque that is the subject of this story. Not surprisingly, several members and friends of the extended Piunno family were also there. I was privileged to meet founder Frank Piunno, Sr., as well as Lou Lentine, Anthony Granito, Don and Tony Mazzolini and my friend Russ Davis.

The bronze plaque originally hung on a wall of the old Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in the East 110th Street and Woodland Avenue neighborhood of Cleveland. When the Diocese of Cleveland announced it would close the Church, two co-conspirators sprang into action.

Frank Piunno, Sr., with his co-conspirator Russ Davis, seized the plaque from the Church before it disappeared to who knows where and would probably have been melted down for the scrap value by outsiders. On it are the names of twenty parishioners who were killed in action in WWII. One of the names on this plaque is that of Sgt. Michael F. Piunno, whose Italian-American family and community have never forgotten him.

Michael was born Sept. 24, 1922, to Francesco and Maria Giuseppa Piunno, the 7th of 8 children: Anna Marie (Fatica), Giuseppe (Joseph), Donato (Dan), Rose Marie (Granito), Joseph Anthony, Camilla "Carrie" Marie, deceased with the Trinitarian Order, Michael Joseph and Frank

Joseph. While in grade school Michael was an altar boy, like so many of us who lived in Catholic parishes were. Afterwards he studied at Benedictine High School, graduating in 1940.

Michael enlisted in the United States Army Nov. 16, 1942. After Basic Training he was assigned to the 89th Infantry Division. They deployed to France where they received additional training, most likely from combat veterans. The Division was part of General Patton's Third Army.

Sgt. Piunno was part of the action that began on the 26th of March as they crossed the Rhine "under intense fire". Once into Germany, on April 4, they overran Ohrdruf, a subcamp of Buchenwald, where Michael undoubtedly witnessed the atrocities there. It was the first concentration camp liberated by the U.S. Army.

According to the 89th Division History, they captured Zwickau, Germany on April 17, the day Michael was killed. Up until V-E Day the Division lost 325 battle deaths and 1,029 wounded.

It wasn't until 1949 that Michael's remains were returned to the family in Cleveland. On March 26 a Requiem Mass was celebrated at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. Burial took place in the Veterans Section of Calvary Cemetery, Cleveland, four years after his death.



The original plaque now hangs honorably in the lobby of MCR Inc. with the name of Michael J. Piunno and nineteen other heroes from the parish who were Killed in Action during the war. The American flag that covered Michael's coffin is also displayed there. Michael's family received his Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman Badge and other decorations earned.



Like other families who lost loved ones during the war, Michael's death was suffered in silence. However, his family, and the Italian community of Cleveland, have not been silent about his memory and sacrifice.

Each year Benedictine High School, Michael's Alma Mater, holds an Italian Festa Night at the school in his honor.



Michael Piunno

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# Lou Tests Right to Free Speech in Chagrin Falls, and Prevails

By Peace Action Cleveland

Louis H. Pumphrey

Posted in: Travels With A Peace Flag

CHAGRIN FALLS, Sunday, May 28th—Such DRAMA!! Jeepers! This was the 15th straight year of taking part in the Blossom Time Parade on the eve of Memorial Day, wearing my embarrassingly tight U.S. Army dress uniform and carrying my peace flag on a pole. To say that the event was an “adventure” would be a pretty big understatement. All went well for the first few minutes after unfurling my peace flag near East Washington Street, walking in front of a converted RV used by Homeless Hookup CLE, a non-profit that provides various services and goods for troubled veterans. Driving the RV was Dean, once a homeless veteran himself. I had walked in front of his vehicle at last year’s Blossom Time Parade. Today’s parade had a decidedly different narrative. As I stepped onto East Washington Street from the Chagrin Falls High School driveway, the staging area for parade vehicles, things went south pretty quickly. All of a sudden, a young parade official stepped in front of me and with his arms stretched straight out from his sides, blocked me, telling me to step out of the parade. I refused his command, noting I was within my First Amendment right of “freedom of speech” which was my “permit” to walk in the parade. I added there is precedent as I had walked in the parade for several years without incident. When he persisted in telling me to step to the side of the road, my half-Irish blood began to boil and I bluntly told him, “That’s not gonna happen!! Leave me alone!!” An exasperated woman behind me, witnessing the confrontation and greatly offended by the brutish, thuggish behavior of the parade official, shouted at him. “You can’t touch him!!” So he backed away from me slightly and said he was holding up the parade. I told the offensive official to go find a policeman so we can discuss my First Amendment right of freedom of speech. He quickly walked away. I never saw him again—and Chagrin Falls police along the parade route were respectful, with one thanking me for my service. BUT, my “excellent adventure” was not quite finished.

About half-way down the parade route, a young man wearing an olive drab, but non-military uniform, approached me and asked me to step to the side of the parade. I knew if I did that I wouldn’t be allowed to get back in the parade. I said to the polite, respectful young man, “We can talk while we walk.” He was amenable to that. He had a walkie-talkie so I suspect that the obnoxious parade official who tried to block me several minutes earlier tipped him off and told him to be on the lookout for me. The friendly young man in olive drab told me there was concern among some people that I might “cause a disturbance.” I assured him that would not happen, although I may have disturbed sensibilities among many spectators. I said, “I’m just trying to give people something to think about.” I reached to shake his hand. He switched the walkie talkie from his right

hand to his left, and I said, as we shook hands, “It was nice talking with you.” And HE stepped out of the parade to the side of the road. I told a woman walking with a float in front of me about the dust-up and she suggested I register to be on next year’s parade roster. That’s not gonna happen. I already have a permit—and you know what it is. Before heading out to Chagrin Falls from home, I stood at the corner of Van Aken Boulevard and Norwood Road in Shaker Heights, waving to folks driving to nearby St. Dominic Catholic Church for Sunday mass. There were several friendly toots of horns for my peace message, and waves. I had done that in previous years on Memorial Day eve. An elderly couple (well, okay, they may have actually been younger than me) walked by on their way to mass and the gentleman cheerily said, “Happy Memorial Day!!” I tersely said, “Happy is not the right word for Memorial Day. I know three names on that Wall.” The gentleman was a bit stunned by my remark but quickly recovered, saying, “Ohhhh...well, how about Happy Special Day.” I



Louis H. Pumphrey

said, “Okay. That’s good.” The idea came to mind before mass to walk through the church’s side door on the Norwood side of the church (remove my army garrison cap, of course) and walk down the main aisle of the church, stopping every few pews and say to people, “Do you think the Prince of Peace would like my flag?” Everyone smiled and answered in the affirmative.

When I got to the back of the church, near its front door, the long-time and highly-respected—if not revered—pastor, Father Tom Fanta, was prepared to walk down the aisle toward the altar to begin mass, accompanied by two altar boys. The priest reached to shake my hand, saying “Thank you for your service.” I said, “Wasn’t my idea. I got drafted.” He said his father served in the Korean War. I asked Father Tom if he thought the Prince of Peace would like my flag and he firmly said, “He would

LOVE your flag!!” With that I walked out the front door of the church to my car for the trip to Chagrin Falls. On my way to my favorite place to leave my car—the parking lot of my favorite dentist of all time and very talented volleyball player, Dr. Megan Shiga—I noticed the parking lot was full at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, indicating mass was still in progress. The idea came to mind—since I had a lot of time on my hands before the parade started—to ask people leaving the church if they thought the Prince of Peace would like my flag. They all agreed he would, and one man echoed Father Fanta’s sentiment, saying Christ would “love” my flag. One elderly man leaving church using a walker (I’m pretty sure he was older than me) asked about my years of service and I told him my active duty ended in 1968. He said, “In 1968 the army wouldn’t let you have that flag.” Got that right.

SHAKER HEIGHTS, Memorial Day, May 29th—I walked in the Memorial Day Parade for the 15th straight year. The

difference between Shaker and Chagrin Falls folks is like night and day. There were loads of appreciative applause for my peace message from Shaker spectators lining Van Aken Boulevard, the parade route, in sharp contrast to Chagrin Falls the day before. A couple of women said they remembered me from past years and were happy to see me. One woman said she took a photo of me each year, adding “I could make a collage of the pictures.” A couple of well-meaning gentlemen wished me a “Happy Memorial Day,” and I quickly set them straight. A young mom, a native of India, walked with me for a few minutes with her two children. We were “on the same page”. I said to her, “When people thank me for serving my country, I sometimes say, ‘I didn’t serve my country. I served deceitful, lying, fear-mongering, war-mongering politicians and their war-profiteering bed partners. Those truly serving our country are medics, nurses, doctors and mental health professionals who work very very hard to mend as best they

can the psyches and bodies of those savaged and ravaged by war. They are the real war heroes. Not those who kill and destroy. That’s not heroic. It’s barbaric.” Did you ever notice that those who shout the loudest for war have never been in one? I talked for a few minutes with a young father of three who grew up on Winthrop Road in Shaker, but now lives on Scottsdale Boulevard. He graduated from an Army ROTC program in college and trained to be a helicopter pilot at Fort Rucker, Alabama. He flew MEDEVAC Blackhawk helicopters in Iraq, summing up his service as “helping people rather than hurting people.” Before the parade began there was a ceremony in front of the Shaker Heights City Hall, with various people giving speeches. Closing the event was a trumpeter playing “Taps”. As the mournful strains wafted through the air, I teared up and thought to myself: “All those lives wasted.”

# Unlikely, Unusual, Unbreakable Friendship: John Glenn and Ted Williams

By Nancy Peacock

Down through the ages, the military has forged unlikely friendships between fellow combatants who have been responsible for saving each other's lives. Author Adam Lazarus has successfully chronicled one of the more fascinating examples of this phenomenon with his newest book *The Wingmen: The Unlikely, Unusual, Unbreakable Friendship Between John Glenn and Ted Williams* (Citadel Press, August 2023).

In 1942, Williams led the American League in home runs, RBI, and batting average. Despite these impressive stats, Williams had a reputation for quarreling with reporters, being short-tempered with fans, and being lazy in the outfield. Although he had a protected draft status as the sole support of his mother, he enlisted in the Navy at the end of the 1942 season. He became an enthusiastic fighter pilot, and, after the war, Williams was made a Volunteer Reservist, and promoted to the rank of captain.

The Selective Service Extension Act was passed in 1950. Two years later, during the tenth year of Williams' career with the Boston Red Sox, the 32-year-old was abruptly called up to active duty in the Korean War. Nowadays, it is hard to imagine a sports superstar with a wife and child who would be required to return to combat. But patriotism was popular among World War II veterans and some thought Williams' celebrity might make this new war more acceptable to the average American.

Back in the Air Force, he became an exceptional jet pilot and was transferred to an airbase in Korea. At a squadron meeting, Williams saw two officers and thought to himself, "That looks like the right stuff to me ...one of them was John Glenn."

Major John Glenn already had an impressive service record as a career Marine jet pilot with

two Distinguished Flying Crosses. Both Williams and Glenn racked up impressive service records on enemy bombing missions. They became friends and eventually took R&R with a group of fellow officers in Kyoto, Japan. When a group of Japanese kids recognized Williams, he rewarded them by pitching an invisible ball to the surprised batter who swung with all his might. Williams turned and pretended to watch the ball soar out of sight. Fifty years later, Glenn fondly recalled the joy Williams shared with the youngsters.

"Nothing gave him more pleasure than talking in that inimitable booming voice of his about those Marine days in Korea," Glenn said. "And he still remembered those kids in Kyoto."

Lazarus details the harrowing missions Glenn flew with Williams as his wingman, including a mission in which Williams' plane was hit and set ablaze. Glenn pulled alongside Williams' plane, pointed upwards and the two

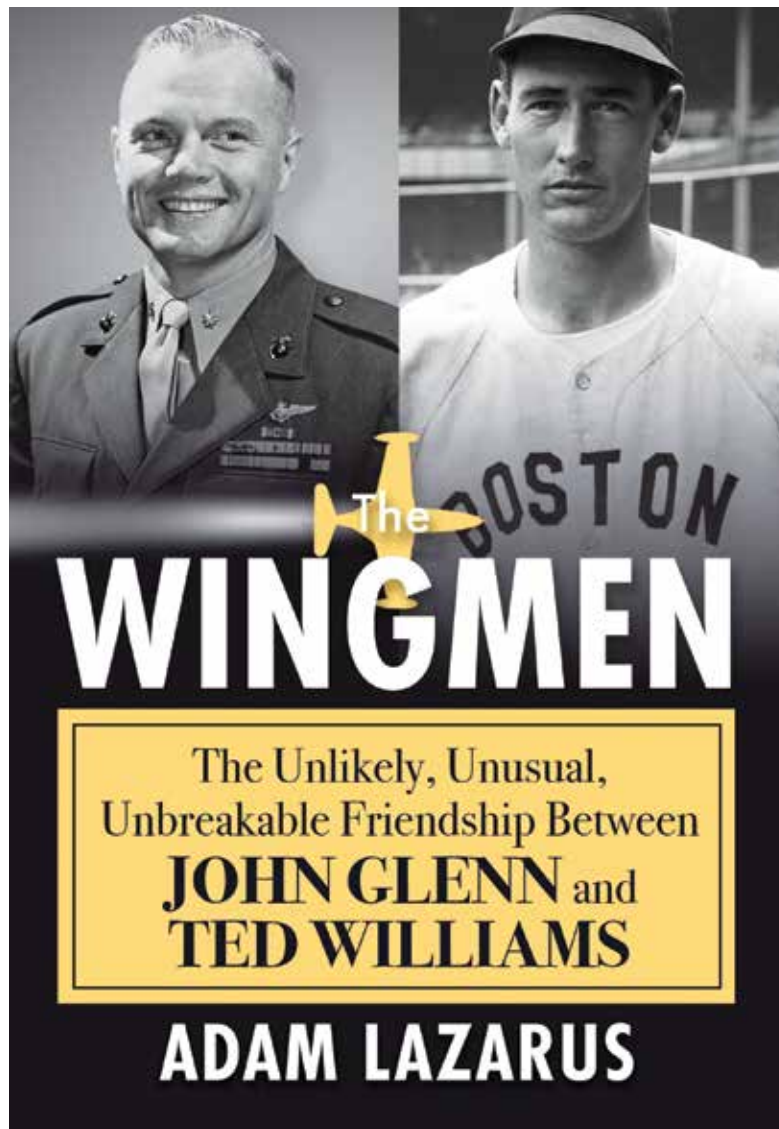
Over the course of the next several decades, both men remained friends while pursuing diametrically opposed career paths. Glenn's celebrity as an astronaut catapulted him to a political career as a long-time U.S. Senator from Ohio. Williams contracted with Sears to create a line of sporting equipment, authored two books on baseball technique, and pursued baseball-related business ventures. Lazarus skillfully takes the reader on each man's journey while noting the many times they reconnected during their lifetimes.

"As different as they were, as much as they disagreed on so many issues, especially politics, Ted Williams and John Glenn enjoyed each other's company," Lazarus wrote.

Forty years after they flew side-by-side in Korea, Lazarus maintained that the two men shared a connection unbroken by time. Glenn's description said it best: "When you fly in combat with somebody, there's a bond that runs so deep you cannot describe it."



Author Adam Lazarus



pilots climbed together to an altitude so high that the flames were extinguished by a lack of oxygen. At a memorial service for Glenn 63 years after this mission, Glenn was remembered by a four-star general: "His wingman in Korea, the great baseball player Ted Williams, once called him 'one of the calmest men I have ever met, no matter how perilous the situation.'"

Following their tours in Korea, Williams returned to the Red Sox lineup in August, 1953. Glenn became a celebrity test pilot, setting a record for transcontinental supersonic flight. Following newsreels of the flight, Glenn appeared on TV shows and guest speaking engagements. Eventually, Glenn auditioned for and was accepted into NASA's Project Mercury space program.

# Tri-C's Crile Archive Center for History Education Continues Lessons of War, Past and Present

By Brian Albrecht

Artifacts of history, horror, honor and hope are displayed in a small corner of Cuyahoga Community College's Western Campus in Parma, waiting to be discovered.

For nearly 30 years, the Crile Archive Center for History Education has been a repository of military history that memorializes the past while educating present and future generations. Its contents trace the contributions and stories of local veterans from World War I, through World War II and the Korean War, Vietnam and recent conflicts in the Middle East. Their experiences are told in photographs, diaries, letters, documents, bygone medical equipment, uniforms, helmets and other military gear.

The center has served as a place where visitors and students can get an appreciation for the triumphs and tragedies of war, according to Matthew Miller, current manager of the Archives and the Veterans Military Connective Services of the west campus. "Every family has a story, every family makes a sacrifice when it comes to war," Miller said. "Somebody in your family is going somewhere and going to fight for this country, or has or will, and we're going to maintain their history."

The future of the Archives may have looked cloudy when layoffs and cutbacks due to the COVID epidemic hit the nation in 2020, and the center was closed for nearly six months. A DD214 Chronicle reader recently wondered if the center still existed, and whether he could make a donation of artifacts as others have in the past to help build the collection.

Yes, and yes, as the center (<https://www.tri-c.edu/crile-archive/>) remains open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. for visitors and students.

The center's namesake is George Washington Crile Sr., a prominent World War I surgeon who co-founded the Cleveland Clinic. His name was later applied to Crile General Hospital in Parma, one of 60 military hospitals created across the country to handle wounded returning home from World War II. The 152-acre complex opened in 1944 and included an 1,800-bed hospital that treated more than 15,000 patients, a 400-bed center for neuropsychiatric patients, a theater for movies and USO shows featuring Hollywood celebrities, a library, and barracks for staff and 300 German POWs.

After the war the facility was used as a Veterans Administration hospital until 1964. Two years later, it became the western campus of Cuyahoga Community College.

James Banks, a former Tri-C history professor who became the first Archives director, described the center's

origin and growth as "evolutionary," the result of several serendipitous events including:

- A visit by a traveling replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall in 1992 that brought vets to the campus and prompted the university to add history classes about World War II and Crile General Hospital.

A student project documented creation of the hospital through "locally stored materials."

- Public and veteran interest was further enhanced with dedication of a Veterans Memorial Garden in 1994 and placement of a POW memorial in the garden four years later.

- Momentum from the courses and memorials resulted in donations of military artifacts and records to the university, starting early formation of the archives in a small closet on campus. Banks retired as history professor in 1998 but became curator of the archives until 2020.

- The center moved to larger quarters in a room off the college library in 2006, an expansion supported by several college administrators and resulting in such joint programs as video documentaries with the History Channel, PBS and the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. The center also offered annual on-campus seminars and ceremonies for special events.

Banks said the best part of his work at the center was the realization that it "was literally preserving not only history in the academic sense, but also a tangible history in the sense of artifacts, diaries and letters that speak to generations of students."

Faculty brought students to the center for a hands-on experience with military history encompassing both veterans and their families. Among those teachers is Thomas Lyon, an adjunct history professor at Tri-C, who said, "Whenever you can teach using primary sources, you try to do that as much as possible. It (the center) is just a great collection of various artifacts and documents. Using primary sources adds an additional instructional



James Banks, former director of the Center, said it offers "a tangible history in the sense of artifacts, diaries and letters that speak to generations of students." (Tri-C photo)

dimension to the course, and the students like handling them; to hold a World War I helmet that a Clevelander wore in 1918 when he was in France, really gives them a connection to the past," he added. "It's really nice, that feeling of studying history right on a historic spot."

Banks similarly noted that the center enabled "not only students but also the community to better understand the historical background of the wars we've been engaged in, and the sacrifice in human terms, the impact on families. They can experience what it was like in the 1940s or 1950s or even during the Vietnam war."

He was heartened by news that the center still existed, and

jokingly noted regarding its future, "if Canton can maintain a vacuum cleaner museum [the Hoover Historical Center], the Cleveland community could find a way to sustain what Crile Hospital meant to the families of veterans of World War II and the Korean War, not to mention those now serving."



Matthew Miller, manager of the Crile Archives and History Education Center at Tri-C's western campus, sits among part of the center's displays of military uniforms and memorabilia. (Photo by Brian Albrecht)

A number of former Crile General Hospital patients and staffers contributed their stories and artifacts to the center. These included Army Air Force Tech Sgt. Jesse "Will" Largent who was injured and captured after his bomber was shot down over southern France. While recuperating in a German naval hospital, being the only American patient, Largent accepted the surrender of a German admiral in charge of the hospital.

Another POW was a civilian employee on Wake Island, who was imprisoned for nearly four years after the Japanese captured the U.S. naval base during World War II. He donated all of his personal documents, prison records, and artifacts including an original flag from Wake Island, Red Cross cigarettes, letters from home, and photos of many of those who did not survive.

The center is now part of the college's veterans services department, and Miller explained that's because "it's a military-focused archive, which is just such a powerful avenue to get with our veterans. "They love it, they donate photos of themselves and other items," he added. "It (the center)



really makes us a military-friendly institution.”

Donations from current veterans are added to a repository that includes written and oral histories, and original war memorabilia described by Miller as “forgotten things that have existed for 40-50 years in someone’s attic. There are some incredible photos, original photos from the Ho-



Captured Japanese artifacts from World War II are part of the display. (Photo by Brian Albrecht)

locaust that I’ve never seen before,” added Miller, an Army National



A collection of medical gear reflects the center’s past history on the site of the Crile General Hospital during World War II. (Photo by Brian Albrecht)

Guard veteran with a Master’s degree in history.

The appeal of the collection spans generations, according to Miller. “A lot of people still find World War II to be interesting. It’s still so relevant to us, too, in seeing fighting now [in Ukraine] in the same tread marks as the Eastern front of World War II, where the Nazi army essentially died 70 years ago.” Donations to the center still come in. “The message is bring it in, but no guns,” Miller said.

He personally enjoys the letters from veterans the most. “There’s no better account of what’s going on. They can get real personal. I’ve written letters home, and you tend to talk a lot in those letters. They capture a good moment in time.” That’s part of the education he’s gotten in running the Archives.

Miller also said he’s learned “that people genuinely enjoy history. They want to touch it and feel it. “And here you can do that.”



A patient is unloaded at Crile General Hospital in Parma during World War II. (Crile Archive Center for History Education)

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# Using Fast Mortgage Approvals to Compete Against Cash Offers in Today's Housing Market

In the competitive landscape of the real estate market, prospective homebuyers often find themselves vying against cash offers, which can be a significant challenge. Cash offers, backed by the immediate availability of funds, can sway sellers and real estate agents to choose them over financed offers. However, homebuyers armed with preapprovals and the ability to facilitate fast loan closings can level the playing field and enhance their chances of securing their dream home.

## The Power of Preapprovals

Obtaining a mortgage preapproval is a critical step in demonstrating financial readiness and positioning oneself as a serious contender in the homebuying arena. A preapproval is a lender's commitment to provide financing up to a specified amount, based on a preliminary review of the buyer's creditworthiness, income, and assets. This reassures sellers that the buyer has the means to follow through on their offer and is less likely to encounter financing-related delays during the closing process.

## Preapprovals also empower homebuyers by offering:

- **Accurate Budgeting:** A preapproval sets a clear budget range, enabling buyers to focus their search on homes within a comfortable qualification range.
- **Quick Decision-Making:** Armed with a preapproval, buyers can swiftly submit offers, showcasing their preparedness to Sellers and potentially outpacing other buyers.
- **Competitiveness:** When competing against cash offers, preapproved buyers make themselves relevant by highlighting the reliability of their funds to close, especially when the preapproval is with a well-respected lender.

## Fast Loan Closings: The Game Changer

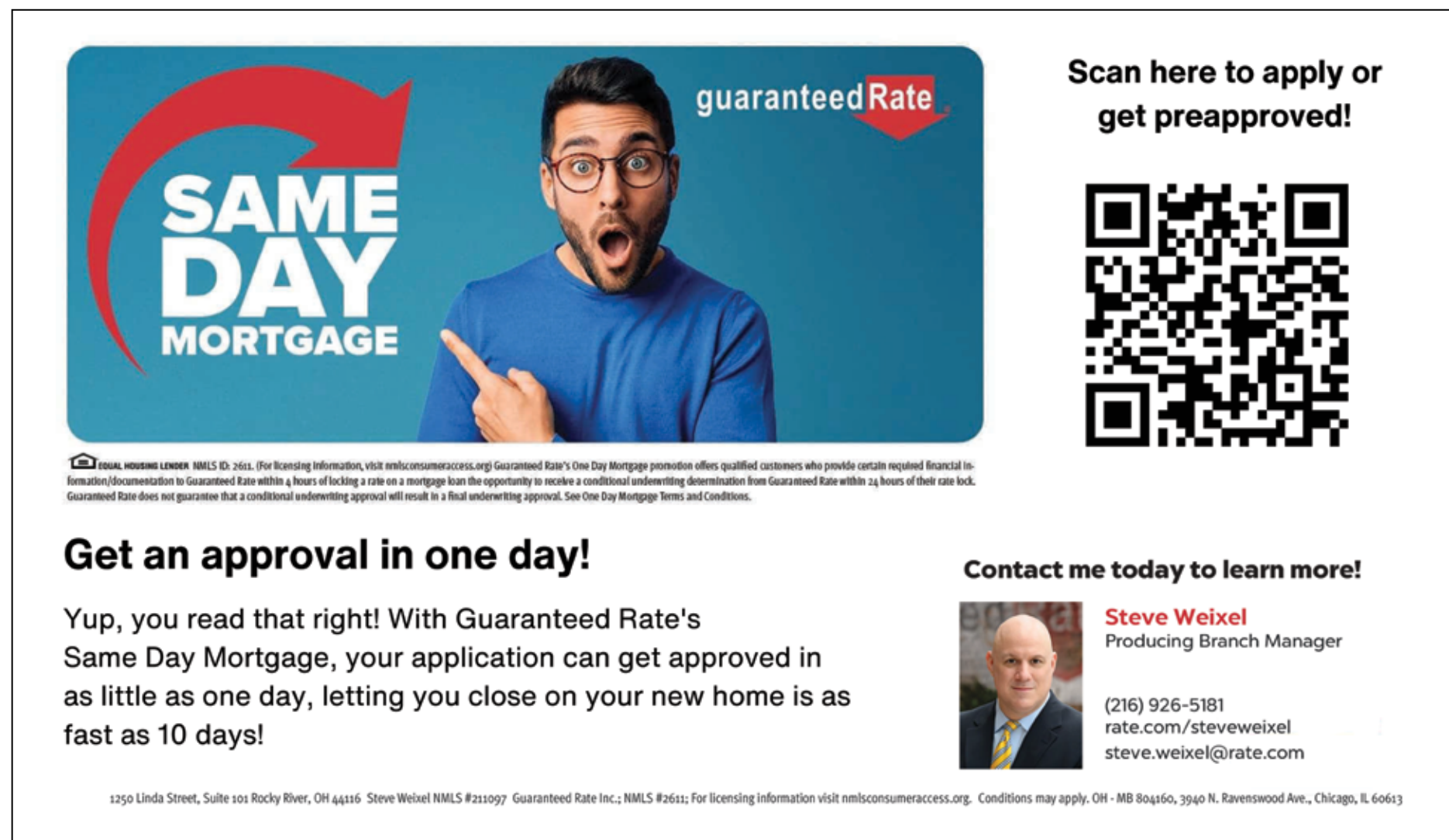
In a market where timing is of the essence, the ability to facilitate a fast loan closing can be a game-changer. While cash offers boast immediate funds, a well-prepared buyer with a fast closing timeline can rival the convenience of an all-cash transaction. Here's how the ability to ensure a fast loan closing benefit homebuyers:

- **Increasing Seller Confidence:** A buyer who can close quickly showcases their commitment to the transaction, alleviating concerns about prolonged uncertainty.
- **Overcoming Other Competitive Offers:** In multiple-offer scenarios, a fast closing can make a financed offer more enticing than even a cash offer with a prolonged closing timeline.
- **Streamlined Documentation:** Buyers who have already undergone rigorous preapproval underwriting can minimize the additional steps needed to close after obtaining an accepted offer.
- **Minimized Delays:** Speedy loan closings reduce the likelihood of encountering last-minute financing hurdles.
- **Reducing Seller Holding Costs:** Sellers benefit from quicker closing times as they can avoid extended carrying costs and transition to their next housing arrangement sooner.


## Collaborative Efforts: Lenders, Buyers, and Real Estate Professionals

Achieving swift loan closings and leveraging preapprovals requires a collaborative effort among lenders, buyers, and real estate professionals. Buyers should seek out reputable lenders with a proven track record of expediting the loan approval and closing processes. Moreover, proactive communication between buyers and real estate agents is crucial to ensure everyone is on the same page regarding timelines and expectations.

*To learn more about how preapprovals and fast closings can be utilized in the Ohio housing market, contact Steve Weixel, Producing Branch Manager at Guaranteed Rate in Rocky River at 216-926-5181. You can also send an email to [steveweixel@rate.com](mailto:steveweixel@rate.com)*




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# Cleveland's Housing Market Sees Resilience Amidst Shifting Interest Rates

Christopher Zurawski, REALTOR

*Cleveland, Ohio – The housing market in Cleveland has remained a steadfast beacon of resilience in the face of fluctuating interest rates. As the broader economic landscape experiences shifts, the city's real estate sector has adapted, demonstrating a unique ability to weather-changing conditions. The interplay between the current housing market dynamics and interest rates has created a dynamic scenario that deserves closer examination.*

## Interest Rate Fluctuations: A Double-Edged Sword

Interest rates have long been a pivotal factor influencing the real estate market. The last few years have witnessed a series of fluctuations in interest rates, contributing to a nuanced environment for both buyers and sellers. The Federal Reserve's cautious approach to adjusting rates has been pivotal in mitigating rapid market changes. Homebuyers and investors alike have had to recalibrate their strategies to make the most of these fluctuations.

## Impact on Homebuyers

For potential homebuyers, the ebb and flow of interest rates have translated into a mix of opportunities and challenges. Lower interest rates typically stimulate demand by making mortgages more affordable. This has led to an influx of first-time buyers entering the market, seeking to capitalize on favorable lending conditions. However, as rates begin to rise, some buyers may experience a sense of urgency to secure a mortgage before affordability diminishes.

## Seller's Market Continues

Cleveland's housing market has largely favored sellers in recent times. The supply-demand imbalance, in conjunction with the low-interest-rate environment, has resulted in a seller's market. Limited housing inventory has fueled competition among buyers, often leading to bidding wars and higher sale prices. This has translated into an advantageous position for sellers, allowing them to hold firm on their asking prices.

## Real Estate Investment Landscape

Investors in Cleveland's housing market have also been attuned to interest rate fluctuations. Lower rates have bolstered rental property investments by making financing more attainable. As rates increase, potential investors might face increased borrowing costs, impacting their return-on-investment calculations. Nevertheless, Cleveland's relatively affordable real estate market continues to attract investors seeking long-term growth potential.

## Looking Ahead

As the housing market in Cleveland navigates the intersection of interest rate fluctuations and broader economic trends, a sense of cautious optimism prevails. Local real estate experts anticipate that while interest rates might undergo periodic adjustments, the city's steady growth and affordability will likely cushion any adverse effects. The ongoing expansion of local industries, coupled with government initiatives to bolster homeownership, adds further stability to the equation.

In conclusion, Cleveland's housing market showcases a resilient spirit as it adapts to the effects of current interest rates. Homebuyers, sellers, and investors are each navigating a dynamic landscape where opportunities and challenges coexist. While the prospect of evolving interest rates remains a focal point, the city's real estate sector remains rooted in its ability to thrive amidst change. As stakeholders monitor economic developments, the balance between supply, demand, and interest rates will continue to shape Cleveland's real estate narrative.

## Assistance

For housing information and assistance contact us at [admin@neohomes4u.com](mailto:admin@neohomes4u.com) or 440.305.6336. We specialize in Veteran housing solutions, including HUD-VASH rental assistance.

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# JVCOCC Luncheon

By Christopher Zurawski

The greatest citizens of each of our nation's generations: those who died defending our country, those who served, those who stand vigilant now and will in the future, their respective families, and the loving citizens who supported them and their loved ones while the defenders were in harm's way and embraced them and their families when they came home and made it their lifetime duty to help them all heal.

The Joint Veterans Council of Cuyahoga County (JVCOCC) was established in 1932 to bring together the energies of the various Veterans organizations and work on common goals: civic, education and commemoration. Today, they continue the longstanding tradition of actively supporting our Veterans, our Service Members, and their families. The Joint Veterans Council of Cuyahoga County is a world class organization that answers this call to preserve a legacy.

To accomplish this, the JVCOCC works with veterans, veteran organizations, communities, and service members to connect veterans, veteran organizations and family members with information and organization that support veterans and their families to collaborate on advocacy initiatives, community events and veteran achievements.

Numerous organizations and veterans gathered on 20 May 2023 to recognize one outstanding veteran. Special guests included GEN (ret.) Carter Ham, Congressman Max Miller, Ohio's Secretary of State Frank LaRose and Cleveland's Fred Szabo. The Master of Ceremonies guiding us throughout the presentations was the "Voice of Cleveland", Larry Morrow.

This year's veteran, COL (ret.) Ronald Schwachenwald has served our community since retiring from Active-Duty service in the Army after 35 years. He served as a President of both AUSA's local chapter and the State, the JVCOCC and Purple Heart Homes. He is an Ohio Veteran Hall of Famer and one of the creators of Cleveland's two Fisher Houses. Most importantly, many of us know him as a mentor, friend and comrade because of his selfless service and unrelenting willingness to help.

"Colonel Ron", as so many affectionately call him, was recognized by so many at the JVCOCC Annual Awards Luncheon. However, he would not accept unless we recognized all veterans for their outstanding service on and off the battlefield. Moreover, we paid a spe-

cial tribute to the Vietnam veterans. A place Ron will never forget due to his multiple tours there as a combat helicopter pilot.

Ron is an accomplished man supported by his wife Lois and his children—Darlene, Dorene, Colene and Ron, Jr. You will often see him at the JVCOCC meetings, helping Purple Heart Homes and the VFW posts in North Olmsted and North Ridgeville.

To see Ron's full story click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-DFtr5u11s>



JVCOCC Awardee - COL (ret.)  
Ronald Schwachenwald



General Ham speaks to guests



Ronald Schwachenwald  
and General Ham



## New Lorain County Veteran Housing Project

### Permanent Supportive Housing for Veterans

Family & Community Services is excited to have begun construction on an extension of its veteran services programming in Lorain County through a new permanent supportive housing project that will bring 16 units of veteran specific housing stock to the area surrounding the Samuel L. Felton Jr. Valor Home. These units will aim to serve

homeless veterans and veteran families who are in need of wrap around services with the goal of maintaining long-term permanent housing. Family & Community Services thanks our community partners for their support with this project and we look forward to working together as construction begins and we move forward to housing veterans!

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

# The Hiroshima Bomb: Hundreds of Americans Died Before Aug. 6, 1945

## The Fateful Voyage of the USS INDIANAPOLIS CA-35

By Barb Smith

For many Americans, the words, Hiroshima and the atom bomb are synonymous with images of a mushroom cloud dropped over Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945, to help end the war in the Pacific. The expanding mushroom cloud of highly enriched uranium left in its wake 15 kilotons of uranium TNT, resulting in a flattened city, with tens of thousands of dead innocent civilians, and radiated bodies left in its aftermath. Few Americans know of the hundreds of American sailors and marines who died in the beforemath, seven days before Paul Tibbets and his crew on the B-29 bomber, Enola Gay, dropped the Hiroshima bomb.

The following, include accounts from survivors, families of survivors, and lost at sea families, as well as friends of the last crew of the USS INDIANAPOLIS.

THE USS INDIANAPOLIS  
Once there was a great U.S. ship,  
That went out to the sea  
There were many young men aboard this vessel  
Many who soon would see  
Some of these men were very scared,  
Some were fearless and brave.  
But many of these men however,  
Would take their emotions to the grave.  
A mission in the Second World War,  
To deliver the first atomic bomb.  
Who would have thought that aboard this ship,  
Something would go wrong.  
That one fateful morning,  
At a little past midnight,  
Torpedoes struck the ship,  
Filling everyone with fright.  
In the shark infested water,  
The men would float and wait.  
As God above them,  
Would soon decide their fate.  
So, here's to all the heroes,  
Who lost their lives at sea.  
And to my grandpa, James O'Donnell,  
Water tender number three.  
By Connor Hofmeister (age 11 in 2003),  
Grandson of Survivor O'Donnell, WT3

The USS Indianapolis delivered the components of the Hiroshima bomb to the island of Tinian on July 26, 1945. Four days later, on July 30, the Indy was torpedoed by the Japanese submarine I-58, halfway to Leyte Gulf. 300 went down with the ship, from the initial blast. Almost six hundred more died, succumbing to their wounds, dehydration, hallucinations, and shark attacks

for five nights and four days. By accident, Navy pilot LTJG Chuck Gwinn from his PV-1 Ventura, spotted bodies bobbing in the ocean below. He reported his findings. He would forever be known as the Angel to the survivors. Navy pilot Lt. Adrian Marks, in his PBY rescued 56. Eight ships would participate in the rescue of Indy's remaining survivors.

**Book:**  
*USS Indianapolis (CA-35) Only 317 Survived*  
*Glenn Morgan, BGM3 to J.J. to J.J. Moran, Radio 1C:*

When would we be rescued. Had an S.O.S. been sent? I relied heavily on J.J.'s opinion. "There's no doubt that an SOS message was sent," J.J. said. He knew this to be true because he had sent it. "Sure you tapped out the message, but how do know it left the antenna? ....."Morgan, I know when I'm sending because I have a meter that says so. When the needle pops over, it's going." It would be four days till the 316 survivors would be rescued. 880 men died in the US Navy's worst tragedy at sea.

2nd Class Petty Officer radioman Max "Smitty" Smith of Portage, Michigan, served part of his time in New York City as a naval radio operator. Smitty was then ordered to the island of Samar in the Philippines. On July 29, 1945, Smitty received and transmitted the last completed radio message from the USS Indianapolis just hours before it sank, giving the ship its berthing position for when it arrived in Leyte Gulf. It was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine on July 30, 1945. Of the 1,196 men on board, only 316 survived. All these years Smitty has carried on his precious heart tremendous guilt, because he was not able to save them. During his retirement, he devoted his life to the memory of the lost crew members of the USS Indianapolis... Smitty helped to establish a permanent memorial to the USS Indianapolis and its crew in the ship's name-sake city; dedicated on July 30, 1995. Smitty donated his 1968 Oldsmobile convertible that was raffled off and raised over \$50,000 to establish the USS Indianapolis National Memorial. It is located downtown on the Central Canal and is open to the public 24/7.

**Terror at Sea: The Tragic Sinking of the USS Indianapolis** (*historynet.com*)  
**THE PHILLIPINE SEA: JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT, MONDAY, JULY 30, 1945**

...The first torpedo slammed into the heavy cruiser USS Indianapolis's starboard bow, killing dozens of men in an instant. The violent explosion ejected Captain Charles B. McVay III, 47, from his bunk in the emergency cabin just aft of the bridge...

...Of the 1,195 men aboard Indianapolis, some 300 had gone down with the ship, including McVay's executive officer, Commander Joseph Flynn, and the ship's dentist, Lieutenant Commander Earl Henry Sr., whose wife had just had a baby boy.



Jane Henry, wife of Indianapolis dentist Earl Henry Sr., cradles son Earl Jr. Little Earl was six weeks old when his father was lost at sea. (Courtesy of Earl O'Dell Henry Jr. [www.earlhenrybirdprints.com](http://www.earlhenrybirdprints.com))

Earl Henry, Jr, showed my husband and me the letter that his father had sent to his mother, expressing his joy at the birth of their son, Earl, Jr., who was six weeks old when his father was killed. While aboard ship, Earl, Sr. had been working on creating a six-foot model of the USS Indianapolis to present to his newborn son. It went down with the ship. Earl Henry Jr. keeps his father's legacy alive by selling online prints of his father's paintings of domestic birds, a talent that he had developed as a little boy, thanks in part, to spending time in the kitchen with his grandmother. 2"x3" trading cards of domestic birds were packaged in boxes of baking soda. Earl collected the cards, sat at the kitchen table and drew the birds as his grandmother baked for the family. Kentucky Cardinal was the last painting the Lt. Cdr. painted while aboard the Indy in March, 1945. between the invasions of Iwo Jima and Okinawa.

Jim Belcher, son of survivor, James Belcher, S1, recently shared with me from his home in Virginia: "Mom and



dad met when he was serving in the Navy in the Korean War, stationed in Sasebo, Japan. He was in Japan from 1950-1957. Met mom in 1952. They married in 1955. I was born in Yokosuka, a dual citizen. I'm the only Japanese-born child of a USS Indianapolis survivor. My two younger brothers were born in the US. Both sets of parents had problems with their romance at first, for obvious reasons. My mother's oldest brother (my Uncle Kazuhiro) served seven years in the Imperial Japanese Army before and during the war. My grandfather Hajime Inoue was at Nagasaki when the second bomb was dropped on August 9, 1945."

**Films:**  
**ABOVE & BEYOND**

I scanned the internet to learn if the USS Indianapolis had been mentioned in any WWII films, especially those specific to the dropping of the Hiroshima bomb. I found, one.

*Above and Beyond* -1952- Robert Taylor & Eleanor Parker (Free on YouTube,) is the story of the secret mission of the Manhattan Project. Towards the end of the film, view three seconds of archival silent aerial footage of the USS Indianapolis cruising under the Golden Gate Bridge in the San Francisco Bay towards the end of the film on its fateful voyage of delivering Little Boy to Tinian. No reference is given of the USS Indianapolis. Viewers not knowing the story may wonder what that ship is doing in the film.

We viewed *Above and Beyond* on DVD with survivor James Jarvis, AMM3 in his home in Uniontown, Ohio. Soon after, we viewed it again, with survivor, Dick Thelen, S2C, in his home in Lansing, Michigan. Both sailors imagined themselves, there on the screen aboard their cruiser, the Indy, leaving the San Francisco Bay for her last time. They were about to become heroes. During our visit, Mr. Thelen's son relayed that after he viewed, *JAWS*, as a teenager in 1975, he ran into the house asking his mother if that story was true about the USS Indianapolis. "Why don't you ask your father. He was aboard the Indianapolis when it was torpedoed."

Documentary, Sarah Vladek, director-USS Indianapolis CA-35:  
*The Legacy is the only survivors'-sanctioned story of the Indy*

**Tolerance and Forgiveness**

The first annual USS Indianapolis Survivors Reunions was held in Indianapolis in 1960. Captain Charles McVay and his wife were welcomed by the survivors who felt him blameless for the Indy's sinking.

**The reunions continue today.**

Commander Mochitsura Hashimoto, the commander who ordered the firing of the six torpedoes which sank the USS Indianapolis attended at least one reunion later in life. He was well-received by survivors, their families and some lost at sea families. In 2014, we met Hashimoto's daughter, his granddaughter and great grandchildren who attend annually.

**Letters of Peace and Reconciliation**

On July 29, 2023, a memorial service was held at the USS Indianapolis Memorial in Indianapolis. Mainichi, Japan, The Mainichi, Japan's Daily newspaper-Aug. 4, 2023:

Last surviving veterans of US cruiser, Japan sub that sank it, exchange inspiring letters.

The following is a letter from Kunshiro Kiyozumi, sole survivor of the I-58 Japanese sub to Harold Bray, sole survivor of the USS Indianapolis.

Dear Mr. Harold Bray,

*Thank you very much for your kind letter. I was very surprised to read that you were the last survivor of the USS Indianapolis CA-35. I am happy to see that you look so young and healthy in the*

*photo. I am now 96 years old. I was 16 years old on July 30, in the I-58 submarine. I was just starting out. Although the war was an unfortunate event, I am moved that we are now living in such a happy and peaceful way, and that we can talk to each other as friends. I will continue making efforts to work for a peaceful world. I would like to send your heart to the spirits of our fallen comrades-in-arms.*

*Thank you very much.*  
*Kunshiro Kiyozumi*

Harold Bray sole survivor, replied: "There are no winners in a war." Let us look forward to working together to build a better, safer world."



Kunshiro Kiyozumi is seen in Imabari, Ehime Prefecture, on June 10, 2023 (Mainichi/Nobuto Matsukura)

On July 7, 2023, in his hometown of Benicia, CA, the dedication of the Harold Bray Bronze Statue and Monument was held, just 15 miles from where in July, 1945, Bray first boarded the Indy, just weeks before her sinking.

To learn more about the USS Indianapolis and her crew, and to read the letter the Earl Henry, Jr. shares with Kiyozumi, I invite you to consider joining Facebook: USS INDIANAPOLIS CA-35 Artifacts, Memorabilia & Collectibles



Harold J. Bray is seen in this photo provided by the association of families of USS Indianapolis crew



Robert Oppenheimer, Col. Paul Tibbets, Hiroshima-Aftermath



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## A Local Hero's Greatest Sacrifice: 1LT George "Bud" Reuter

By Christopher R. Zurawski

Operation Tidal Wave was conducted by 177th US Army Air Corps B-24 bombers based in Libya to conduct an air attack on nine oil refineries surrounding Ploiești, Romania on 1 August 1943, during World War II. It was a strategic bombing mission to deny petroleum-based fuel to Axis forces. Unfortunately, the mission resulted in no significant curtailment of petroleum output.

The 93rd Bombardment Heavy Group was on temporary assignment to North Africa. Bud and half of his fellow crewmates already flew their 25 combat missions. However, the experienced bombardiers and navigators were much needed for this daring assignment, so Bud was recruited for Operation Tidal Wave—regardless of meeting the 25-mission mark. Bud and two crewmates were flying on a new B-24 aircraft, "Hell's Wench".



This operation was one of the costliest for the US Air Corps in the European Theater, with 89 aircraft and 660 crewmen lost. It was proportionally the most costly major Allied air raid of the war, and its date was later referred to as "Black Sunday". Five Medals of Honor, 56 Distinguished Service

Crosses and numerous other medals were awarded for valorous service to the aircrew of this operation. This bombing campaign in Ploiești was one of the bloodiest and most heroic missions of all time.

After the operation, the Romanian government recovered and buried 216 Americans killed in the raid. Of these 216, only 27 crew members were identifiable. The "Unknowns" were buried by Romanian citizens in the Hero Section of the Civilian and Military Cemetery of Bolovan, Ploiești. The American Graves Registration Command (AGRC) conducted a large-scale exhumation of Bolovan Cemetery and recovered dozens of remains that could not be identified but were believed to belong to casualties from 1 August 1943. Eventually, AGRC was unable to identify more than 80 remains from Bolovan Cemetery. They reinterred those they could not identify at Ardennes American



Painting by Roy Grinnell

....Continued on page 20

# PHOENIX 62

## American Hero

By Jacob Arnett

*“Hero? I’m no hero! Just doing my job to the best of ability, and for my brothers.” I could picture Pat saying this to me, upon reading this. I’ve had many conversations about his war, the Vietnam War, with John “Pat” McKeany, and my experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan. Pat and his wife, Rita, would often contact my carpet cleaning company in Las Vegas, Noble Carpet Cleaners, and Pat and I would chat while I cleaned upholstery. I still remember how, when I first arrived to the McKeany residence, I saw his Vietnam War medals on a plaque on the wall. He told me the story of his participation as a helicopter pilot in a battle called Lam Son 719 which, according to author Larry Freeland, was “The battle that decimated America’s helicopter force in Vietnam.” Unfortunately, in April of 2021, Pat passed away due to complications from Agent Orange-associated cancer. I had known about Pat’s progressive cancer since the day we met, and though he sometimes spoke of his mortality, I made the mistake of bringing up how perhaps he could be thankful for the time he did have when others’ve known, him and I both, were taken much too soon. I had expressed agreement of one’s questioning of their own mortality, when I should have felt the inclination to pursue the strategy of hope. This mistake I will not make again. I want to leave you with this heroic man’s own words, as Pat did write down his story for his family, a 20-page document simply titled “Vietnam Experience.” The following was written in his hand, from the copy he gave to me.*

On February 18, 1971 a helicopter was shot down onto a landing zone (LZ) named “Ranger North”, resulting in an American helicopter crew member being stranded. There was an attempt to extract the stranded soldier without success. Two days later an operation was conducted to rescue the stranded soldier by the Phoenix (my company). Captain Nelson, of the Phoenix, successfully landed and rescued the stranded soldier. While taking off from the landing zone, he encountered heavy enemy fire. He recalled, after the operation, that he saw muzzle flashes on the entire hillside he faced (hillside adjacent to Ranger South) while exiting Ranger North. His helicopter burst in flames. Fortunately, he was able to cut his fuel supply and make an emergency landing onto another hilltop landing zone nearby called Ranger South.

Ranger South was surrounded by the enemy, as well. It was amazing that Captain Nelson was able to autorotate the helicopter into the LZ. Cutting the fuel caused an engine failure. He landed on the hilltop LZ which had a clearing large enough for two helicopters. Even though they were still taking fire when they landed, everyone safely exited and moved away from the burning aircraft.

I was flying with Butch Doan, that day, on a separate operation nearby. We heard an emergency radio call from Captain Nelson and immediately flew to the LZ to attempt a rescue. Now there were five Americans on the ground.

Butch and I decided to perform a cork screw approach from about 400’ AGL while circling down to the LZ. We took heavy enemy fire. A small-arms round hit between Butch and I, piercing through the helicopter’s console, causing plastic to fly everywhere. We took other small-arms fire hits as well. When we landed in the LZ, the helicopter that made the emergency landing was engulfed in flames. The M-60 machine gun ammunition that was on board the burning helicopter was “cooking off,” making the tracers look like a fireworks display. The combination of enemy fire and bullets cooking off from the burning helicopter made for an intense experience.

LZ and jumped onto our helicopter. The South Vietnamese soldiers, together with the remaining stranded soldiers, were hunkered down trying to avoid the chaos. The enemy fire was intense. As we took off, we were again hit by enemy small-arms fire. A short way from exiting the LZ, we took a hit from a 50 Caliber round to the helicopter’s mast head. The helicopter started to shake violently. I checked the instruments and everything was in the green. Other than the violent shaking, the helicopter was running fine. Fortunately, we were able to fly to a nearby secure LZ (LZ 30) to be rescued. Another one of our Phoenix aircraft went in to get the remaining crew members. Amazingly, everyone made it out alive and there were no American casualties that day. Unfortunately, Captain Nelson died a few days later, in a separate operation on March 5th. I’m proud to say that I was among 6 pilots awarded with the Silver Star that day. The Silver Star is the third highest award under the Medal of Honor and the Cross of Gallantry. All other crew members received Distinguished Flying crosses for their contribution in the operation. These were the first medals for conspicuous gallantry awarded in the Lamson 719 operation.

On March 5, 1971 Captain Nelson was our company flight lead for a 10 aircraft insertion of troops into

Landing Zone Sophia inside Laos. Our 10 aircraft followed a few other companies that were inserting troops in front of us. The aircraft in charge of the entire operation lost control of the move causing many aircraft to go off the intended course. The result was devastating since aircraft were landing in an area that was not prepped or secure.

The radios were blaring with every aircraft taking fire and some being shot down. I became enraged as it didn’t make sense that aircraft in front of me were off course and flying too slowly. Fortunately, I made a quick decision not to follow all of the other aircraft. I became flight lead and made an announcement on the radio to have the remaining aircraft follow me into the originally intended LZ location. Its location was a short distance north of where the other aircraft



Phoenix pilots. Pat is front and center

We sat on the ground for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, three of the stranded crew members ran across the

....Continued on page 20

**Phoenix 62**

....Continued from page 19

had been landing. It turned out that my decision was one of the best ones I made in Lamson 719. None of the remaining aircraft took any fire.

As I was coming out of the correct landing zone there was chaos and confusion. So many helicopters had been shot down or damaged. I met up with my fellow Phoenix pilots in trail formation as we took off to return to Khe Sanh. While gaining altitude, I noticed Captain Nelson's aircraft to the far left. I saw his aircraft burst into flames and explode. It immediately plummeted to the ground from at least 500' AGL. No ground search could be done at the time since there were so many enemy troops in the area. The bodies of Captain Nelson and his crew were not recovered until 1989.

My last month in Vietnam was pretty quiet except for one event. I wasn't flying this particular day. Word came that

one of our helicopters was shot down. David Soyland was the pilot in command. A few of our helicopter crews were there to help, but the LZ was swarming with enemy and too hot to attempt a rescue. One of the gunships reported that they saw Soyland running away from the enemy as they were firing upon him. To this day they haven't found Soyland's remains. Interestingly, his Dog Tags are on display at a Hanoi museum.

President Nixon awarded the 101st Airborne Division with the Presidential Unit Citation for our extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy during Lamson 719.

Thank you,  
Pat  
Call sign "PHOENIX 62"  
C/158 AVN 101st Airborne Division  
9/20/49-4/26/21



Pat McKeany's medals



Pat Huey

**A Local Hero's Greatest Sacrifice**

....Continued from page 18

Cemetery in Neupré, Belgium and Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Hombourg, Belgium.

1LT George "Bud" J. Reuter was killed in this mission on 1 August 1943, near Ploiesti, Romania . Bud was born on 21 June 1918 in Harrison, Indiana, to John George and Elizabeth Theodocia (Johns) Reuter of Harrison, Indiana.

Bud was attending college when World War II broke out. He had a photographic memory and was an excellent student who wanted to pursue a future

career in engineering. He wanted to fight and protect his country, so he joined the Army Air Corps on 9 December 1941 at Craig Field in Selma, Alabama. His father John worked at NACA (now NASA) as an engineer and Bud wanted to follow in his footsteps. He was never able to.

On 10 January 2023, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified the missing remains of 1LT George J. "Bud" Reuter. During the postwar operations,

the American Graves Registration Command exhumed unknown remains and reintering those that could not be identified. 1LT Reuter is memorialized on the Tablets of

the Missing at the Florence American Cemetery in Impruneta, Italy.

Bud was finally laid to rest near his parents on Saturday, 29 July 2023 at 1300 hours at Sunset Cemetery in North Olmsted, Ohio, with full Military Honors. Dignitaries and the community from all

Medal, and European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign.

The reason we reflect on Bud's service, these medals and this battle is because he and his comrades volunteered to fight tyranny and the harbingers of death. He went to war and continually volunteered so future generations would not have to witness such horrors. These medals are to remind us of his bravery and sacrifice—to ensure his family he truly loved them.





US Army renders military honors to 1LT George Reuter

over honored this World War II Veteran. A special thanks go to Ralph Reynolds of VFW Ohio, who spent countless hours ensuring this Veteran returned home. 1LT Reuter was awarded the Silver Star, Purple Heart, Distinguished Flying Cross, and Air Medal for conspicuous gallantry in action against the enemy while serving with the 9th Air Force in the European Theater of Operations. Additionally, he was awarded the World War II Victory Medal, American Campaign Medal, Army Good Conduct



Ralph Reynolds of VFW Ohio honors the Family.

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# Warrior Beat Drums Up Gratifying Therapy for Vets

By Jerri Donohue

During his stay at the Louis Stokes Cleveland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Trevor Meyer felt his anxiety spike in the evenings. “I can’t speak highly enough about the quality of care at the VA,” Meyer said. “The program was great - until 4:30 when the hospital closed.”

The former Navy Corpsman had toured with a band for two years before enlisting in 1997. He attempted various careers after receiving a medical discharge early in 2001, including operating a music studio and club in a Brooklyn, New York warehouse. After a decade, his alcohol abuse made life unmanageable, however. In 2015, Meyer returned to Ohio to address it.

His music background helped Meyer during his month at the Veterans Affairs Recovery Center (VARC); he spent his evenings thumping on a practice pad he’d brought with him. A resident observed that the activity seemed “relaxing”. Meyer remembered that comment, and the interest shown by other veterans, when his therapist suggested he find a way to use drums in an alcohol-free environment.

“I developed the seed for Warrior Beat there [at the VA],” Meyer said. Within a year of his hospitalization, Meyer and his friend Ben Lehman co-founded Warrior Beat, a 501(c)3 nonprofit that brings drum therapy to veterans dealing with depression, post traumatic stress disorder and other problems. They used grant money to purchase drums and recruited Mike Reyes, a retired Army sergeant and full time musician, to help design a program tailored to veterans with no prior music experience. Then they held weekly group drumming sessions in a rented space in Canton, Meyer’s home town.

Participants of all ages find the physical activity releases endorphins naturally to relieve tension. Meyer said other benefits include deeper respiration and better circulation. When drumming is a tool to manage pain, individuals suffering from arthritic joints sometimes opt for reduced medicine. The science of entrainment factors in these positive results.

“When there’s a dominant rhythm, lesser ones lock into that major one,” Meyer said. “Everything in our bodies vibrates. It [drumming] synchronizes the left and right parts of our brain, usually within five minutes.”

Meyer recommends drumming as a complement to talk therapy because it connects mind, body and spirit. He offered the example of Wilson Hall, a nonresidential treatment facility in Massillon. Counselors there reported that patients who spent 40 minutes drumming expressed themselves more easily in the subsequent therapy session.

The VA in Chillicothe contacted Warrior Beat in 2019 to help implement a drum therapy program. Meyer and Reyes designed an intensive, weeklong course for Veterans Administration personnel. They certified 30 employees to facilitate drum circles, and have since trained more than 200 staff members at VA facilities in Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Alaska and Arkansas - and in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Dayton.

When the COVID pandemic struck, the nonprofit developed Veterans Drum from Home, a virtual VA program, so that existing drum circles could continue. Homebound veterans began to join. Enrollment grew after social distancing ended. Currently veterans in several states access the platform through Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN). The Veterans Administration supplies the drums.

Run in 8-week cycles, the hourlong sessions consist of 15 minutes of instruction, 30 minutes of jamming, and 10 minutes of guided meditation. They conclude with questions and

feedback, and anyone who needs immediate counseling can also speak with VA staff.

A second livestream program offers VA employees 30-minute “de-stressing” sessions. Meyer said some gather as a department “to have fun making noise without a drum,” beating on desks and incorporating the same techniques taught that week in Veterans Drum from Home.

Although Warrior Beat recently closed its location in Canton, it serves a burgeoning number of virtual participants. This fall, Meyer and his work with Warrior Beat will appear on “After Action,” a Public Broadcasting Service series.

“The PBS program will be a huge help in promoting our programs nationally,” Meyer said.

Meanwhile, some veterans, including Meyer, have made therapeutic drumming a routine for years. “I drum almost every day for therapy,” Meyer said.

*To learn about joining a drum therapy program, contact Meyer at [trevor@warriorbeat.org](mailto:trevor@warriorbeat.org)*



*Meyer facilitates a drum circle in Canton (photo courtesy Warrior Beat)*



*Mike drumming*



*Meyer encourages veterans of all ages to try their hand at drumming (Photo courtesy Warrior Beat)*

# Russell Scot Rhoda

By Christopher Zurawski

Russell Scot Rhoda founded Ride With Valor in 2019 with the express purpose of helping veterans in need. The nonprofit organization with headquarters in Strongsville provides completely renovated abandoned housing for veterans experiencing homelessness; they also retrofit homes to meet ADA requirements and furnish wheelchairs and other mobility assistance for aging and disabled veterans.

“The work we do is extremely fulfilling,” says the soft-spoken Rhoda, Ride With Valor’s CEO.

After graduating from Nordon High School, Rhoda enlisted in the U.S. Army, where he loved serving as a medic in active duty from 1987 to 1990 and then in the reserves until 1995. He came from a long line of veterans, including his grandfathers, father and uncle, all who had served in the U.S. Navy. He spoke to a Navy recruiter, but after talking with the Army recruiter, he made up his mind to go Army.

“We talked about being a medic in the Army, about the training at Airborne School and the role that the medic plays in the Army,” he says.

“From that point on, I knew that’s what I wanted to do.” Why chose a medical role? Because a certain civilian in his family had proven herself in that field. “My mother is a nurse,” Rhoda says. “I used to study with her, and learning about the impact it can make on the human body and mind just intrigued me from an early age.”

He did his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, then on to Fort Sam Houston in Texas where he became a medic, and then on to Fort Benning [now Fort Moore] in Georgia for his Army Airborne School training. Assigned to the First Battalion, 54th Infantry, a mechanized unit in Bamberg, Germany, Rhoda worked his way up to lead medic for Bravo Company. He later became the lead medic for Charlie Company of the Sixth Battalion, Sixth Infantry.

All of his training had helped him mature on several levels. “It really was an important step in going from a little guy in high school who wrestled at 127 pounds to, by the time I finished at Airborne School, 160 pounds of muscle,” he recalls. “It was an exciting part of my young adulthood.”

Recognizing Rhoda’s skill at identifying where people needed help and acting on that need, the battalion’s Sgt. Major Julio Meza requested that he serve with a private USEURA platoon Meza created. The platoon traveled throughout Europe and Africa to train with the military of other countries.

In 1996, after leaving the Army, Rhoda chose to serve the City of Macedonia, his hometown, as a firefighter and then trained as a paramedic. Two years later, he joined the Berea Fire Department.

“When I got out and started fire school and paramedic school that was my way to keep doing better, making sure everyone around me was taking care of the folks that needed the help,” Rhoda explains.

All went well until 2010 when, during a medical run, he was loading a patient on a gurney into an ambulance



Russell Scot Rhoda

Photo courtesy: RWV

when the metal legs malfunctioned and collapsed. Rhoda dove to grab the cot, and he slowed the patient’s fall, but it threw him to the ground, severely injuring his back. Not long afterward, he was diagnosed with cancer that eventually caused him to lose vision in his left eye.

His injuries prevented him from doing the job he loved and had committed his life to because they forced the Berea Fire Department to medically retire him in 2011, roughly eight years shy of official retirement age. Rhoda struggled to find a job that offered the internal motivation that had always driven and satisfied him. Finally, he took a job at Home Depot and was fairly quickly promoted to management.

That’s when he learned about the charitable programs Home Depot funded to help veterans. He had already been researching VA benefits and other programs to help his father and uncle who were living with him. He also did some mobility remodeling around the house to keep them safe as they aged. While working at Home Depot one day, he met a U.S. Army veteran and his wife who were facing serious challenges.

While serving his second tour in Afghanistan, the man had been severely injured by a roadside bomb that killed several others in his vehicle. His wife and young children stayed with him as he recovered at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and a pipe broke in their Olmsted Falls home, flooding it and causing black mold to grow throughout the house.

“I got a corporate grant from the Home Depot in 2016 and partnered with the VFW in Olmsted Falls and North Olmsted, partnered with other veteran organizations, and we had a ton of volunteers,” Rhoda informs. “I was able to get him \$25,000 in building materials alone. We had electrical contractors that I had met through Home Depot that rewired the whole house for him, same with plumbers, just folks I had met doing what I was doing there, and completely gutted the house and rebuilt it from the frame up and that’s what started it all.”

Learning of what Rhoda and his new and growing network of partners and volunteers had done to help that veteran family recover their home and lives, other veterans began to contact Rhoda. By 2018, he knew he needed to provide those contributing materials with at least a tax write-off, and Rhoda decided to start a charitable organization in the midst of a career serving his country and his community but while now dealing with a couple of unexpected disabilities of his own.

On New Year’s Eve, 2018, he began assembling and filing the paperwork to launch a 501c3 with the name Ride With Valor. The organization became official in March, 2019. Rhoda left Home Depot to run the organization full time but remains partners with his former employees who fully support his organization to assist veterans. Around that time, Rhoda was contacted by a homeowner who wanted to donate a house to him because criminals had been broken into it and stolen all of the drywall, copper, plumbing and electrical materials, and he didn’t want to pay to refurbish it.

Less than a week later, a case manager at the Wade Park VA called and told him about a female veteran who was homeless and was squatting in an abandoned house in Cleveland a block away from where her children go to school. Was there any way he could help them?

“Well, as a matter of fact, we had this home offered to us,” Rhoda was pleased to respond. “We have our network. We have our connections with family services who can place them in temporary housing in a shelter, and we can create a new home for them because it’s in the neighborhood where her girls go to school.” The project helped Ride With Valor launch its Hearth and Home for Veterans initiative. Rhoda and his team identify homes in the community that have been neglected and abandoned, completely remodel them, furnish them, and landscape the property.

*Continued on page 24..*

**Russell Scot Rhoda**

....Continued from page 23

“We move our veterans in need into them and give them a fresh start with the network we set up for them to make sure that they stay on track,” Rhoda says.

The organization’s Aging in Place program helps aging and disabled veterans by sending a team of contractors into their homes to make ADA modifications to ensure their safety. One example is replacing a bathtub with a walk-in shower to eliminate the slip-and-fall hazard. They also do emergency repairs for veterans living on a fixed income from disability or social security, such as installing a new furnace when theirs goes out in the middle of winter, or installing air conditioning.

“Our central air died, and since my husband’s stroke, he has trouble maintaining his temperature, so he tends to get overheated very quickly, which causes him to have seizures,” relates Kathy Bowman of her husband Michael, who served as a sergeant in the Army from 1998 to 2003 and then in the reserves from 2005-2009.

“Russell is working with us to fix our AC.” Bowman adds that Ride With Valor also found an electric wheelchair for them when the VA denied him so that Michael, 44, could regain some independence after his stroke.

Another program, Victory Garden, helps veterans struggling with food insecurity. Rhoda paid for and cleared two-thirds of the six-acre property surrounding his home in Strongsville, which doubles as Ride With Valor’s office. He used the land to plant various apple, plum and peach trees.

“Our goal is to create a sustainable source of food for our veterans and a place for them to get outdoors,” he says, adding that the City of Cleveland donated a parcel of land half a block away from the Volunteers of Ameri-

ca veterans’ shelter, where they also planted various fruit trees. “Once the trees are mature and producing fruit, it will provide an area for our veterans to come, pick fruit, spend time outdoors and always have a place to go and be together and have that source of sustainable food.”

The fourth program, Wings of Valor, assists veterans with mobility issues. They take secondhand electric wheelchairs, clean them up, put new batteries in them and donate them to veterans who don’t qualify due to lack of insurance. They also occasionally receive vehicles and find a veteran in need. They also operate a wheelchair-accessible van that is now helping its second veteran.

In May, 2022, Ride With Valor temporarily loaned a wheelchair-accessible van to Sara Blair’s late father, Donald J. Shaver Sr., who had served as a sergeant in the Army from 1970 to 1972 and had become a bilateral amputee at that point. That enabled him to attend life-sustaining medical appointments.

I wholeheartedly believe that my father’s life was prolonged because of this donation,” she says. “Due to “I wholeheartedly believe that my father’s life was prolonged because of this donation,” she says. “Due to Russell’s unwavering dedication to create community ties that then become resources for the veterans Ride With Valor serves, my father was able to secure a grant through Home Depot to make safety repairs to his deck at home that also allowed him freedom and serenity in the last few months of his life.”

Two years ago, Rhoda married his wife, Carrie, and he had also enlisted as a volunteer with the Red Cross to remain in the emergency services field. Today, Rhoda keeps Ride With Valor growing and flourishing through corporate grants, private donations and community fundraising events, and he maintains partnerships with Home Depot, Owens Corning and local businesses and contractors who donate labor as much as possible.



*The Home Depot presented me the jacket for my dedication to our Veterans and to our continued partnership.*



*My wife Carrie, and me at the IX Center’s Home & Garden Show introducing Veterans To Ride With Valor. Photo courtesy: RWV*

The organization also doesn’t immediately turn over ownership to the veterans they furnish with homes. Instead, they help them find jobs so that they can pay rent, and those moneys provide income that goes back into the organization’s coffers. They then offer the veterans the option to purchase the home at up to 50% of the market value. Thus far, the four veterans his organization has provided subsidized housing for are progressing nicely.

“Our first veteran, the young woman with two daughters, is now collecting 100% disability and is working with a credit counselor to purchase the house,” Rhoda says. “She understands if she buys the house, it has automatic equity in it. Instead of paying rent for this amount, it will drop her payments to this amount, and it’s going to be her house forever. That is such an amazing incentive and puts a strong drive into the veteran, and it’s all working really well.”

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# Green Berets Always Training

By Christopher Zurawski

That sounds like an exciting topic! Writing an article about your special forces association chapter's tactical application shooting competition can be a great way to highlight the skills and dedication of the participants. To make your article engaging and informative, consider including the following elements:

## Introduction:

Start the article with a brief overview of your special forces association and its chapter 35. Explain the purpose and goals of the tactical application shooting competition, emphasizing the importance of honing shooting skills in real-life scenarios.

## History of the Competition:

Provide some background on the competition. Discuss when and why it was initiated, how it has evolved over the years, and its significance within the special forces community.

## Format and Rules:

Describe the format of the shooting competition, including the types of scenarios participants are faced with and the rules they must adhere to. Mention any safety measures in place to ensure a controlled environment.

## Skill Demonstrations:

Highlight the various shooting skills and techniques that participants must showcase during the competition. These may include accuracy, speed, shooting on the move, shooting from various positions, and engaging multiple targets.

## Real-Life Applications:

Explain how the shooting competition translates into real-life scenarios encountered by special forces operatives. Discuss how the skills tested in the competition are essential for their missions and operations.

## Participants and Teams:

Introduce some of the participating individuals and teams, sharing their backgrounds, experiences, and motivations for taking part in the competition. Include quotes or testimonials from participants to provide a personal touch to the article.

## Training and Preparation:

Discuss the training and preparation that participants undergo leading up to the competition. Highlight the dedication and commitment required to excel in such a challenging event.

## Event Day:

Take your readers through the event day, describing the atmosphere, excitement, and adrenaline that permeate the competition. Mention any special guest appearances, sponsors, or distinguished attendees.

## Winners and Awards:

Announce the winners of the tactical application shooting competition and detail the awards they receive. Recognize outstanding performances and highlight any remarkable achievements during the event.

## Community Impact:

Discuss the impact of the competition on the special forces association chapter and the broader community. Explain how events like these promote camaraderie, skill development, and public awareness about the crucial role of special forces.

## Conclusion:

Summarize the article, emphasizing the value of the tactical application shooting competition for the special forces community and how it reinforces the mission of the association. Encourage readers to learn more about the chapter and its activities.

Remember to conduct interviews with organizers, participants, and attendees to gather first-hand insights and quotes. Additionally, including high-quality images or videos from the event can enhance the reader's experience and make the article more engaging. Good luck with your writing!



## Green Berets are Always Training ...

As Ed emerged from the wood line, he was covered in dirt and sweat but he moved with a careful and

calculated grace, every step measured to avoid unnecessary haste. His face was intense and focused, revealing a soldier hardened by countless hours of training and experience.

Carrying a state-of-the-art assault rifle with a well-worn grip, he held it close to his body, ready to react at a moment's notice. Ammunition pouches adorned their tactical vest, showcasing the weight of the competition. A pistol was strapped to his thigh, a symbol of proficiency in close-quarters combat.

Ed's body language spoke of readiness and alertness. He was tense yet prepared to respond to the targets as they appeared. Despite the heavy gear and the burden he carried, he moved quickly, expertly maneuvering with the heavy ammo cans and sandbags used to simulate the weight of sensitive items and fellow Soldiers.

Sweat dripped down his forehead, glistening in the sunlight as he emerged at the firing line. With his heart rate elevated, he scanned the area, assessing the situation and analyzing the targets. His eyes darted from tree to tree, searching for the targets. Ed began engaging the targets until all were eliminated.

Each year the Green Berets of Special Forces Association Chapter XXXV bands together to conduct the Tactical Application Shoot (TAS). This is an annual fundraiser like no other. It is a grueling all-day event designed to test the competitor's intestinal fortitude. This shooting competition combines cross-fit, marksmanship, and resilience. Moreover, this is a way to train others, build their confidence and support the community.

This all-day competition consisted of six battles each competitor had to compete in. Every battle consisted of physical challenges to raise the heart rate and stress the shooter. The toughest battle was the "spinner", a sophisticated steel target requiring a balance of timing and precision. This target was set up as a sniper engagement with the rifle after traversing several tank traps with sandbags and a casualty. This single battle challenged every shooter to the point of breaking. Only the steadiest of shooters were successful during this battle.

The other battles included engaging targets from behind a vtc board at angles, moving targets, transition stations and traversing across a rope bridge. No matter the engagement scenario, the shooter was graded on speed, accuracy and attention to detail.

There were four categories and each were filled with the shooters of all ranks. The elites and Masters included Green Berets and other operators. The intermediates were filled with young shooters who far exceeded the physical standards and

expectations on the range. Even more involved were our novices. This is where the team was heavily involved in training competitors new to the sport and less familiar with competition shooting. We spent more time coaching and assisting these shooters.

The competitors fought bravely and stood strong. Everyone finished and walked away proud. They spent the Saturday traversing undulating terrain, carrying heavy weights over defiant obstacles. They fired about 250 rounds from the pistol and the rifle at targets both stationary and moving ranging from 10 meters to 250 meters.

SFA Chapter XXXV will conduct a similar event next year which will include different shooting events with less physical activities in the morning and more challenging and physical events in the afternoon. This allows the event to be more inclusive and social with our community. There will also be a cookout and a campout at the conclusion of the festivities. Stay tuned.

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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.

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