



SPRING 2022

VBCMagazine

Stories Unite Us | Since 2008

**MY AMERICAN
DREAM BEGAN IN
DA NANG, 1972**

MY "LOVE BEAD" COURT MARTIAL

THE COLD WAR AT 75

**TRUTH ABOUT WAR FROM
A LONELY MARINE, 1953**

**ORANGE ALERT ON
THE PINETREE LINE**

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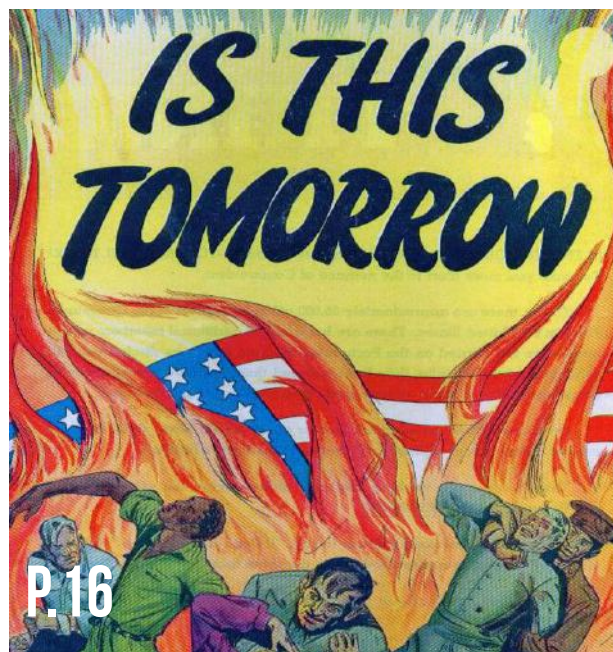
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Cover: Kim Mitchell as a baby with her adoptive father, U.S. Air Force Technical Sergeant James Mitchell, in Danang, South Vietnam, in 1972. (Courtesy Kim Mitchell)

VBC Magazine is published quarterly by The Veterans Breakfast Club, a 501(c)(3) non-profit that harnesses the power of storytelling in order to connect, educate, heal, and inspire.

200 Magnolia Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15228 (412) 623-9029 veterans-breakfastclub.org For more information, contact betty@veterans-breakfastclub.org

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Last August, a sense of well-being washed over me as I stood in the crowd at our first breakfast in the Pittsburgh region since 2019. I felt like I was home again, among the people and the stories I love. Getting back to in-person programs was a highlight of 2021, and we look forward to starting up those breakfasts again, both here in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. And our online events continue to bring a broad diversity of people together to share remarkable stories of service. Just this month, General Doug Satterfield told us about building bases in Iraq. Dianne Cameron talked about her tumultuous 1967 tour of Vietnam with the rock band "The Pretty Kittens." USS *Pueblo* veterans John Mitchell and Rick Rogala recalled their 11 months as POWs in North Korea. And Pinchas Cutter bore witness to life and death in the Warsaw Ghetto and Buchenwald Concentration Camp. You can find them all archived on our YouTube channel and Facebook page. And as always, we welcome your suggestions for VBC *Happy Hour* and VBC *Coffee Hour* guests, *The Scuttlebutt* podcast subjects, VBC *Magazine* articles, and VBC *Bulletin* email topics. Stay in touch. And remember: non-veterans are always welcome. They, too, will improve their well-being in fellowship with our veterans.



Todd

Todd DePastino
Executive Director
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UPCOMING EVENTS

All in-person events begin at 8:30am unless otherwise noted and include breakfast for \$12pp. RSVP to betty@veteransbreakfastclub.org or 412-623-9029.



TUESDAY, MARCH 29 VIETNAM VETERANS DAY EVENT: Join us live in Pittsburgh or online for an evening with Kim Mitchell (see p. 6) who will pay tribute to Vietnam Veterans. Location TBD. Event details to come at veteransbreakfastclub.org/events

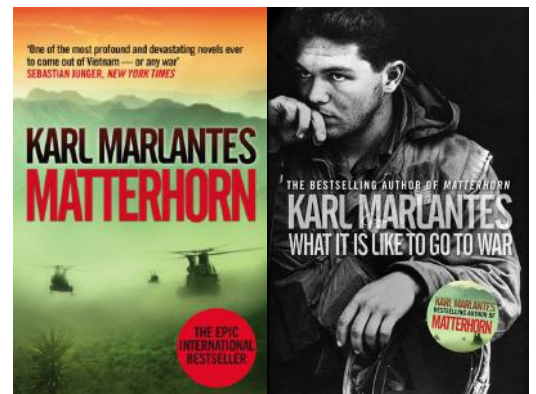
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6: Seven Oaks Country Club (132 Lisbon Rd, Beaver, 15009)

TUESDAY, APRIL 19: Christ United Methodist Church (44 Highland Rd, Bethel Park 15102)

FRIDAY, MAY 6: Comfort Inn & Conference Center (699 Rodi Rd, Penn Hills, PA 15235)

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25: Memorial Park Presbyterian Church (8800 Peebles Rd, Allison Park 15101)

THURSDAY, JUNE 9 AT 7:00PM ET Special VBC Event ONLINE: An Evening with Karl Marlantes. Marine veteran Karl Marlantes is one of the greatest war writers in history. In 1967, Marlantes gave up a Rhodes Scholarship to join the Marine Corps and fight in Vietnam. He recounts his experiences in two masterful books, *Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War*, and memoir, *What It is Like to Go To War*. Join us to talk with Karl about his service and writing.



TUESDAY, JUNE 14 FLAG DAY EVENT: McKeesport Regional History and Heritage Center (1832 Arboretum Dr, McKeesport, PA 15132)

TUESDAY, JUNE 21: Christ United Methodist Church (44 Highland Rd, Bethel Park 15102)

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29: Christ Church at Grove Farm (249 Duff Rd, Sewickley, PA 15143)



ONLINE PROGRAMS

Check out upcoming guests and topics at veteransbreakfastclub.org/events



VBC HAPPY HOUR Monday nights at 7pm ET on Zoom; simulcasted to Facebook and YouTube. BYOB(verage). Veterans stories, conversations, special topics, and guests.



GREATEST GENERATION LIVE

WWII ROUNDTABLE One Tuesday a month at 7pm ET; simulcasted to Facebook and YouTube. Conversations about all things WWII, including the stories of WWII veterans.



A VETERAN'S STORY WITH PETE MECCA

One Thursday a month at 7pm Eastern on Zoom; simulcasted to Facebook and YouTube. In-depth interviews with remarkable veterans of all eras, branches, and backgrounds.



VBC COFFEE HOUR

Wednesdays at 9am ET on Zoom; simulcasted to Facebook and YouTube. Just like our usual veterans storytelling breakfasts, but made virtual! BYOB(reakfast)!



Hosted by Shaun Hall, a non-veteran learning about military culture from people who've lived it. Every week, veterans of different backgrounds join Shaun to talk about why they joined, where they served, and what they think about the military and their service now. Along the way, they discuss PTSD, the VA, military operations past and present, and take occasional forays into pop culture. Nothing is off limits, and no topic is too obscure.

You can download **The Scuttlebutt** wherever you get your podcasts or check us out on YouTube. It's easy to find us simply by visiting VBC's website:

www.veteransbreakfastclub.org/scuttlebutt. Be sure to leave us a review or comment, and like, share, subscribe. You can contact Shaun at shaun@veteransbreakfastclub.org.

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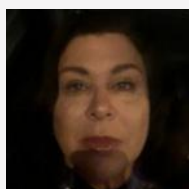
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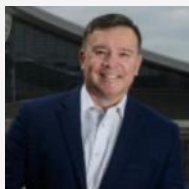
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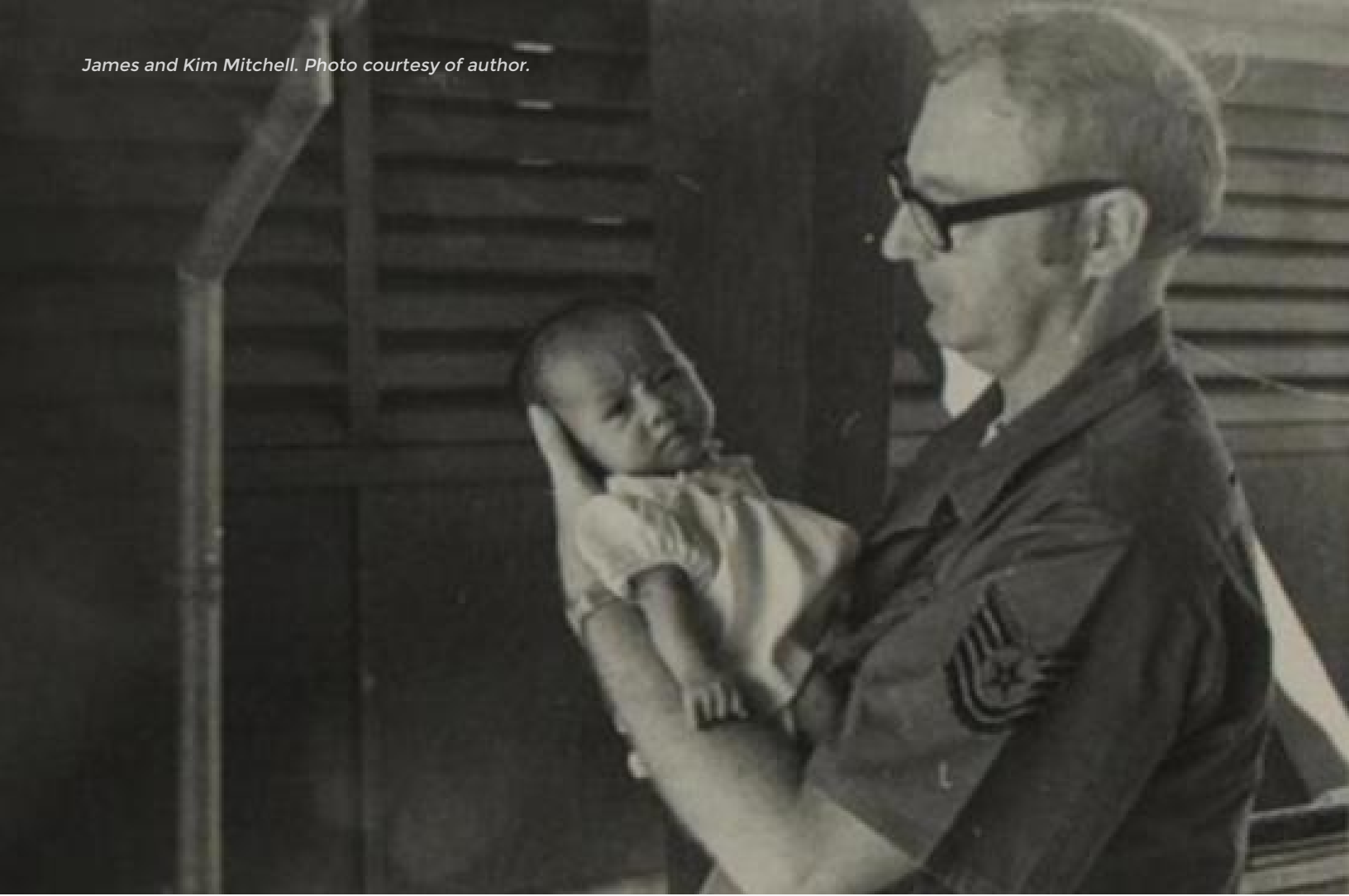


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James and Kim Mitchell. Photo courtesy of author.



FEATURE

MY AMERICAN DREAM BEGAN IN DA NANG, 1972

by Kim Mitchell

No one who joined our VBC Happy Hour with Kim Mitchell and Bao Tran in 2020 will ever forget their gripping story of how a South Vietnamese Marine rescued an orphaned baby from streets of Quang Tri City during the Easter Offensive of 1972 (you can view it here: https://youtu.be/FgcU_tjrSpY). Today, that baby, Kim Mitchell, is a Navy veteran and advocate for service members, veterans and military families. A graduate of the US Naval Academy, Kim is currently the Senior Vice President for Military and Government Affairs at National University System. She serves as Advisor and Board Member for several organizations, including the Kaplan Public Service Foundation, Infinite Hero Foundation, the Woody Williams Foundation, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, and the Iraq Afghanistan Veterans of America. We're grateful to her for allowing us to share some of her story below.

Every once in a while, I'm reminded that I'm an immigrant.

In my memory, I've always been Kim Mitchell, the kid who grew up on a farm in Northern Wisconsin. So, it surprised me when I heard that President George W. Bush wanted to paint my portrait and include my story in his book, *Out of Many, One: Portraits of America's Immigrants*.

For a long time, I didn't really know my story. I knew I'd been adopted by my father, Air Force TSgt James Mitchell, in 1972. My dad was stationed in Da Nang as a chaplain's assistant. One of his regular stops was the nearby Sacred Heart Orphanage, where he brought supplies, gifts, and clothes to the nuns.

One day, the nuns placed me in his arms. I was just one of many crying babies. They said I'd been found in a ditch and brought to the orphanage, where I'd been named Tran Thi Ngoc Bich, "Precious Pearl" in English.

My father and his wife, my mother Lucy, were childless, and were planning on adopting. For some reason on that day, I got lucky. My dad decided to adopt me and bring me home with him. He named me Kimberly.

My earliest memories are of Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, New Mexico, and Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Then, in 1979, my father retired from the Air Force, and we settled in my mother's home town of Solon Springs, Wisconsin.

By then, I was a naturalized citizen, an all-American small town girl who blended in with the other kids in my school. Church youth group, school activities, 4-H—that was me. I was one of the only Asians in the area, and I knew that marked me as different somehow. But so did my fastidious personality. Even in kindergarten, I wanted things to be perfect. I wanted square corners on my bed. I wanted my clothes to be folded. As a teenager, I ironed my blue jeans.

And I was a serious student with college ambitions. My father thought the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs would be a good fit. And I did too.

That is, until I learned about the Naval Academy. A retired Admiral I'd met at a youth conference mailed me brochures and an academic catalog. The pictures were all in color. Smiling students, sailboats cruising under radiant skies. And women! There were women in the photos. It looked like a place where I belonged.

So, this small-town girl a thousand miles from the ocean fell in love with the sea and became a Midshipman.

* * *

I joined the Navy and saw the world, first as a Surface Warfare Officer aboard ship, then in shore commands, then in various staff positions at the Pentagon. During my final years, I was fortunate to be chosen a White

House Military Social Aide, where I participated in hundreds of White House events. I also worked for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen as the Deputy Director of the Office of Warrior and Family Support. For me, it was the fulfillment of the American Dream.

Think about it. I was a 5'2" Vietnamese orphan, naturalized citizen, representing the United States in international discussions. In 2001, I participated in multilateral talks about short and intermediate range nuclear missile treaties. The Russians looked at me like, "Who are you?"

"I'm Lieutenant Mitchell," I said. "I represent the Joint Staff."

I had goals and worked hard toward them. I also had support for them, from the Navy and from my family. They made the Dream possible. My background didn't matter.

But, of course, it mattered to me.

Like most adopted kids, I wondered about my origins. Who were my parents? Why had they abandoned me?

In 2011, I took a brief trip with friends to Vietnam, where I thought I might somehow connect to my past.

Without telling me, my friends contacted the Sacred Heart Orphanage, which was still operating, and arranged for a visit.

There, I met Sister Mary Tran, who had been at the orphanage back in 1972. They had all the old records and were able to find my name in the books: Tran Thi Ngoc Bich. I also had a number. I was Baby 899.

Running my finger on that name was like reaching back through the mist of time and touching something vital. Knowing your past is one thing. Feeling it is quite another.

A day or two later, we visited the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi, which issued a press release about our discovery. A few news outlets picked up the story.

One of them was *Nguoi Dep Magazine*, a small Vietnamese-language monthly published in New Jersey. The little article they ran about me would change my life.

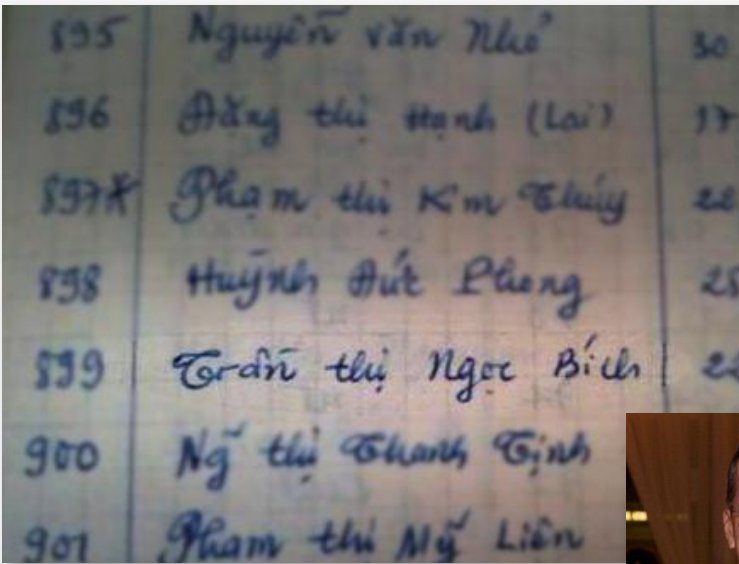
In October 2012, I received an email from a man living in Albuquerque. He claimed to be the person who brought me as a crying infant to the Sacred Heart Orphanage. He said he'd read the story in *Nguoi Dep Magazine* and recognized my unusual Vietnamese name, Precious Pearl. I didn't believe a word he said. I thought he was either delusional or a scam artist.

It took many emails and phone calls to change my mind. On March 29, 2013—Vietnam Veterans Day -- I met Bao Tran and learned his story . . . and some missing pieces of mine.

Bao told me I wasn't abandoned. I was *rescued*. And Bao was just one of the rescuers.



Courtesy George W. Bush
Presidential Center



Kim Mitchell's Vietnamese name. Photo courtesy of author.

It was May 1, 1972. The Easter Offensive was raging. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) had crossed the DMZ with 300,000 soldiers and struck the South hard. Quang Tri City had just fallen, and there were enormous civilian casualties. The NVA then set its sights on Hue City to the south.

Bao was a 22-year-old South Vietnamese Marine, part of a demolition crew assigned to blow up the My Chanh Bridge along the main highway between Quang Tri and Hue to slow the NVA's advance.

The last of Quang Tri's refugees streamed across the bridge.

As Bao prepared the charges, he looked up and saw one last person staggering across. Bao ran out to bring him over before the bridge blew up.

"I can't go on any longer," the exhausted man said to Bao. Then, he gently handed over a conical hat.

"Please bring her to safety," the man said. "She is desperately hungry."

Bao peered into the hat and saw a baby curled at the bottom.

The man told Bao he'd found the baby on the roadside, clutching her dead mother, trying to nurse.

Bao took the hat and returned to his crew. He asked his commander what he should do with the baby.

"You take care of her," the commander ordered.

Bao did just that. He carried me in the hat to Da Nang, over 80 miles. He walked much of the way. When I cried, he dipped his finger in his Thermos and gave me water.

Arriving at the Sacred Heart Orphanage, he handed me over to Sister Angela Nguyen.

"You must give her something of yourself," Sister Angela said. "What would you like to name her?"

Bao gave me his surname, Tran, and then added "Ngoc Bich." Precious Pearl.

* * *

Bao never forgot me and always considered himself, in some sense, as my surrogate father. He calls me *con gai*, daughter, and his own daughter Cindy calls me "Sis." It's very Vietnamese, who place the highest of value upon family. And families are broadly defined.

Bao has his own harrowing story of survival, of course. When Saigon fell in 1975, Bao was sent to a Communist "re-education camp," where he was tortured and nearly starved. He was eventually released and came to the US in 1994 as part of a U.S. State Department effort to resettle former South Vietnamese soldiers.

I'm in awe of Bao, his compassion and

his selflessness, which are beyond comprehension.

But I also think that Bao stands for so many others, veterans, who have given of themselves in extraordinary ways. I saw it in the Navy, which instills an ethic of service, a devotion to mission, and a commitment to something greater than yourself. Military service makes you strong, but if you learn the right lessons, you also grow in kindness.

Now that I'm out of the Navy, I've dedicated myself to serving veterans. And Vietnam veterans hold a special place in my heart. I owe everything to them. I've lived the American Dream because of the sacrifices they made in Vietnam. For that, they will always have my undying gratitude.



Mullen and Kim Mitchell. Photo courtesy of author.



Kim and Bao Tran with daughter Emily on VBC Happy Hour, June 2020.



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Animal Friends for Veterans is funded by the **Major Ben Follansbee Memorial Fund**, named for a highly decorated Airborne Ranger, who tragically took his own life in 2012.

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THANK YOU TO TH

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WHAT DO I GET AS A VBC MEMBER?

VBC members are entitled to access to members-only events (such as our great VBC Jeopardy tournament). Members also receive a 10% discount on VBC trips & travel opportunities, access to members-only merch, and a welcome letter & gift.

HOW DO I BECOME A VBC MEMBER?

Sign up for a VBC Membership at our website, veteransbreakfastclub.org/membership. We'll direct you to our partner platform, JoinIt, where we will sign you up and securely process your payment. Or, send us a check in the mail made out to "Veterans Breakfast Club" to 200 Magnolia Pl, Pittsburgh, PA, 15228. Please include "VBC Membership" in the memo line.

CAN I STILL ATTEND VBC EVENTS WITHOUT BEING A MEMBER?

Absolutely! Our events, both in-person and virtual, are open to everyone, whether you're a veteran or not. We hold some special events, approximately one per month, that will be open to members only.

HOW MUCH DOES VBC MEMBERSHIP COST?

A VBC Membership is \$36/year, paid annually. All annual donations will count toward membership.

CAN ANYONE BE A VBC MEMBER?

Yes, VBC Memberships are open to everyone, not just veterans!

CAN I GIFT A VETERAN WITH A VBC MEMBERSHIP?

Yes! Head to veteransbreakfastclub.org/membership and click "Gift a VBC Membership."

Have a question not answered here? Email betty@veteransbreakfastclub.org or head to veteransbreakfastclub.org/membership to learn more.

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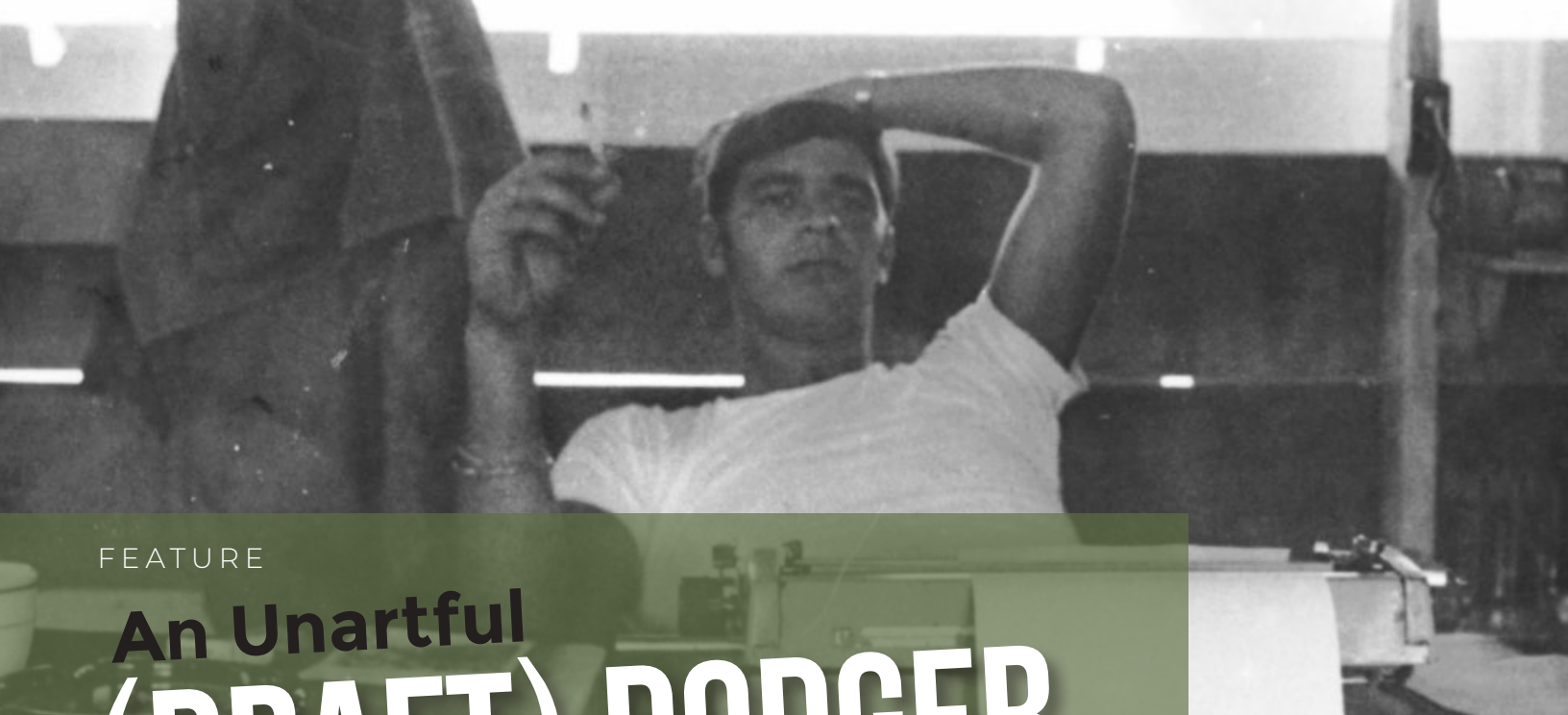
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FEATURE

An Unartful (DRAFT) DODGER

by Fred Abatemarco

Fred Abatemarco is an award-winning magazine editor and writer, whose career culminated as Editor-in-Chief and President of Popular Science Magazine. Long before that, Fred spent 1970-1971 as an Army Correspondent-71Q20 Information Specialist- in the Americal Division, 23rd Infantry, based in Chu Lai, Vietnam. Now retired, Fred is working on a personal memoir, which you can read in draft on his fascinating blog, <http://vietnam-return.abatemarco.com>. Below, Fred tells how the Army failed to transform an unwilling, rebellious teenage Draft-ee into a proper soldier.

August 18, 1969, was the last day of the historic Woodstock Music festival in upstate New York. I was supposed to be there with my buddies Charlie Boy and Vinny. But I never made it. Instead, on that sultry mid-summer morning, I was at Ft. Hamilton, a languid, postage stamp of an Army base in the shadow of the Verrazano Bridge in Brooklyn, NY. Outwardly modest, Ft. Hamilton was a deceptively busy induction point for Army draftees like me.

My big brother Frank dropped me off at the base on his way to work in Manhattan. Though six years apart in age, Frank and I were very close. We shared a bedroom in our parents' modest two-family home in the Gravesend section of Brooklyn and for most of my adolescent life, Frank had been my muse and protector. But on my induction day, Frank was as powerless as I. Without leaving his driver's seat, he signaled his farewell with a silent, sympathetic shoulder shrug. "Hope for the best; prepare for the worst," his body language seemed to say.

As Frank drove out of Ft. Hamilton's gate, I stood at the door of the induction hall paralyzed in fear and bewilderment. That morning, for the first time, I saw clearly my

situation: I was about to be sworn in to the Army, perhaps sent to a raging war, unlike so many of my contemporaries who managed to avoid the military draft.

At the time, every male US citizen aged 18 to 25—approximately 27 million of them—was required to register with the Selective Service, becoming eligible for conscription into the Army. However, only a tiny fraction actually served or was called. The bulk of the armed forces, including those who served in Vietnam, were volunteers. Of some 10 million US military members during the war years, only about 2 million were draftees. Many millions received deferments, exempt from the draft for reasons ranging from poor health or injuries, family hardship, religious beliefs (conscientious objectors), military sensitive jobs, criminal records or, college studies. Hundreds of thousands became "draft dodgers"—they openly defied and refused military service, or skipped out to Canada, Mexico, Scandinavia or elsewhere beyond its reach.

Statistically, an overwhelming majority of my generation qualified as one or more of the above. They did not serve. Even among those conscripted, less than one-third went to the war: only 650,000. Draftees like me were a minority in Vietnam—though their casualties were proportionally higher.

And an even larger percentage of my demographic—middle class, college-eligible, white males—never came close to seeing Vietnam let alone military service. Indeed, none of my friends and relatives served full time in the military during the 60s. Most either held onto their student deferment long enough to run out the clock on the draft, or managed to finagle their way into becoming "weekend warriors," homebound National Guard members.

So what was my problem? How come I wasn't able to pull off what most of my contemporaries did?

The simple answer is I was lazy and irresponsible. Rudderless is the best description of my life in 1969, and the course it had been on for some time. I simply didn't get my shit together enough to engineer a deferment.

After four college semesters of embarrassing academic underperformance, I was politely asked to "take some time off" from the University of Bridgeport. Immediately, I lost my 2-S student deferment, the most coveted beat-the-draft, get-out-of-jail card of them all. An undergraduate student was required to be in good standing with an accredited college and carry a full matriculation course load. 2-S accounted for the lion's share by far of the 15-million plus draft deferments. I was not clever enough to hold onto mine. The result was the proverbial "Greetings" letter announcing my induction date.

With my brother out of sight, I unfroze and stepped inside the Ft. Hamilton processing center. My sweaty hand had a death grip on a supermarket shopping bag holding one change of clothes and a toothbrush. Nineteen years old and seriously hurting from a week of subsisting on booze and amphetamines, I was dizzy with dread. It was a relief to get out from under the merciless summer sun, which beat down, frying my shoulder-length brown hair, virtually reigniting my hangover. Inside the induction hall, just about the time that Jimi Hendrix was turning the *Star Spangled Banner* into a plaintive psychedelic anti-war anthem at Max Yasgur's farm in upstate New York, I peed into a cup, took the proverbial step forward, then raised my right hand.

Woodstock was history, and so was my life as a civilian.

At that moment, it seemed unlikely that my life and the war some 9,000 miles away would ever intersect. President Nixon had begun the troop withdrawals from Vietnam. No less an authority than my college history professor personally assured me that "the war was practically over." He said that in the winter of 1969, when he refused to give me a chance to up my grade one letter. Thus ended my student deferment from the military draft. It turned out that history professors aren't very good at predicting the future; 1969 will be remembered as the bloodiest year of them all for US soldiers in Vietnam.

For three days of hot, boring outfitting and orientation at Ft. Jackson, SC, I quickly learned one of the most fundamental Army skills: "hurry up and wait." I was less scared than lonely. My unease became palpable. I smoked like a fiend; ground my teeth; drooled in my sleep, and had dry mouth during the day. I phoned my girlfriend Natalie every chance I could and wrote to her non-stop, but it hardly quelled my anxiety.

Once our heads were shaved and all other signs of civilian life was suitably smothered, a bunch of us were crammed onto rickety olive-drab school buses and transported south about 100 miles to Ft. Gordon near Augusta, GA.

For the next eight weeks, all through the end of summer and early fall, red clay dust filled every cavity and pore of my body. As part of 1st Platoon, Company D, 1st Battalion, 1st BCT Brigade, I ran hither and yon from sun up to sundown in pursuit of "basic combat training" under the stern bark of one drill instructor or another. Because of my 10-letter Italian name, they called me "Alphabet," and



"Head shaved and all evidence of civilian life erased."

thought themselves clever for it. Silently I seethed but I stayed on track with the mantra: *Just get through this!*

I was never in such great physical shape as I was that autumn. I was never so dispirited either about the course my life had taken. My friends were in college, my NY Mets were on their way to the World Series, and I was playing soldier in Georgia with no clue what was to become of me. As the torture of our training cycle ticked by, war worries eventually emerged. Eighty-five percent of us were heading to advanced infantry training and then most likely Vietnam, said our commanders, with sadistic glee. They left the thought right there for us to imagine the worst. And we did. *How could I have let my life come to this?*

And then I got dealt an ace in the hole. A week before the end of basic training, the Army rewarded me for what they called "Civilian Acquired Skills." My time between high school and college as a copy boy and wire room operator at the Wall Street Journal paid an unexpected dividend. And though my studies as a Journalism major were spectacularly underwhelming in the academic world, those two resume bullets helped earn me an Army job—Military Occupation Specialty—as a 71Q20 Information Specialist. My new assignment would be as a newspaper reporter, editor or publicity flack for Uncle Sam in Ft. Bragg, NC. No need for further training. Take a two week leave, go home to your family and loved ones, report back in November.

If I was a religious man, I'd have thanked Divine Intervention. Instead, I chalked it up to the jelly — this time — falling face up.

But my luck was about to change again.

* * *

The onion-skin transcript of my Army court martial is barely twelve pages long. Granted, in the annals of military justice my alleged infraction was not on par with, say, the betrayal of Benedict Arnold. But neither was the charge — *Disobeying a Lawful Order* — a trivial matter.

The alleged crime occurred at 0735 hours on 23 April, 1970, as I stood with the rest of my platoon for morning inspection in front of a brick barracks at Ft. Bragg. Specia-

list E-7 Laurence Guay, who was in charge of my platoon, made a special point of announcing he would no longer tolerate “civilian trinkets with the duty uniform.”

Our roll call formations lasted all of about 15 minutes. Specialist Guay walked through the ranks checking for polished boots, missing buttons, tucked in fatigue shirts. Typically, the fatigue-shirt collar button is undone, and the undergarment tee shirt exposed. That’s where Guay says he saw my multi-colored necklace of beads.

“They were hanging about an inch below his neck,” he testified. Guay told the court he gave me a lawful order to remove the beads immediately. Then, when he found out I was still wearing them later that morning, he marched me to see the “Old Man”—our company commander—and made a formal report that I had disobeyed his order.

Yes, it’s true. I did not remove the beads, but I made sure they were out of sight. To me, they were a way to retain some type of individuality amid all the mind numbing conformity of Army life. I wasn’t protesting the war. I simply was trying to hold onto some sense of my civilian self.

They were also something of a cottage industry for me. On weekend trips to New York, I’d pop into head shops and funky clothing stores like Azuma, to stock up on the tiny plastic beads. Back at the barracks, in my off hours, I’d string them and sell them to the guys for a couple of bucks each as necklaces or bracelets.

So the fact that many of my platoon mates were wearing

beads made me indignant that Specialist Guay had singled me out.

In fairness, I must admit that another one of my other pastimes at Ft. Bragg was pulling pranks with some of my bunkmates designed to drive Specialist Guay bonkers. Like the time we decided to set up an unofficial lending library in our barracks. One of the periodicals we offered was the *Daily World*, the official newspaper of the American Communist Party. We threatened to bring down the wrath of our First Amendment, Freedom of the Press rights, if Specialist Guay dared mess with our library.

Another time we planted a sapling in a trash can *inside* the barracks. But nothing topped the moment when four of us decided to become blondes. We had just spent a depressing weekend day off at the Chapel Hill campus of the University of North Carolina. Pretty girls and handsome guys—all with long flowing hair—only made us feel more out of sorts than usual. “If we can’t grow our hair, let’s dye it!” one of us said. So at the Post PX, we picked up their entire inventory of a color treatment called “Summer Blonde,” and applied it every day. Within a week, we evolved into towheaded wonders. Specialist Guay staggered with disbelief.

It was a “Gotcha” moment for Guay when I was officially charged with violation of Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice for my alleged failure to comply with Army Regulation 670-5 which specifies the proper Army uniform and insignias.

The Army typically deals with minor infractions against its rules with a procedure called “Article 15.” Essentially, you admit your guilt and get punished with a slap on the wrist ranging from a loss of privileges to a small fine.

I refused the Article 15 for two reasons. As far as I was concerned, I had a perfect right to wear the beads—as much as any crucifix of Jesus, Star of David or fist of black power wearing devotee did to their amulets. And I didn’t see Specialist Guay calling down any of these “civilian trinkets.” Perhaps even more important, an Article 15 would restrict me to the base and that would be intolerable because most weekends, I went through very elaborate efforts to get home to New York to see Natalie.

I decided to stand up to The Man at a formal court martial where I could defend myself. A few weeks later, I was summoned to see Major Kirkpatrick, a senior officer from a different unit. “This is your Summary Court Martial,” the major announced when I was seated in front of his desk.

“Wha?” I puzzled.

“Your Summary Court Martial,” he repeated. The major went on to explain that right then, right there in his office, *mano a mano*, the incident in question would be reviewed and adjudicated by him. He had Specialist Guay’s written statement, the charge sheet, and he would hear my side of the story. No witnesses, no jury, no defense counsel.

“No, sir,” I said.

I demanded a full trial for my day in court. I had been working with an attorney from the Army’s Judge Advocate Group and felt certain I had a compelling case if I could get a chance to present it properly. The major cautioned me. “You go before a full Special Court Martial the stakes get much, much higher. You face loss of rank, a dishonorable



“I smoked like a fiend, wrote every day, followed the NY Mets march to the World Series and wondered how my life could have taken such an odd turn.”

- Fred Abatemarco

discharge, jail time—any or all of the above.”

He wasn't going to scare me. At least, I wouldn't let him think so. This was hardball.

So, in a stifling conference room in July 1970, I had my day in court. Major Charles Humphries, a Vietnam combat veteran, presided as my sole judge and jury. In addition to Guay and me, there was also a prosecuting attorney and assistant, my two-lawyer defense team, and witnesses for both sides.

Throughout the three-hour proceeding, Major Humphries chain smoked unfiltered Pall Mall cigarettes and blew smoke rings through the dirty window screen. Occasionally, he leaned back in a squeaky desk chair and propped his feet up on the scarred painted wooden table that passed for the court bench. The proceedings bored him to distraction. Minutes after the closing statements the judge summarily shooed us from his overheated, nicotine saturated courtroom with a verdict of “Not guilty, case dismissed.”

Really, it wasn't even a contest. Had the trial been a prize fight, the ref would have stopped it in the first round. The testimony of Specialist Guay was inconsistent and unconvincing. Defense witnesses contradicted Guay's claim that he told me to remove the beads. The lasting impression was that he told me “he did not want to see the beads,” according to witnesses who testified that the beads were no longer in sight after the formation.

My bunkmates and I celebrated that night with a victory banner and Kool-Aid. I flaunted my triumph to family, friend and foe. I fought the power and won. Or did I?

Three months later I received my orders to report to Vietnam.

Was my courtroom triumph somehow the cause of my surprise all-expenses-paid trip to the war in Southeast Asia? My father was certainly convinced it was why I got sent to Vietnam with less than a year left in my Army enlistment. “If the Army can't get you one way, they'll get you another” was his thinking.

It was unusual to send personnel to the war with less than the full 365 days tour of service available. However, mid-1970 was a weird



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period for the war. Replacements were being made head for head, job for job, and not on the full regimental or brigade scale that was the norm through the early days of the war. If the Army thought it needed one more 71Q20 Information Specialist, it may well have been a random selection that found me.

I'll never know, and it doesn't really matter why I got assigned to Vietnam. I'm thankful I was one of the lucky ones who made it home.

And my time there, helped make me who I am to this day. I didn't welcome the experience, but I wouldn't trade it either.



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FEATURE

THE CO

by Todd DePastino

Veterans will sometimes say, “I served in war, only *peace time*.” It usually mean the 1950s-1960s, Korea and Vietnam, or the 1970s-1980s Vietnam and Desert Storm. When these periods referred to as “peace time” to remember something called the Cold

This year marks the 75th anniversary of World War. Don't expect commemorative events. That's because unlike most wars, it was hot fast and stop suddenly, the Cold War at various temperatures for decades, it boiled over to a Third World War. And it never had a clean start point, no Fort Sumter or Pearl Harbor moment, when blazing guns ended something dramatically new. Instead, it ended with a speech.

On March 12, 1947, President Harry Truman appeared before both houses of Congress to request \$400 million in military and economic aid for Greece and Turkey, which were fighting Communist challenges. In requesting this aid, Truman named Woodrow Wilson in 1918—proclaimed a broad the United States' role in global affairs. The president wasn't just requesting money. He was, in effect, declaring tacit war against Communism seeking to expand across the globe.

“At the present moment in world history, every nation must choose between alternate ways of life,” Truman said. He went on:

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free elections, representative government, free enterprise of individual liberty, freedom of religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the destruction of personal freedoms. I believe it should be the policy of the United States to support peoples who are resisting attempted domination by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own hands.

These words sum up the “Truman Doctrine” for my money, mark the Cold War's start.



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But other historians disagree, with good reason. Some argue that the Cold War began at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, when Joseph Stalin, Franklin Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill began hammering the shape of the postwar world. Others see Churchill's famous "Iron Curtin" speech of March 5, 1946 at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, as the turning point. Historians with broader views—especially French scholars—say the Cold War stretches back to 1917 when Europe and the US established a *cordon sanitaire* to prevent the spread of Bolshevism beyond Russia. You could even argue it goes back further than that, to the nineteenth century, when Americans feared the despotic and expansionist Czarist regime.

But from the perspective of Americans after World War II, the Cold War began in 1947. If it started before then, most people living in the United States were unaware of it.

After all, the Soviet Union was our most important ally in World War II. "Uncle Joe" Stalin and the Red Army scored high in approval polls for their heroic sacrifices in fighting Hitler's armies on the Eastern Front. That good will lingered into the postwar period, right up to Truman's speech in 1947. On that day, our erstwhile ally morphed into a diabolical enemy. Before the end of the year, a sweeping new National Security Act would create the CIA, the National Security Council, and the Department of Defense, which included a new Air Force as an independent branch. It was a massive restructuring, and more changes followed. There was no mistaking it. The



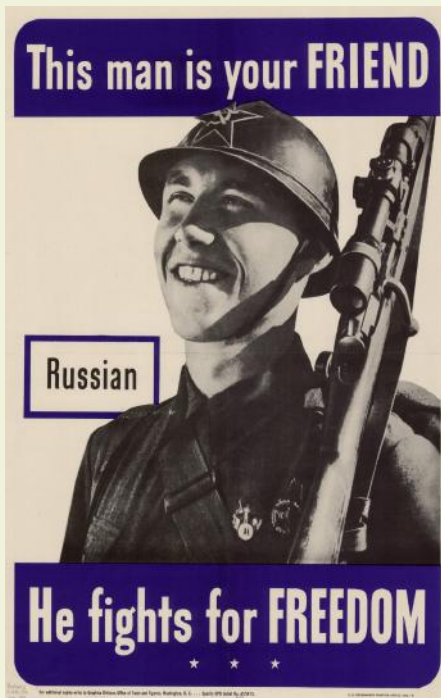
Cold War was on.

When the Cold War began is one question historians debate. *Why* it began is another. I've never found the *why* debate compelling. When have two great powers ever existed side-by-side without coming into conflict? The world's first historian, Thucydides, explained it plainly in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Sparta and Athens went to war because they were adjacent great powers. Great powers compete. And often the competition goes too far.

For the United States and the Soviet Union, the competition began on the battlefields of Europe. When the two great Allied armies—one from the East, the other from the West—met at the Elbe River eighty miles south of Berlin on April 25, 1945, they brought with them not only weapons, but also ideas about how Europe and the world would be put back together after the disruption of World War II.

Each of these great powers had its own history of shaking up the world. Prior to the Soviet Union, the United States was the great global disruptor. Beginning July 4, 1776, the US provided the world a model for the revolutionary overthrow of empire and monarchy. For almost a century-and-a-half, the US inspired revolutions across the globe. France in 1789, Haiti in 1791, the Irish Rebellion of 1798, the Greek War of Independence, the Mexican War of Independence, and the many South American revolts against Spain. The US supported most of these, much to the consternation of the Old World. "The American record is filled with declarations in which there is too little that is reasonable and too much that is unbecoming impertinence," remarked Empress Catherine of Russia.

The US had cheered the first Russian Revolution in March 1917, when the Czar was overthrown. But those cheers turned to icy opposition when Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power in a coup later that year. Bolshevism was completely new, not derived from the American model of revolution, and quickly took its place as the global vanguard of disruption. The Soviet model was so threatening that immediately after World War I, the US sent 13,000 troops to Russia to fight the Bolsheviks and restore the pro-American "White Russian" faction to power. The operation failed, and the last US troops didn't leave Russia until the summer of 1920.



The US and USSR warmed to each other just once, during World War II, after Nazi Germany launched the largest ground invasion in history against the Soviets. On June 22, 1941, over 3.5 million German soldiers swept east across a 1,800 mile front into Stalinist Russia. Their advance was swift and brutal. By the first week of December—the same week as the attack on Pearl Harbor—the Red Army had taken 4 million casualties, and the Wehrmacht was on the Kremlin's doorstep. If the Germans prevailed at Moscow, Churchill and Roosevelt knew, Hitler would reign in Europe.

So, almost overnight, in the United States, the nasty dictator Joseph Stalin became the heroic leader “Uncle Joe.” Yesterday’s enemy became today’s indispensable friend.

Stalin, too, changed his tune. No more Marxist-Leninist diatribes against the “American bourgeois imperialism.” No more talk about leading a world revolution. Instead, Stalin called for the defense of “Mother Russia.” Soviet propaganda even emphasized the glories of the Czarist past, the resistance to Napoleon in 1812, the achievements of Peter the Great, Catherine the Great, even Ivan the Terrible. To Americans, all this sounded normal and reasonable, an appeal to patriotism at a time of existential threat.

It soon became clear, however, that Stalin still considered the US and Britain as sources of that threat. And his paranoia led him to believe that the key *strategic* decisions Roosevelt made during the war were in fact *ideological* choices intended to undermine the Soviet Union’s power and position.

For Stalin, Roosevelt’s two most infuriating wartime decisions were, number one, to proceed slowly against Nazi Germany and, number two, to keep casualties low. Both these decisions were strategic luxuries that Stalin himself couldn’t afford. Unlike Russia, where German officers standing on tanks could see the spires of Red Square in their field glasses, the US didn’t have to worry about the Wehrmacht marching down the streets of its capital. There was no rush to meet the Germans in total-force combat. The US could pick and choose the place and time of its battles and wait until its economy and society had reached a full war footing.

Both Roosevelt and Churchill knew that democratic societies not under invasion have a low tolerance for

casualties. For the war to be sustainable, therefore, they would have to rely on technology and heavy weaponry—air power especially—keep ground forces out of harm’s way as much as possible.

Stalin suspected this ginger approach to war in the West was intended to curb Soviet advances in the East. In June 1942, for example, Hitler had over 3 million troops in the East fighting the Red Army and fewer than 400,000 in the West to protect the Atlantic Coast. Hitler would eventually have to rush soldiers back to the West for the Normandy invasion, but the Wehrmacht never came close to striking a geographic balance.

The scale of battle on the Russian Front boggles the mind. In the Battle of Moscow, for example, 2 million Germans fought 1.5 million Russians. Stalin pleaded with Roosevelt and Churchill to invade from the West, forcing Hitler to peel off some of his troops from the East. “Our country is waging a war of liberation single-handed,” Stalin complained.

In 1942, Roosevelt unwisely promised Stalin that the Allies would open the Western Front that autumn. Then, Churchill talked the President out of it, arguing that the Americans would get slaughtered on the beaches if they acted too soon. When Stalin learned that what would become the Normandy Invasion was postponed for a third time to 1944, he recalled his ambassadors from Washington and London in protest.

By D-Day, June 6, 1944, the Soviet position in Eastern



Europe had improved to the point where Stalin was no longer as desperate for his Allies’ help. The Red Army had saved Russia and expanded its borders to include the Baltic nations, eastern Poland and Romania. Stalin was now in position to achieve his highest aim, which wasn’t Global Communist Revolution (though that would be nice, too), but rather the security of the Soviet state, especially its western borders.

I think we see today, thirty years after the Cold War’s end, just how deeply rooted is the Russian obsession with security in its west. This preoccupation stems not so much from ideology or national temper, but from what historians call the “Curse of Russian Geography,” a feature of terrain that has driven the behavior of Russian leaders from Ivan the Terrible to Vladimir Putin.

Russia inhabits the eastern end of a vast European Plain with no natural boundaries to protect it. The Plain begins at the Pyrenees and stretches 2,000 miles east to Moscow, and then another 1,000 miles beyond that to the Ural Mountains, which separate Europe from Asia. This makes Russia almost impossible to defend from the West, where it has a 2,000-mile north-south border without mountains. If God had placed the Urals 1,600 miles further west to Ukraine, history would have been much different. The Russians would never have had to worry about invasion from Europe. These invasions—five of them in 500 years—loom so large in Russian memory that the nation's defense experts believe their best defense is a good offense. That's why they're always keeping their western neighbors, like Ukraine, on their heels. Russians only feel safe with a western empire, a buffer zone, to protect them. Couple that with the need for warm water ports, and you have the recipe for Russian meddling from Poland on the Baltic to Greece and Turkey on the Mediterranean.

After the fighting in Europe stopped on May 8, 1945, the issue of Poland rocketed to the top of Stalin's agenda. While Stalin had pledged months earlier at Yalta that there would be an independent Poland with free elections, he quickly reneged on the deal after the German surrender. Instead, he made it clear that, in addition to the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland, Stalin would also install a Soviet-friendly satellite state in the western part. Poland, after all, contained a key choke point where the European Plain narrowed to 300-miles. This stretch of plain was small enough to defend and could therefore serve as a sentry point against invasion. Stalin's breathtaking perfidy against Poland during World War II came down to this intransigent fact of geography.

The problem for Roosevelt's successor, President Harry S Truman, was how to advance his Wilsonian vision of a free, independent postwar Europe when the Soviets seemed unwilling to admit the war was over. While the American public demanded and got rapid demobilization and the mass return of GIs from abroad, Soviet soldiers stayed put, occupying ground in Eastern Europe they had no intention of vacating. By 1946, Stalin controlled ten times the number of troops in Europe than the US and Britain combined.

On February 9, 1946, Stalin gave a remarkable speech at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater which reversed the nationalistic "Mother Russia" rhetoric of his wartime persona. Back were the Marxist-Leninist diatribes and denunciations of "modern monopoly capitalism," which, he said, was the root cause of World War II. Nazism, Stalin declared, was merely one nefarious example of capitalist imperialism. Another, he implied, was the United States, with which a Third World War was inevitable. This time, the Communist Party and the Soviet people would have to save the world on their own, with no capitalist allies to help. For that reason, Stalin concluded, the Soviet Union would remain on a war footing

and prepare for the colossal showdown that was coming.

Two weeks after Stalin's speech, George F. Kennan, a deputy at the US State Department mission in Moscow, dictated an 8,000-word diplomatic cable back to Washington warning of Stalin's intentions. Nicknamed "the Long Telegram" (and later published as "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" in Foreign Affairs magazine), Kennan's analysis exposed Stalin's Marxism as a moral and intellectual "fig leaf" for Russians' age-old defensive reflexes: "for the instinctive fear of the outside world, for the dictatorship without which they did not know how to rule . . . for sacrifice they felt bound to demand." Stalin's ideological intransigence, he went on to say, was an expression "of uneasy Russian nationalism . . . in which conceptions of offense and defense are inextricably confused. But in new guise of international Marxism, with its honeyed promises to a desperate and war torn outside world, it is more dangerous and insidious than ever before."

Kennan recommended that the Truman administration stand firm to resist further Soviet expansionism, though not try to roll it back. The US must be prepared to play the long game against the Soviet Union, maintaining steady counterpressure against its influence in Europe without provoking World War III. Our nation, he argued, should serve as a beacon of hope, projecting a positive and progressive vision for the world to counter the dark Soviet promise of security for freedom. Kennan never used the word "Containment" in his telegram, but it sums up his approach better than any other. We can't fight the Soviets straight on. We can only contain their ambitions and aggressions. It will take years of tiring, patient struggle. But we will win, and the world will be better off for it.

Kennan's "Long Telegram" reinforced Truman's growing conviction in 1946 that the US had to serve as a check against the

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Soviets in Europe. The problem for Truman was, quite simply, that most Americans didn't share his view.

With the Armed Forces cut to ten-percent of its wartime peak, defense spending similarly pared back, and the nation hungry for consumer goods denied them in wartime, there simply wasn't a popular will for new military commitments overseas. Neither was there legislative interest in them. Today, we remember Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" speech of 1946 as prophetic. But at the time, it was a flop. Truman's mere presence in Churchill's audience was enough to hurt his party's performance in the Congressional elections that fall. The Republican Party would later fully back the Cold War, but in 1946 the prospect of hiking taxes and spending to promote America's foreign entanglements seemed foolhardy to the GOP.

Then, in early 1947, Truman got a request from Great Britain that forced his hand. The British reported that they were broke and could no longer afford the burden of guaranteeing the security of Greece and Turkey. The former was facing an armed Communist insurgency funded, in part, by the Soviet Union. Turkey, meanwhile, confronted direct pressure from the Soviet Navy looking to gain access from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean.

The price tag for picking up Britain's aid burden to Greece and Turkey was \$400 million. Not a lot of money, even back then, but enough to concern both houses of Congress, which for the first time in decades were controlled by Republicans.

The story goes that Truman called a meeting between his foreign policy advisors and Republican Congressional leaders, including the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Arthur Vandenberg (R-MI). Truman's Secretary of State George Marshall pitched Vandenberg on the Greece-Turkey aid bill. Marshall spoke of the need for political stability in a region with valuable raw materials and markets.

Vandenberg responded with a dumbfounded look as if to say, "That's it? That's your best argument?" Later someone remarked that Marshall had indeed sounded like a broker outlining an investment prospectus.

Marshall's talented Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson cleared his throat and asked for permission to speak. This aid, Acheson said, is not about markets and raw materials. This \$400 million represents nothing less than the future of world civilization.

Acheson cast the struggle in stark moral terms, not economic ones. "Not since Rome and Carthage has there been such a polarization of power on this earth," he said. "We and we alone are in position to break up the Soviet quest for world domination. . . . For the United States to take steps to strengthen countries threatened by Communist subversion . . . is to protect freedom itself."

Vandenberg was enthralled. He turned to Truman and said, "That's how you sell it." You have to "scare hell out of the American people."

So, on March 12, 1947, two weeks after the meeting with Vandenberg, Truman spoke before a joint session of Congress to call not just for aid to Greece and Turkey, but for a larger, long-term international commitment to the aspirations of free peoples resisting Communist aggression.

From Truman's words that day followed everything we remember over the next four decades: the Berlin Airlift, NATO, Korea, the Arms Race, the Space Race, Vietnam, and the countless other tensions and crises that we call the Cold War.

This year, as we mark the 75th anniversary of the war that masqueraded as peace, we call upon our veterans to share their memories of this singular era. After all, they may be your stories, but they're also our history.



Our wish is to respect yours...

We salute the
Veterans Breakfast
Club as they
capture the history
of the men and
women who served
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Salute to our veterans.



Bill Dempsey, Dick Hayes and Paul Schaughency are just a few of the many veterans who live at a Baptist Senior Family community. We thank them for their service.

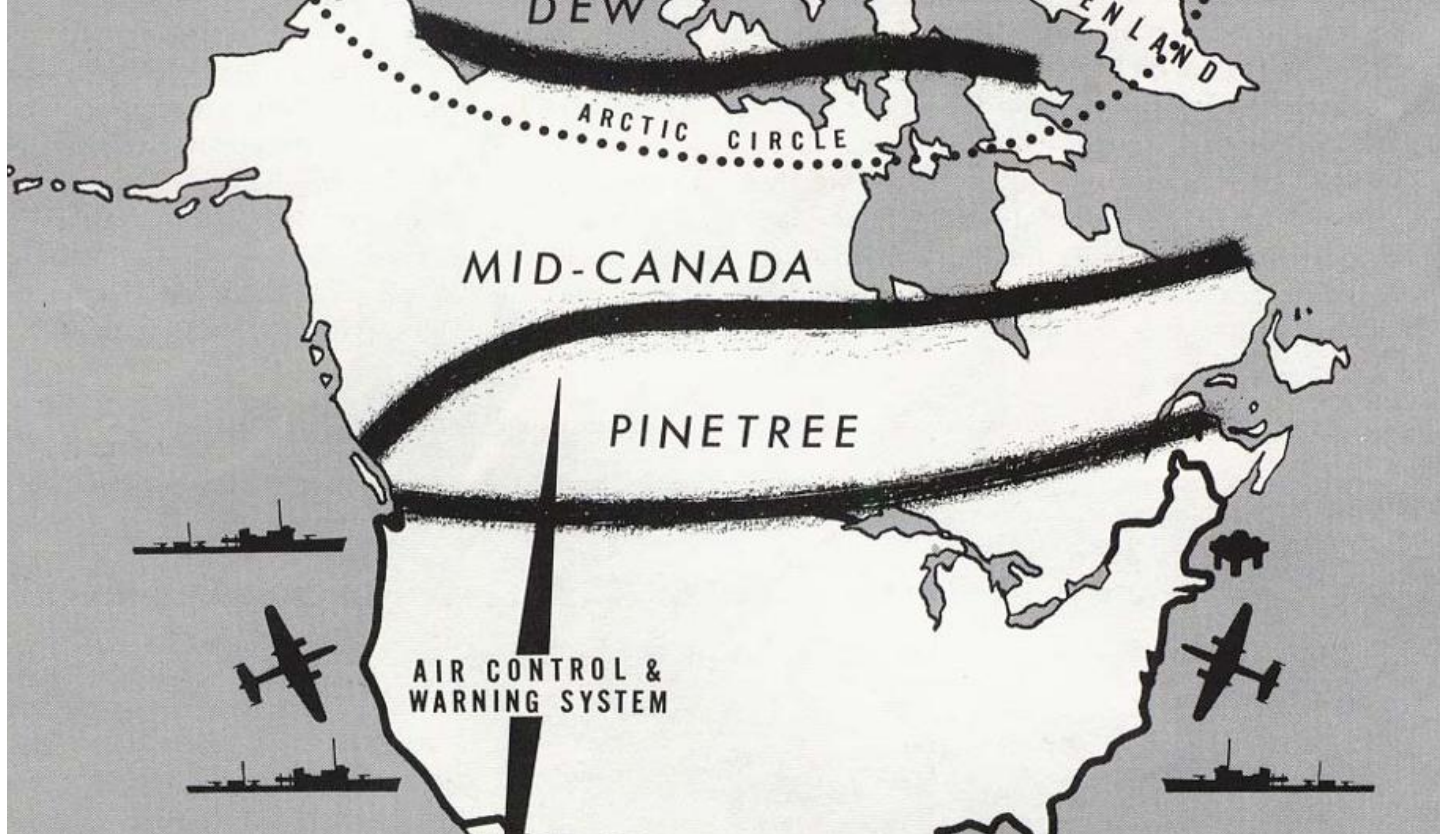
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FEATURE

ORANGE ALERT ON THE PINETREE LINE, GOOSE BAY, LABRADOR, 1957

by Ron Stachevich

Our program with Francis Gary Powers, Jr., in 2021 prompted stories and responses from participants, including a memory from Air Force veteran Ron Stachevich. Ron served on the "Pinetree Line" of RADAR defense at Goose Bay, Labrador. These were the days when WWII was expected to start in the air with nuclear-armed Soviet bombers descending from the Arctic Circle to bomb strategic centers in the United States. The Pinetree Line, along with the more famous DEW Line and the lesser-known Mid-Canada Line, were the aerial pickets designed to warn the US of impending attack. In 1957, Ron and his fellow members of the 641st Aircraft Control and Warning division detected an intruder that raised alarm. Below is his account.

In the fall of 1957, I was stationed at the 641st Air Control and Warning RADAR division atop a mountain at Goose Bay, Labrador, on the "Pinetree Line" RADAR defense. The furthest north radar station at Frobisher Bay picked up an initial target that was flying higher and faster than any known production aircraft. After a few minutes tracking this aircraft coming from the Arctic Circle from the direction of the Soviet Union, we scrambled two F-89 Scorpion fighters from Goose Bay and vectored them to-

ward the target. After a few minutes, they reported "No Joy" [no confirmation of aircraft] because they were unable to reach the altitude needed to identify the target.

We then declared the target a "Bogey," possible enemy. The Line went from Green Alert to Orange Alert. The "Bogey" was passed to Resolution Island north of us on the DEW Line, which continued to track and report the Bogey further southward to several other RADAR sites on the Pinetree Line.

In the 641st RADAR Room, everything got tense. In normal operations, the room was staffed by six to eight airmen and officers, but the word got around about the Bogey continuing south still unidentified. Soon, 20-25 off-duty personnel quietly slipped into the RADAR room to watch the plotting board. It was so quiet that you could hear a pin drop. Just before declaring Red Alert, we got a call from NORAD (North American Air Defense Command) to stand down.

"It's one of ours," they said. "It's a U-2."

We all looked at one another and asked, "What the hell is a U-2?" Then, we started to breathe again.

The whole thing was a test to see how far out the Pinetree Line could detect a Bogey. We passed the test.

A recent shot of a U-2 fitted with a dorsal pod for communications (USAF)

THE U-2

COLD WAR ICON STILL MAKING HEADLINES

In 2020, Chinese authorities charged that a US U-2 spy plane had violated Chinese air space during a People's Liberation Army training exercise. The most pointed detail of China's claim was the reference to the U-2, a 67-year-old aircraft with a fabled Cold War history.

The U-2 became famous on May 7, 1960, when Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev announced that a Soviet Surface-to-Air Missile had shot one down, and the pilot, Francis Gary Powers, had been captured. (The VBC had Francis Gary Powers, Jr., on our VBC Happy Hour last year.)

President Dwight Eisenhower had previously denied the U-2 had been spying, or that it was even a spy plane. The American cover story was that the U-2 was a NASA aircraft used for weather observations (US officials even hastily painted a U-2 in NASA colors and trotted it out for the media).

Khrushchev revealed the truth: the U-2 was a CIA plane designed specifically to fly at super-high altitudes for global surveillance.

Since that day, the U-2 has served as an icon of Cold War tensions, inspiring a famous rock band's name and, most recently, a Stephen Spielberg movie about negotiating Francis Gary Powers' release, *Bridge of Spies*.

It's hard to believe the U-2 is still in operation decades after President Eisenhower first ordered the manufacture of a plane that could fly at 70,000 feet—beyond the reach of Soviet fighters and radar. Lockheed engineers worked in secret, by hand, during off hours to design the craft and fabricate its parts.

The first test flight was on August 1, 1955. The runway was a dry lake bed in remote Nevada, a location later known as "Area 51." Test pilots wore full pressure suits—at 70,000 feet, the atmosphere was barely thick enough to keep a plane aloft, and loss of pressure would make the pilot's blood boil. In an era before satellites or integrated circuits (or zip codes or touch-tone phones for that matter), the U-2 was the most advanced aerospace technology in the world.

Since that first flight, the U-2 has flown in every major US military operation of the past 67 years. A U-2 spotted Medium-Range Ballistic Missiles on Cuba in Octo-



U-2 with fictitious NASA markings to support CIA cover story for pilot Gary Powers, shot down over Soviet Union, May 1960 (NASA)

ber 1962, prompting the famous October Missile Crisis. U-2s gathered surveillance over Vietnam, the Eastern Bloc, and the Middle East. They were even successfully launched from aircraft carriers (the USS Ranger and the USS America) in the late 1960s. Receiving its last major modification in the 1980s, the U-2 outlasted not only the Cold War, but its own replacement plane, the SR-71, which was retired in 1998.

The U-2 has defied all predictions of its demise—the plane has been targeted for the military budget chopping block for over fifteen years. It was saved most recently in 2014, largely because of its service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Unlike satellites, the U-2 is nimble and can change surveillance objectives on short notice. Give a pilot eight hours in a U-2, and he or she can map the state of California and even read a headline from a corner newsstand.

A few other airplanes rival the U-2 in longevity—the Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker, Boeing B-52 Stratofortress, and Lockheed C-130 Hercules come to mind. But none of these has had to compete with satellite and drone technology to survive. None but the U-2 has managed to sustain its mystique through the space age.

That mystique is one of the reasons China responded so vocally to the U-2's surveillance operations. The US denied violating air space, though not the spying.

"U-2s have long-distance surveillance systems now," explained one analyst. They don't need to violate air space to get good images below. They can monitor ground activity from dozens of miles away.

If there is a new Cold War with China on the horizon, the U-2 will no doubt be a part of it.

50-YEAR-OLD MYSTERY SOLVED BY VBC!

(WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM THE WASHINGTON POST)

Jim Roberts met Karen Jankowski and Gwen Roussel, pictured above, only once, when the two Red Cross “Donut Dollies” landed briefly at Jim’s tiny base in Binh Phuoc province, South Vietnam in 1971. Jim took the Dollies’ photos but never learned their names. For the last fifty years, he’s wanted to find them and say “thank you” for brightening his war, if only just for an afternoon.

We tried to help Jim track down the Donut Dollies. We posted his pictures on our Facebook and website. We shared them with the American Red Cross Overseas Association (ARCOA).

But it wasn’t until Veterans Day, November 11, when the *Washington Post* published an article about Jim’s quest that leads started materializing. Within minutes of the story’s posting, the comments flooded in, many from Vietnam veterans sharing their own memories of Donut Dolly encounters.

It didn’t take long before one former Red Cross volunteer recognized her long-lost friend, Gwen Roussel, the blonde with the yellow ribbon in her hair. Gwen was then able to identify the woman in the second picture, Karen Jankowski.

On our December 6 *VBC Happy Hour*, Jim was able to say “thank you” to Gwen and Karen, and all three shared their stories of service in Vietnam, along with many other veterans and former Dollies. You can watch the reunion on our VBC YouTube channel (<https://youtu.be/0-NUf-7hFQd4>). The following is Jim’s account of meeting the Donut Dollies the first time, adapted from him memoir, *MAT 111 Dong Xoai, Vietnam 1971*.

One morning we got a call from an incoming helicopter. The pilot asked for smoke, so he could judge wind direction and speed for landing. The Huey flared its descent and settled gently on the pad’s painted white “H.”

Not sure what to expect, we stood our ground as the rotor blades gradually stopped spinning. A jungle fatigue clad figure climbed down out of the cabin. Even from our distance we could see that his fatigues were almost their original green color, neat, pressed and possibly starched. He was not a “bush” soldier. As he turned to help another person to climb out – then a second person.

What the #\$\$%?” one of us muttered.



(Jim Roberts/*Washington Post*)

These two people were not wearing green jungle fatigues. They wore light blue dresses . . . and had blond hair. What was going on?

They were so-called Red Cross “Donut Dollies.” During World War II, adventurous women volunteered to work in the European Theater of Operations in positions that came to be known as Donut Dollies. Working in teams of two, they were assigned to a mobile kitchen. Their job was to wake up in the middle of the night, go to the kitchen and make hundreds of donuts and gallons of coffee. Then they would drive to someplace in the rear area just behind the front lines and serve coffee, donuts, and conversations to the GIs who were resting before moving back up to the front and the fighting.

The Dollies served as a major morale booster for the war weary troops. They served again in Korea, and over 600 of them found their way to Vietnam in the 1960s and early 1970s. Since there were no frontlines in Vietnam, instead of driving mobile kitchens, they traveled by helicopter. This meant that there were no donuts – just the Dollies.

Our village, Dong Xoai, was at an important intersection of roads running north from Ben Hoa to the Cambodian border and east From Tay Ninh. The village had five hamlets and a former Special Forces Camp that was now the home of the District Advisory Team of four men and MAT 111 composed of five men.

Because of its location, Dong Xoai was militarily significant but, unfortunately, it would never rate a visit by the Donut Dollies. There were larger concentrations of troops in other locations better served by the too few Dollies.

But there they were, walking towards us. The jungle fatigue clad figure, a Lieutenant who was not wearing Infantry insignia on his collar put out his hand to shake ours. We really did not see him. We were transfixed by the two women walking next to him. They looked at us and one said, “Hello, I hope we are not interrupting anything.” CONTINUED ON P. 26



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CONTINUED FROM P. 23

The sound of an American woman's voice. I'm not sure what the reply was or if it was even coherent. We shook hands all around, and the Lieutenant, their escort, explained that the three of them were heading to a fire base to visit the soldiers when the helicopter developed some sort of mechanical problem. The pilot decided to land at the nearest camp (ours) and leave the three of them while they returned to base to either have the problem fixed or get another helicopter. If the ship did go down on the way back to base, the crew did not want to endanger the passengers. As we turned to walk back to our team house, the blades spun up and the helicopter lifted off heading to the South.

We talked as we walked back to the team house. After giving them a brief tour, we sat at the table in the dining area and talked some more – to be totally honest I do not remember what we talked about. I just remember listening to their voices. Their speech did not have the sing-song tonal accents of the Vietnamese language. It was so different, so pleasant – and so memorable. They stayed long enough to eat lunch with us – nothing special – just whatever our cook prepared.

Eventually, we received a call from their returning helicopter. We all walked to the landing pad and waited for the ship to land. We shook hands and watched them walk to the waiting chopper. They boarded and the pilot lifted off – and they were gone. I don't think anyone talked as we walked back to the team house.

Forty-nine years later, the American Red Cross Overseas Association (ARCOA) – the Donut Dollies – had its annual convention in Pittsburgh. The Veterans Breakfast Club arranged for an event with the Dollies to talk about their experiences in Vietnam.

I attended the event and showed these two photos, hoping these women were in the audience or could be identified by others. The former Dollies asked me why I wanted to contact them, and I replied, "I just wanted to thank them for their visit and for turning just another day in Vietnam into something to remember."

Thank you, Jim, Gwen, and Karen, for turning our VBC Happy Hour in December into something to remember also.

FINAL SALUTE

TO THOSE WHO RECENTLY PASSED, WE SALUTE YOU.



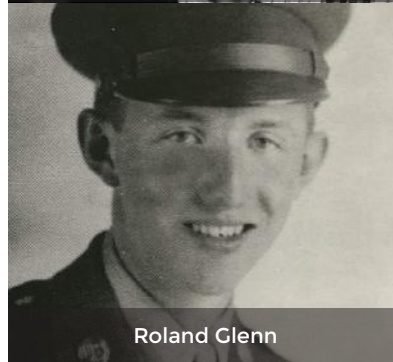
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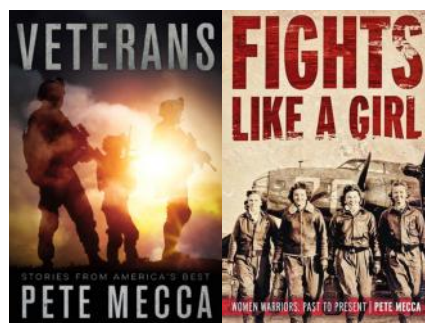


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Roland Glenn

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VBC Host Pete Mecca has written two wonderful books we highly recommend: *Veterans: Stories from America's Best* and *Fights Like a Girl: Women Warriors, Past to Present*. You can order signed copies for \$25 each at veteransarticle.com/books.html or by mailing payment to:

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CALLING ON FAITH COMMUNITIES TO BE VETERAN CHAMPIONS

by Kathy Gallowitz,
LtCol, USAF, Retired

Back in 2010, the Ohio National Guard's Family Readiness office sent out 200 letters to churches asking for their help assisting Guard members and families.

The office got no responses.

Since then, things have improved. As the director of the Ohio National Guard Community Outreach Office and founder of Vanguard Veteran, I've coached hundreds of faith leaders to become effective champions of our veterans and military families.

The spiritual needs are great. Of the nearly 2.6 million US Iraq and Afghanistan veterans:

- 15% struggle with PTSD.
- 40% have difficulty finding meaning/purpose in life.
- 55% feel disconnected from the civilian world.

Similar struggles also plague older veterans, who account for two-thirds of veteran suicides.

93% of Americans have never served in the US Armed Forces. Most civilians aren't aware of the problems veterans face and don't understand military culture. This knowledge gap inhibits the delivery of effective support.

The faith community can bridge this civilian-military divide by providing connection and a chance for healing. Churches can anchor newly separated Service Members and their families who feel at sea as they try to assimilate into new communities.

Military ministries can have many faces - there is no cookie-cutter approach. It all depends on need. Do you know the troops who are deploying in your community? Consider a send-off ceremony. Are they coming home? Welcome them back to your place of worship. Are they overseas? Deliver meals to fam-

ilies or send letters and packages. For local veterans, create a wall of honor, visit retirement communities, and practice making referrals to support services. The important thing is to build sustainable relationships - friends you can count on.

My husband, a career active Army combat veteran, and I started the Military Ministry "VetConnect" in our church two years ago. These people are now friends we can count on and vice versa.

Inspired volunteers with leadership and listening skills, along with patience and a desire to learn, are best positioned to spearhead these efforts. They should begin by asking questions. Who are our military families? What programs are in place already? What can we do for our veterans apart from saying, "Thank you for your service?"

It's not rocket science. It's "people science." Learn more and get tips for launching your military ministry at VanguardVeteran.com or contacting me at kathy@VanguardVeteran.com.

Kathy Gallowitz is author of Beyond "Thank You for Your Service": The Veteran Champion Handbook for Civilians and founder of Veteran Vanguard, which equips civilian "Veteran Champions" to strengthen our workforce and community in ways that benefit us all.



WAR LETTERS

A LONELY MARINE SHARES THE TRUTH ABOUT WAR, 1953

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In 1953, Diane Hartman-Huff was a 17-year-old volunteer "Junior Hostess" with the USO in Philadelphia. Her job was to dance and talk with GIs at USO clubs, write them letters overseas, and generally buoy their spirits without allowing servicemen to get too fresh. Diane also visited the wounded at Valley Forge Army Hospital and Naval Hospital Philadelphia. She would hold their hands and speak gently with them. Those visits remain seared in her memory. "When we started going into the hospitals," she says, "we saw the truth about war."

The letter opposite, edited for clarity, also contains some of that truth. It's from one of Diane's USO "pen pals," Sgt. Ted Koziol, who served in H&S Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.



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July 13, 1953

Somewhere in Korea, thinking of you.

I hope you don't mind my writing again so soon. I haven't anything to do so I thought I'd drop you a line.

The Reserve Area is supposed to be a rest period, but it seems all we do is train and have inspections. I think I'd rather be on the front lines. Up there your life is in danger, but at least you don't have inspections and no officer tries to give you a hard time because you have plenty ammunition and, believe me, we're not scared to use it. After being in this hole for a while, you get bitter inside and don't care for anything. I won't say much about the war because it's not worth talking about.

How is everything back home? Any fellows trying to give you a rough time? Being a USO Hostess must give you a lot of trouble keeping the wolves away. And from the pictures of you I have I can't say I blame them.

Jersey is nice but I think I'd rather settle down in California after getting discharged from the service. Every day is one day closer to getting out. I have a little less than eighteen months to do. I've already done more than half my time. I've been saving whatever I can to put a down payment on a little home with the picket fence around it. Sound silly? Well, anyway, I'm looking forward to the day.

I'd like you to do me a favor. And that is to sprinkle perfume on your letters when you write. It may sound silly but it's the next best thing to being back on the East Coast of the old U.S.A.

I don't know how these Korean people can live down here. The homes are like pig pens. The only piece of furniture they have is a table in the center of one of their rooms from which they eat. They sleep and eat on the floor. The homes are made from straw and clay. They usually have about twenty homes in a village which is mostly in some valley. While out looking for those escaped prisoners you have probably read about, I picked up some souvenirs. Korean flags, chop-sticks, and so forth. What surprised me is that their chop-sticks and eating utensils were pounded from artillery shells.

It's pitch black outside, but these few candles I have left throw off good light. I guess it won't be long before we have a black out. It seems that the g---s pick out every other night for an air raid. It's also a pain-in-the-neck having to get out of the rack in the middle of the night and freezing in a foxhole with a rifle that isn't much good against an airplane. Most of the time they just fly by without firing but we can't take any chances.

When I get married I hope I only have girls, because I couldn't see a son of mine going through all this unnecessary nonsense. Because I know for a fact that this war with the Communists isn't going to end as fast as people think. If we won't be fighting in Korea, it will be in Indochina or someplace else.

I'll admit that since I've been out here I have drunk [alcohol] ten times than what I did in the States. . . . After seeing all this killing and listening to continuous fire, a few drinks to loosen your mind does you good.

We're back in Reserve now. Which is about three miles to the rear of the lines for a rest period. But from the way our artillery has been firing as of late, along with the wounded being flown back to the hospital, I don't think it will be long before we're back up front.

When I get back to the States I'm going to sit in a bath tub all day and no one better bother me. I'm tired of taking so called "baths" in some small stream in the mountains.

We have a few radios in our area which pick up special Americans stations from Japan. It's a great feeling to hear the top records but it also gives you a big lump in your throat listening to it.

I'm going to sign off now hoping for a longer letter and a good picture of you. Don't let me down.

Be a good girl,

Ted



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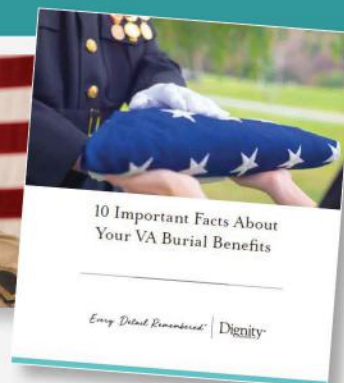
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