



WE HONOR OUR KILLED IN ACTION AND WANT AN ACCOUNTING OR RELEASE OF OUR MISSING IN ACTION OR PRISONERS OF WAR.

Official Newsletter of..."Run For The Wall"...January 2003

Quarterly Newsletter
"We Ride For Those Who Can't"
January 2003

Inside this issue:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Message from the RFTW Board of Directors<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2002 Merchandise- Missing Batteries- Chat Room• RFTW Board of Directors• Officials for RFTW XV (2003)• Calling All Road Guards• Calling All Chase Truck Drivers• Message from the Central Route Coordinator• Meet the RFTW Board:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Iron Mike- Wally- Donna "IZ" Elliot- Milo | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After The Run The Library Of Congress POW-MIA Database• Missing Gulf War Pilot's Status Upgraded to Missing/Captured• Sad News on the Loss of some RFTW Family Members• For Ratchet and Don• POW-MIA Flag To Be Flown At WWII Memorial• POW-MIA Report from the National League of POW-MIA Families• Remembering Those Who Gave Their Lives For Liberty• Yves Le Bray Pfc French Army (POW 1954-1965)• "The Boys of Iwo Jima"• A Thank you from my heart, to all American Veterans• Veterans History Project |
|---|--|

Message from the RFTW Board of Directors

2002 Merchandise

Several of you have ordered 2002 merchandise you should have received it by now, the only exception may be the "All The Way" bars or 3X5 patches. These have taken an extra long time in receiving from our supplier, and will be shipped to you as soon as they arrive. If you have other items you have not received please contact Skypilot at Skypilot@rftw.org and he'll follow up on it.

Speaking of merchandise, we are making every attempt to keep non-dated items on hand so they can be ordered at any time. This will include Back Patches, 3X5 patches, Route Bars, Flags, decals, ball caps, bumper stickers etc.

We are also going to try something different this year: the RFTW XV 2003 shirts should be available for ordering well before the Run (watch the web site). Ordering will be the same as in the past: print the order form from the web site and send it along with your check/money order to Bandit and we will get the merchandise shipped ASAP.

Missing Batteries

During last year's Run, we had some replacement radio batteries and a mic sent to Chick's in Albuquerque, NM to be picked up when the Run stopped there. For one reason or another, this did not happen. Following the Run I received a call from a family member stating they had the batteries and microphone, and would ship them to the supplier. I have misplaced the name and phone number of the person who contacted me. I need to get the shipping information on these items as we have not been credited for the return yet and may have to pay for the items. If you are the person who contacted me or have any information concerning these items please contact Iron Mike at 812-522-5575. Thanks for your help.

Chat Room

The chat room is still operating on Sunday evenings information on use and sign in instructions are available on the web site:
www.rftw.org

[top of page](#)

RFTW Board of Directors

These are the folks responsible for setting the policies and direction of RFTW your comments/suggestions should be directed to them as they are the ones responsible. They are also the ones responsible for selecting the route coordinators and approving their staffs. If you would like to become more involved in the RFTW leadership or take a more active role these are the folks to contact.

Please feel free to contact any member of the board of directors. However, when you do so by e-mail, please reference RFTW in the subject line so they know it is not junk email. Also, please direct your communication to only one BOD member. Let him or her forward to another board member if additional input is needed.

RFTW Board Of Directors	
Larry "Sky Pilot" Flenniken, Chairman 1835 FM 697 Sherman, TX 75090 903-893-5622 skypilot@rftw.org	Dave "Wally" Wallenfelsz, Vice Chairman 2290 Rickie Dr. Mosinee, WI 54455-8848 715-359-3143 wally@rftw.org
Lynda "Bandit" Papaionau, Sec./Tres. 7430 Liberty Ave. Corona, CA 92881-4533 909-735-4037 bandit@rftw.org	Donna "IZ" Elliott 4561 Davis Mtn. Rd. Pleasant Grove, AR 72567 iz@rftw.org
Milo "Nayber" Gordon F 2457 Blueberry Rd. Colby, WI 54421 715-223-3462 nayber@rftw.org	Mike "Iron Mike" East, President 635 N. Chestnut St. Seymour, IN 47274 812-522-5575 ironmike@rftw.org

Hope this finds you all well and looking forward to RFTW XV see you in Ontario
Iron Mike

[top of page](#)

Officials for RFTW XV (2003)

Central Route:

Central Route Coordinator: Terry "Doorgunner" Clevenger has been appointed to serve as the Central Route Coordinator for

RFTW XV. He can be contacted by email at: DoorgunnerRVN@hotmail.com or by phone at 619-258-6388.

Mark Rittemeyer will serve as the Assistant Central Route Coordinator. His email is: Mritt@juno.com phone: 863-816-9898.

Jerry "Peaches" Simpson will be the Central Route Road Guard Captain. His email is: maverick@shasta.com and his phone is 530-347-7217.

Southern Route:

Kent "Smurf" Wilson has been appointed to serve as the Southern Route Coordinator for RFTW XV. He can be contacted by email at: rftwsr@yahoo.com or by phone at 505-722-2046.

John "Slammer" Gebhards will serve as the Asstistant Southern Route Coordinator. His email is: jeg1576@onemain.com phone: 636-745-2458.

Don "Recon" Morrill will be the Southern Route Road Guard Captain. Kent does not have email, but he can be reached by telephone at: 773-230-8002. If you're interested in serving as a Road Guard on the Southern Route, please call Recon Don.

[top of page](#)

Calling All Road Guards

RFTW 2003 will be leaving Ontario with a larger group than ever before. As a result we are looking for a few qualified men and or women riders to serve as Road Guards. Anyone interested should contact the Road Guard Captain for the Central or Southern Route as soon as possible.

The following criteria has been established for Road Guards:

- Must have been on the Run for two (2) years, but need not have gone "all the way" either time.
- Must have current motorcycle endorsement on license for the state of licensure.
- Must be well experienced motorcycle operator. Successful completion of the Motorcycle Safety Foundation Experienced Rider Course is desirable, but not required.
- As servants to the Run and the public, Road Guards must treat everyone with honor and respect. Their function is to provide safe travel to both the Run, and the Public.

ATTENTION FORMER ROAD GUARDS: Contact Peaches (Central Route) or Recon Don (Southern Route) if you can serve again!

Central Route Road Guard Captain: Jerry (Peaches) Simpson 18550 Alice CT. Cottonwood, CA. 96022 530-347-7217 maverick@shasta.com	Southern Route Road Guard Captain: Don "Recon" Morrill 773-230-8002
---	--

[top of page](#)

Calling All Chase Truck Drivers

Run For The Wall helps pay the cost of gas for Official Chase Vehicles when they have a bike on board.

You must have a large truck or van, and a trailer which can tow at least 4 bikes at once, and must be willing to help any riders who break down on the Run. You must be reliable, and physically able to help the rider place his or her bike onto the trailer, and tie it down safely. You must be calm, patient and understanding with riders who may be somewhat stressed about their bike problems. Taking riders and their ailing scoots to the nearest repair facility may require significant detours from the Run route, as well as personal time. It's sometimes a thankless job - you'll probably miss some sleep, meals, and ceremonies, but you'll make lots of friends along the way.

The Run MAY have one or more vehicles available which need a driver, but we are primarily seeking someone who has a vehicle and trailer.

If you are interested in serving as an Official Chase Vehicle on the Central Route, please email Central Route Coordinator Terry "Doorgunner" Clevenger at: DoorgunnerRVN@hotmail.com or by phone at 619-258-6388.

If you are interested in serving as an Official Chase Vehicle on the Southern Route, please contact Southern Route Coordinator Kent "Smurf" Wilson at: rftwsr@yahoo.com or by phone at 505-722-2046.

[top of page](#)

Message from the Central Route Coordinator

Greetings and Salutations! My name is Doorgunenr, and I have been drafted by the RFTW Board of Directors as Central Route Coordinator for RFTW XV. WOW, what an honor!

For those of you who need to schedule vacation, we leave Ontario on Wednesday, May 14, and arrive in Washington, DC on Friday, May 23. For those who plan to join in along the way, the basic Central Route Schedule is posted, and I understand from Kent that the Southern Route Schedule will be posted soon.

A little background on me: I first joined RFTW in 1999, and have gone All The Way for 4 years. For the past three years - in 2000, 2001 and 2002, I served as a Road Guard, and in 2001 and 2002, I served the Run as the California State Coordinator. I had the honor of serving as the Assistant Central Route Coordinator in 2002, where I had the opportunity to meet many of you when you signed in with the Run.

I am a Vietnam veteran, and served in country with the U.S. Army from 1967 - 1969 as a Huey (C-model gunship) crew chief. I left the Army in 1969, but reenlisted in the active Army Reserve in 1991. I currently serve as a Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare Defense specialist in the 2/363rd Training Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 91st Division (TS), in Phoenix, Arizona, and hold the rank of Sergeant First Class. On the civilian side of things, I own a small muffler shop in Escondido, California.

For all you FNG's out there, I would like to say: WELCOME! You are in for a special treat. RFTW is like no other run on the planet. We are not a party run or a motorcycle tour. We are an organized demonstration of support for our POW-MIAs, and for each other. Our mission is to educate the public about POW-MIA issues, and enlist their support in obtaining a full accounting for every American still missing or imprisoned from all our wars; to honor our KIAs, those heroes who gave their lives for our liberty, and to help bring spiritual healing to veterans and their families.

For you riders who were FNGs last year: GET READY! This year will be even better! I know that sounds hard to believe, but trust me, this will be your best year.

For those who are on the Run for their third year or more: It's time for some payback! Time to get involved to help provide the wonderful experience of Run For The Wall that you've received in the past. You may ask, Doorgunner, how can I serve the Run? We have many needs: Road Guards, Pace Setters, Fuelers at gas stops to name a few. Get in touch with your State Coordinator or with myself or Kent Wilson, the Southern Route Coordinator, and see where you're needed. I know that most of you vets learned in the military never to volunteer. But RFTW is an exception - Volunteer to help out. You'll be glad you did!

[top of page](#)

Meet the RFTW Board:

The RFTW Board of Directors sets the overall policy for the Run, and handles the legal and financial dealings necessary to conduct business. We thought you'd like to meet them. We'll profile 4 of the Board members this time, with bios on the remaining two next time.

Iron Mike:

- 1993, I participated in my first Run with Bungie leading the group. I believe we may have gotten to DC with somewhere between 50-60 riders. I picked up the Run at Carefree in Southern IN.
- 1994, I hooked up with the Run again in Carefree and took my 14 year old son Nick on the Run with us. John and Linda Anderson were

leading the Run about the same size as '93.

- 1995 Found me meeting the Run in Carefree and working as a Road Guard from there in the Run had grown some but not a lot. Again John and Linda Anderson were the leaders.
- 1996 Finally make it to CA and became one of the All The Way group. Again helped out as needed mostly in the Road Guard capacity. John and Linda Anderson
- 1997 Could not make it to CA so hooked up in Carefree again and worked from there to DC as a Road Guard. Deekin was leading the pack and it had grown to possibly a 100 bikes or so.
- 1998 Found me in CA again and a member of the Black Sheep (for those that were around you know what the Black Sheep stands for all others its just part of the family history) Terry and Lori Porter lead the Run and were probably responsible for a lot of the growth that's due to the use of the internet.
- 1999 Back in CA for the entire Route worked as a road guard with Deekin leading the Run this was also the first year we used radios and cell phones to keep in touch with each other and the chase vehicles the family had definitely started to grow.
- 2000 RFTW XII and the 25th anniversary of the pull out of Vietnam found me leading the Run as National Coordinator this was also the year of the initial Southern Route shake down with Phil and Linda Wright leading it. we arrived in DC with approximately 500 bikes. In July I was elected to the Board of Directors and in Sept. was appointed as President of RFTW. One special note besides the honor of being the National Coordinator I had the privilege of picking up my grand daughter as we passed through IN and taking her to DC with us.
- 2001 Back in CA for the Run and this time found myself in a new capacity as immediate pass coordinator and mentor for Milo (Nayber) Gordon. At Milo's request I supported the Run as the pack pace setter which was a real chance of pace.
- 2002 A lot of things going on so could not make it to CA and finally caught the Run in Rainelle and went to DC with the family.

I would like to thanks all the RFTW family members whom have been there for me over the years I have made several very special friends over the years,
Mike

Wally:

Wally has participated in RFTW since 1997. He is loved by everyone, particularly for his service for 5 years driving a chase vehicle, where he always went above and beyond the call of duty to help those with breakdowns, reassuring them and getting their scooter to a fix-it shop, and back on the road. In 2002, Wally was elected to the RFTW Board of Directors, and served as the treasurer for the Central Route, and also helped a bit with merchandise as well as driving a chase vehicles. Wally is a Vietnam Vet, and is easily recognized in his grey van, with his trailer which proclaims the mission of Run For The Wall on its side, so that other drivers sharing the roads with RFTW can see what we're all about.

Donna "IZ" Elliot

I never wanted to go to the Vietnam Veterans Wall. A deep fear of seeing my brother's name, Jerry W. Elliott, on the Wall, falling completely apart and never being able to put the pieces together again was my reasoning. Okay, it was an excuse not to feel pain, but I didn't know that then.

During a trip to Vietnam in 1999 I had made a promise to the Joint Task Force - Full Accounting (JTF-FA) Team to take a section of a recovered UH-1 chopper blade to the Wall as a memorial. In May 2000 I met RFTW in Missouri, and the journey began.

As a family member of a long lost soldier missing-in-action (MIA) from a long past war, I was feeling abandoned in my search for Jerry. The Vietnam War is over, but for the families of POW/MIA's the battle for true answers continues. According to NVA war records "live prisoners were taken" from Jerry's loss site on 21 January 68 at the Old French Fort south of the village of Khe Sanh.

Before the sun set on the first day of my first Run, I knew I had found my support group. RFTW participants made sure that not only the blade made it to the Wall and was dedicated with military ceremony, but that I was surrounded by people who understood and still cared. It was an honor I will never forget.

That feeling of unity brought me to Ontario, California, in 2001 to make the Run all the way from CA to DC. It was a unique experience, and just one month later I was to call on the memories of the people on that Run as I stood in a tower overlooking a small village in the mountains of South Vietnam.

I had to travel into the bush to find an old Bru chief that might have information about Jerry. The foreign food that disagreed with me, the constant drizzling rain, red clay mud, an unknown language, wild terrain, a scooter driver I didn't know, who could not speak English, looking for a Montagnard man I wasn't sure was still alive in a restricted area. This plan had all the markings of a real cluster.

I was scared! But all the faces of all my sisters and brothers from RFTW began to come to mind. "I can do this," I thought, "I am not alone, even half-way around the world."

It was one heck of a scooter ride! Bumping down ice slick red clay roads that made my teeth chatter, to dirt trails that had almost washed out, leading deeper and deeper into the jungle, and eventually turning into footpaths that sometimes had a single rut just deep enough to snatch and twist the front tire. Quite a ride, but mission almost accomplished. I found the man, but no answers.

This past May 2002, I met up with the Southern Route in Jackson, Mississippi, and traveled to D.C. It was good to see old faces and to make new friends, and once again as soon as the Run was over I was already missing my support group. Participating in RFTW not only finally got me to the Wall and helped me to begin healing, but the public display of support for a full-accounting of all POW/MIA's keeps me going when the going gets rough. I will need you again when I return to Vietnam.

RFTW is one voice to the world, thundering across this great nation

Milo:

I'd like to give you a little back round about my involvement with RFTW. I first joined RFTW in 1993, at Rainelle, WV. I questioned my sanity for getting involved with that number of motorcycles in one pack. My pucker factor definitely hit 4 digits that first time I rode with the pack. There were around 60 or 70 bikes with the Run. I think that about 20 people went All The Way.

- In 1994, I joined RFTW in Wentzville, MO. I again felt the pride that I hadn't felt since I left the Army. I had felt it in >93 but was so overwhelmed by other emotions that I didn't recognize it.
- I did not ride RFTW in 95 or 96.
- In 97 I met up with the group at Angel Fire, NM. I couldn't believe the size of the pack - we had a two-bike formation the full length of the parking lot. That was the first year that I rode as a Road Guard. I rode in that same position in 98 and 99.
- The Run has gotten bigger and bigger each year. With growth come expansion problems.
- In 2000 I served as your Road Guard Captain. With almost 200 in the pack, I just couldn't believe that we had all them there motorcycles when we left Ontario that year!
- In 2001 I served as the Central Route Coordinator. It was a great ride in spite of all the rain.
- In 2002, RFTW XIV, I again served as your Central Route Coordinator. It was the best RFTW yet. I find that each year I make that cross-country pilgrimage, it is the best one yet.

I have now been given the privilege of serving as a member of the RFTW Board of Directors. I look forward to helping this great experience continue to provide the relief that is always has provided.

[top of page](#)

After The Run The Library Of Congress POW-MIA Database

By 'Cat' & 'iz'

After ten hard days on the Run For The Wall 2002 from California to DC; Iwo Jima; the Rolling Thunder Memorial Day parade, speeches and music at the Lincoln Memorial; and the Vietnam Veterans Wall, where do you go when your RFTW brothers and sisters mount up and ride out of D.C.? We took our separation anxiety to The Library of Congress to research the POW/MIA Database.

We were looking for any documents that might help me, Donna Elliot, in the search for my brother, last seen alive surrounded by NVA soldiers at the Old French Fort in the village of Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, on 21 January 1968.

The Library of Congress (LoC) POW/MIA Database, a library-like facility, contains information related to persons still unaccounted for as a result of the Vietnam War. The database is more accurately described as a collection of vital declassified documents stored in an incomprehensible manner, on hundreds of reels of microfiche. The non-indexed reels contain thousands of pages of redacted declassified intelligence reports; service records; loss incident reports; loss investigations; past and current recovery efforts; case analysis; loss site excavation reports; and information provided in refugee and other source reports possibly pertaining to live American Prisoners-of-War in Southeast Asia. In addition, the LoC POW/MIA Database contains records on POW/MIA policy; POW/MIA release negotiations, diplomatic activities, Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs depositions, and archival documents found in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

"Our day began with a ride on the Metro from Virginia into Washington. Traffic, need I say more?" recalls 'Cat'. "I was anticipating the knowledge of what was locked inside the LoC as 'iz' and I made our way through the maze of tunnels in the basements of the buildings that house the LoC. For those of you who have not been inside these buildings, it's an experience of its own! After getting approval to access the LoC, meaning background checks and beautiful identification pictures, we were ready. So we thought. We had prepared well, had a rolling suitcase to carry the two 3" notebooks of document information sheets that 'iz' had spent three months researching on the internet to look at and copy, notebooks, pens and pencils, and the miscellaneous stuff you pack just in case. Total readiness until we read the rules: no folders, backpacks, purses, certainly not any suitcases, were allowed into the research rooms due to theft of historical documents. The uniformed guard directed us to the temporary storage room. More confusing directions, this time to the microfiche room, we were getting closer!"

"At last, we found the POW/MIA Microfiche Research Room, nook, cranny, call it what you will, it had the films there! For two days we pulled box after box of film off the shelf, loading and viewing on microfiche machines that belong in some antique office equipment museum themselves. We were hungry, tired, necks and backs aching, running out of cash to buy debit cards for copying, but we couldn't stop until they ran us out at closing time. I was fortunate to find a document quite by accident with the name of our "sister" Kate Halpin's brother, Richard Halpin, although we still have no idea where these lists came from, or why the data was collected. The documents contained lots of blanked out spaces with black markers. So damn frustrating to be so close to information, yet so far away."

"As I sat there, reading and sometimes crying, I wondered about the officials who marked out critical information in these post-war reports," 'Cat' said. "Where are their loved ones? Why won't they give the families this information? How do these officials sleep at night? Is it that they know where their loved ones are?"

Many Americans have wondered, have questioned why the North Vietnamese would keep U.S. prisoners after the war ended. A declassified and heavily redacted CIA document distributed on 18 April 1969 states, "They will be used as a means of obtaining payment for bomb damages from the U.S. when the war ends. . . . The North Vietnamese Government hopes to receive payment from wealthy families of POWs for bomb damage. . . . to get the POWs back at the end of the war, the U.S. would have to exchange equipment for them and build up the country."

There were many similar reports in the POW/MIA Database. Some outlined the NVA policy toward U.S. POWs, and one ordered the capture and safe transport of as many American prisoners as possible beginning in late 1967. Directions were to deliver the POW first to NVA Regiment Headquarters for debriefing, and then transport to NVA Division Headquarters to be "proselytized," or converted to communism.

Did the U.S. really agree to give financial aid to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam? According to several intelligence documents we read, yes, but payment was never made. One report released on 12 April 1985 (date of information unknown,) reveals that "The DRV has refused to supply any information on U.S. MIA's, who may number up to about 2,000, although this was to be done under the terms of the 1973 Paris ceasefire. The DRV has tied this matter of providing information on the MIA's with the receipt of up to \$3.25 billion in aid from the U.S., a matter which is unlikely to be resolved in the course of an American election year."

As of June 18, 2002, the Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), published the following POW-MIA Statistics: Total U.S. Unaccounted For in Southeast Asia - 1908 (includes 459 at sea/over water losses); Pursuit Status: Further Pursuit - 1033, Deferred - 214, No Further Pursuit - 661. The Central Identification Laboratory, Hawaii, claims that since 1973, the U.S. has accounted for 677 Americans from Southeast Asia: Vietnam - 483, China - 2, Laos - 167, Cambodia - 25.

The U.S. Government, since Saigon fell in 1975, has collected 21,804 reports "possibly pertaining to Americans in Southeast Asia": Firsthand Live Sightings - 1915, Hearsay Sightings Reports - 4881, Crash/Grave Sites - 5348, Dog tags - 9760, for a Total of 21,904 (DPMO math?). DPMO declares that "of the 1915 firsthand reports received since 1975, 1897 (99.06%) are resolved."

"Resolved," this means that the firsthand reports are expressed as equal to Americans who are accounted for as "PW returnees, missionaries, civilians jailed at various times for violation of Vietnamese codes were correlated to wartime sightings of military personnel or pre-1975 sighting of civilians who remain unaccounted for. . . . were determined to be fabrications."

The remaining unresolved 18 firsthand reports "pertain to Americans reported in a captive environment," or a "reported sighting of an American in a non-captive environment (i.e. working as truck drivers; married with Vietnamese family.)"

This raises the question of live POWs, are there any left alive? The Senate Select Committee deposed Scott Barnes in 1991. The following excerpts are from his sworn testimony and based on his experience in Laos in 1981:

"From one side of the camp to another side of the camp, there was two individuals that were armed and there was two Caucasians that were being escorted from one side to the next, and what had happened is, when we were looking down, one of them had gotten struck in the butt, the rifle had gone there and he had hit him with the butt into the elbow and apparently he had told to Mike or Jerry whatever you want to refer to him as (man he refers to was a CIA operative), oh shit, and there was a minor name calling back and forth, and that's when he said, oh, my God, we did leave them behind, they're speaking American. I mean, that's American English. Seeing that they were, in fact, dirty white, you know, I cried, I mean, I really did. It was a very upsetting situation, and I said 'I can't believe we would leave them behind.' His major concern right then was to go ahead and get photographic intelligence. He was setting up."

Asked to describe the prisoners, Barnes testified, "Slim, depressive looking. It's almost like they were told to look down like this, always keep their heads down. Until he got hit. The worst condition of a living human that was still alive that I've ever seen and I've been in a lot of places and I've never seen anybody that looks physically in that bad a condition, that was alive. It was sad."

Barnes is asked, "So your conclusion was that these were prisoners of Vietnam?"

"Well, it was they were prisoner of Laos being held by Vietnamese, yeah, I mean I was skeptical that, well, maybe they are operatives that got caught in illegal operations before, but I think one's mind tends to, I don't want to believe this, and you try to think of well, maybe this is what happened, I mean, who knows? But once you analyze all the facts and the data you realize, yeah, they were men who were left behind, no doubt about it. No doubt."

1981, ten years had passed since Barnes had seen the American POW's, he and Daniels even considered trying to rescue the men they could see, and possibly more were in lock down, but decided that even if they were able to kill the guards and release the POW's, their emancipated physical conditions would prevent them from ever reaching safety.

Meanwhile, the live sighting reports have never ceased, but are always discredited. In 1985 Thomas V. Ashworth, a former Marine Corps officer and helicopter pilot in Vietnam, found himself filing a notarized affidavit saying that he was told the U.S. government refused to use the Hmong information he had collected from sources since 1982, and regarding live U.S. POW's being held in Laos, if he did not cease his efforts on behalf of the POW issue, he would be discredited, labeled publicly as being "nuts."

"Nevertheless, I was told," Ashworth wrote in his testimony, "the American prisoners could never be brought home publicly. Past government mistakes precluded openly bringing the men home. I was told that some of the prisoners would be brought home secretly, paid off, and kept from talking."

"The Government's fallback position, he said, is that I'm a nut if I pursue the matter. I understood this to mean that I would somehow be discredited if I pursued the matter. The same policy applies to anyone who gets to close to the truth."

Perhaps Ashworth's situation, fairly consistent treatment of other credible men who were public in their belief that live POWs were knowingly left behind, such as Bill Bell, Mark Smith, and Millard Peck, to mention a few, is what prompted Monika Jenson-Stevenson, author of Kiss The Boys Goodbye - How The United States Betrayed Its Own POWs In Vietnam, to remark, "The truth is that lies have become U.S. Government policy on prisoners. That's a policy more generally known as a plausible deniability."

As of 1999, "Mike" an American pilot living with ethnic Kha Hill Tribes in Laos wanted to come home (see copy of declassified information report). And if you want to know what the government has done to follow-up on this live sighting report, well, you'll just have to contact your Congressional Representatives, because according to Bob Necci of the II POW/MIA Index, their organization made an inquiry to DPMO, but never received a response.

Perhaps this type of situation is what prompted Jenson-Stevenson to ask the Senate Select Committee to issue a public statement stating that "If there are Americans alive in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia who were taken prisoner during the Vietnam War or because of activities growing out of that War, the Select Committee will welcome them home."

[top of page](#)

Missing Gulf War Pilot's Status Upgraded to Missing/Captured

On October 11th, 2002, U.S. Navy Secretary Gordon England officially changed Captain Scott Speicher's status from MIA (missing in action) to Missing/Captured. This is a significant development, which means that our government has acknowledged that there is no evidence that CPT Speicher is dead, and indicates that they believe that Iraq knows what happened to him. By doing this the Bush administration has effectively told Iraq that they must account for our missing pilot.

As our nation prepares for war with Iraq, the time for obtaining release of CPT Speicher is short. We must keep pressure on the government to make this a key issue in resolving our problems with Iraq. Any negotiations to prevent or end war with Iraq must include an accounting of the whereabouts, and return of CPT Speicher.

On October 29, 2002, President Bush signed the Speicher Bill into law. The new law will provide asylum in America to natives of the Middle East and their families for delivering any living American Persian Gulf War POW/MIA to the U.S. Government. Thanks go to Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, the sponsor for his hard work in the Senate and Congressman Dan Burton who led the way in the House. Thanks also to everyone who made calls, sent faxes, and did what you could to help this bill to become law.

Sad News on the Loss of some RFTW Family Members

Rachel "Ratchet" Julian

On Sunday afternoon, November 17, 2002, on the way back from church there was a roll-over car accident, and our precious little sister,, Rachel "Ratchet" Julian, went home to be with the Lord. She was with her intended when she died. She went quickly and relatively painlessly. He told her that he loved her and she told him that she loved him then got real quiet. That was the last words she spoke.

For those who had the privilege of knowing her while she was here in The World, Ratchet made an unforgettable difference. For years she made time in her busy, young, vibrant life to participate in Task Force Omega, ensuring that POW-MIAs would never be forgotten. She joined the Civil Air Patrol, where she proved her gift for leadership as Squadron Commander, and she volunteered as the secretary for her town's fire department Auxiliary. Every May for almost a decade, Ratchet was on hand to greet Run For The Wall with her dad and mom, Ron "Fidel" and Kay "Lil Boss", her brothers Josh and Joe "Con Man"and her sister Jessica "Spots" Ratchet helped to present the POW-MIA ceremony in Hugo, Colorado, and dispensing some of the best hugs ever given, with an unmatched enthusiasm. Ratchet made every RFTW participant feel important. Even as a little girl,, Ratchet had a special gift of being able to sense when a tough, seemingly hardened combat veteran needed a big hug, and the encouragement to go on, and with generosity and grace, provided it. Like the rest of her family, Ratchet was a Christian, committed to living the Gospel, not just talking about it. I know that Ratchet is in heaven today, sharing a can of peaches with the Lord.

Several RFTW family members went to Walsenburg, Colorado to be with the Julian family at Rachet's going away party. She was buried in her Civil Air Patrol uniform, and at the end of the ceremony, "taps" was played in honor of Ratchet's evening on this earth, followed by revile to celebrate the new morning of her eternal life with the Lord.

An angel has left earth. Ratchet brought joy wherever she went, and she loved everyone in the RFTW family with all her heart. Everyone whose life was touched by this wonderful young woman will miss her. Please add Rachet and her family to your prayer list.

If you'd like to make a donation in memory of Ratchet, they may be made to: Spanish Peaks Fire Maids, c/o John Stever & Helen Clark, 22460 Spirit Mountain Dr., Aguilar, CO. 81020. Or the Colorado Civil Air Patrol, Fremont County Starfire Squadron, c/o Ron Julian, PO Box 605, Aguilar, CO 81020. Or to please make a donation to any veterans group such as a Stand-Down for homeless veterans.

You can contact the Julian family at: Ron at: fidel@webcoast2coast.net or Kay at: lilboss@webcoast2coast.net.

Don Weaver

Don was a WWII POW who has ridden with RFTW for the past three years. Don passed away peacefully on December 19, 2002. Don was over 80 years old (he wouldn't ever tell just how old he was,) and was very active in Pointman Ministries, reaching out to veterans with spiritual and emotional needs. Don also served veterans' human needs in the best way he could, and was always there to help any and all vets he came in contact with. His work with vets will long be remembered, and he will be sorely missed. Many RFTW participants will remember Don's poignant presentations at the wonderful dinners which were put on by Pointman Ministries and Dick's Family Kitchen at our stops in Ash Fork and Williams, Arizona, on the first night of RFTW for the past several years. We'll also remember him riding with us to The Wall, offering encouragement and camaraderie to all who he encountered along the way.

Pointman Ministries has established a fund in Don's memory, and its first mission will be to help support Don's widow, Sandy, until his VA benefits can be worked out. Thereafter, all proceeds will go to support veterans' causes through Pointman Ministries. All donations are tax deductible. Gifts can be sent to Pointman Ministry, Don Weaver Memorial Fund, 8367 Pecos Dr., Suite #5, Prescott Valley, AZ 86314. For more information, call Ed "Jester" Johnson at; 928-772-9300.

For Ratchet and Don:

God called you home
He put His arms around You and whispered 'Come With Me'With tearful eye we watched you go
And saw you fade away.

Although we loved you dearly,
We could not make you stay.
A Golden Heart stopped beating;
Working hands were put to rest.

God broke our hearts to prove to us
He only takes the Best.

Author Unknown

[top of page](#)

POW-MIA Flag To Be Flown At WWII Memorial

On December 4, 2002, President Bush signed legislation for Public Law No: 107-323, which mandates that the POW-MIA flag be flown at the new WWII Memorial in Washington, DC. Prior law provided for display of the POW-MIA flag at the Korean War Veterans Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial. It may seem like a small thing, but it represents our government's formal acknowledgment that we must honor and remember our POW-MIAs from all wars, and continue in the fight to obtain a full accounting for each and every one.

POW-MIA Report from the National League of POW-MIA Families

On Veterans Day, the National League of POW-MIA Families sent thanks to all of our nation's veterans for their service to our country and to the American people. We pledge to continue our efforts to return your fellow veterans, our missing relatives, and to stand behind those in the active duty community now serving us all.

STILL MISSING: According to the Department of Defense, there are 1,903 Americans missing from the Vietnam War, 1,446 in Vietnam, 391 in Laos, 58 in Cambodia and 8 in the territorial waters of the PRC. The name of the most recent American accounted for has not yet been released, but the Marine was listed as KIA/BNR in South Vietnam in September, 1967. His remains were jointly recovered in June, 1996.

US DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VISITS LAOS: On October 21-24th, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for POW/MIA Affairs Jerry Jennings met in Vientiane, Laos, with former Lao President Nouhak, Deputy Prime Minister Som savat, Minister of Defense Phicit and other senior Lao officials to advocate greater POW/MIA cooperation to increase accounting results. These high-level Lao officials reaffirmed their government's commitment to work positively with the US on the issue. The 76th joint field operations began this past week and will continue for over a month.

US/RUSSIAN COOPERATION: Russian officials who are members of the US-Russian Commission on POW/MIAs will be in the Washington area next week for meetings with counterpart US officials aimed at generating greater cooperation between the two sides. It is the League's view that much greater emphasis needs to be focused on the work of this Commission than has previously been evident, and it is hoped that the leadership of the Bush Administration will raise this need to their political counterparts in Moscow.

US/CAMBODIA ACTIVITIES: A two-week period of joint field activities was recently completed in Cambodia. Larger-scale operations will be conducted after the first of next year, so this activity expands the usual schedule. Cambodian officials are also engaged in ongoing unilateral investigations to augment efforts of the DIA linguist, now permanently assigned in Phnom Penh, to locate and interview sources with relevant information. In early December, technical talks will be held, and JTF-FA Commander, BG Steve Redmann, is hosting a POW/MIA Seminar for Province-level Cambodian officials to increase their understanding about US capabilities and objectives.

US/VIETNAM EFFORTS: BG Redmann also recently returned from a brief trip to Vietnam to meet with his staff in Detachment II and Vietnamese counterpart officials. The 71st joint field operations in Vietnam recently concluded, and technical talks are scheduled for December 10th.

NOTES: POW/MIA car window decals are \$20 per 100 and lapel pins are \$3 each or 2/\$5, by sending a check to the League office. For added information on any subject, please contact the League's web site at www.pow-miafamilies.org or call the national office at 703-465-7432.

Ann Mills Griffiths
Executive Director
National League of POW/MIA Families
1005 North Glebe Road, Suite 170
Arlington, VA 22201
703-465-7432
www.pow-miafamilies.org

[top of page](#)

Remembering Those Who Gave Their Lives For Liberty

This quote comes to us from RFTW sister Bumps. She found it on a plaque on the wall inside St. Columb's Cathedral in Derry City, Ireland. The plaque was placed in honor of those who died during a 105-day siege in 1689, as part of the forces that held the city against invasion despite near starvation and the opposition of far greater forces.

"Since death happens to all men, fortunate indeed are they to whom it came in such a noble form. These brave men deserved well of their nation, whose greatness they did not a little to maintain. Their indomitable resolution and splendid courage is remembered with gratitude by those who enjoy the liberty for which they gave their lives."

[top of page](#)

Yves Le Bray Pfc French Army (POW 1954-1965)

NEWSWEEK, "Vietnam: Fortune's Scapegoat" January 4, 1965

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954, a fresh inscription was chiselled in the grey stone War Memorial in the little Breton town of Pleudihen. Lettered in gold, it read: 'Yves Le Bray, mort pour la France.' [died for France]. And on All Saints Day every year thereafter, someone from the Le Bray family joined in the placing of a wreath beside the plaque honouring Yves and other heroes of Pleudihen who had died for France.

Last week, however, who should be sipping 'vin rouge' [red wine] in a local cafe but Yves Le Bray - rather the worse for wear, but still alive.....

Le Bray's lost decade began....when he was a 21-year-old PFC serving as a radioman with a French artillery battalion near the port of Haiphong, in North Vietnam. Ambushed while on night patrol, Le Bray spent the next six months in a Communist prison camp. And at war's end, instead of being returned to France like most of his fellow prisoners, he was packed off by the North Vietnamese Government to Langson, near the Chinese border, to become a slave labourer.....

Having lost all trace of him, French authorities presumed that Le Bray had been killed in action, and thus it was that his name was added to the 'monument aux morts' [monument to the dead] back in Pleudihen. Eventually, more than ten years after his capture, the French Legation in Hanoi found out about Le Bray, obtained his freedom, and sent him winging homeward aboard an Air France jet.

Comment: The above article was published in Newsweek in 1965. Following the French defeat in Indochina, the North Vietnamese proclaimed that all the French POWs had been given back to France and that there were no more French POWs in captivity. Today, the Vietnamese say the same thing about American POWs. Rigidly following the Stalinist model, the North Vietnamese did not consider captured French servicemen as POWs, nor do they consider captured American servicemen as POWs. Rather, the POWs are "war criminals", who in the Stalinist doctrine are stateless individuals. Thus, the North Vietnamese could and do say they have been holding no Frenchmen, Americans, nor any POWs, while at the same time it is precisely what they have been doing. Please keep the pressure on your senators and congressional representatives to continue and increase efforts to bring home all Americans who are still not accounted for.

[top of page](#)

"The Boys of Iwo Jima"

From the book, Straight From the Heart By Michael T. Powers

Editor's Note: Each year on Run For The Wall, our last stop before visiting the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, "The Wall" is at the Iwo Jima Memorial. It is a time to pause, catch our breath, congratulate ourselves on a long, but successful journey across the nation, to take group

pictures, hug one another, and offer support for the moving and often-difficult visit to The Wall which is about to come. In the rush of our brief visit to Iwo Jima, we often overlook the Iwo Jima Memorial itself. But the Iwo Jima Memorial is much more than simply a very large, beautiful, famous statue. The story behind it is a very moving and somber one, and is one which I will remember each time I visit in the future. I hope you enjoy this, as I did.

Each year my video production company is hired to go to Washington, D.C. with the eighth grade class from Clinton, Wisconsin where I grew up, to videotape their trip. I greatly enjoy visiting our nation's capitol, and each year I take some special memories back with me.

This fall's trip was especially memorable.

On the last night of our trip, we stopped at the Iwo Jima memorial. This memorial is the largest bronze statue in the world and depicts one of the most famous photographs in history—that of the six brave Marines raising the American flag at the top of Mount Surabachi on the Island of Iwo Jima, Japan during WW II.

Over one hundred students and chaperones piled off the buses and headed towards the memorial. I noticed a solitary figure at the base of the statue, and as I got closer he asked, "Where are you guys from?"

I told him that we were from Wisconsin.

"Hey, I'm a Cheesehead, too! Come gather around Cheeseheads, and I will tell you a story."

James Bradley just happened to be in Washington, D.C. to speak at the memorial the following day. He was there that night to say good-night to his dad, who has since passed away. He was just about to leave when he saw the buses pull up. I videotaped him as he spoke to us, and received his permission to share what he said from my videotape. It is one thing to tour the incredible monuments filled with history in Washington, D.C. but it is quite another to get the kind of insight we received that night.

When all had gathered around he reverently began to speak. Here are his words from that night:

"My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I just wrote a book called Flags of Our Fathers which is #5 on the New York Times Best Seller list right now. It is the story of the six boys you see behind me. Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game, a game called "War." But it didn't turn out to be a game. Harlon, at the age of twenty-one, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out; I say that because there are generals who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen years old.

(He pointed to the statue)

You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken, and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph. A photograph of his girlfriend. Rene put that in there for protection, because he was scared. He was eighteen years old. Boys won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys. Not old men.

The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sergeant Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the "old man" because he was so old. He was already twenty-four. When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, "Let's go kill the enemy" or "Let's die for our country." He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, "You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers."

The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes walked off Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, "You're a hero." He told reporters, "How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only twenty-seven of us walked off alive?" So you take your class at school. 250 of you spending a year together having fun, doing everything together. Then all 250 of you hit the beach, but only twenty-seven of your classmates walk off alive. That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes died dead drunk, face down at the age of thirty-two, ten years after this picture was taken.

The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky, a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. His best friend, who is now 70, told me, "Yeah, you know, we took two cows up on the porch of the Hilltop General Store. Then we strung wire across the stairs so the cows couldn't get down. Then we fed them Epson salts. Those cows crapped all night." Yes, he was a fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of nineteen. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. The neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

The next guy, as we continue to go around the statue, is my dad, John Bradley from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite's producers, or the New York Times would call, we were trained as little kids to say, "No, I'm sorry sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back." My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually he was sitting right there at the table eating his Campbell's soup, but we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn't want to talk to the press. You see, my dad didn't see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, 'cause they are in a photo and a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley from Wisconsin was a caregiver. In Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died, and when boys died in Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed in pain. When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, "I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. DID NOT come back."

So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time."

Suddenly the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero in his own eyes, but a hero nonetheless.

End Note: A few days before placing the flag, John Bradley had braved enemy mortar and machine-gun fire to administer first aid to a wounded Marine and then drag him to safety. For this act of heroism he would receive the Navy Cross, an award second only to the Medal of Honor. Bradley never mentioned his feat to his family. Only after his death did Bradley's son, James, begin to piece together the facts of his father's heroism.

Michael T. Powers
HeartTouchers@aol.com

You can contact James Bradley, the author of Flags of our Fathers by visiting:
<http://www.IwoJima.com>

[top of page](#)

A Thank you from my heart, to all American Veterans

This is a thank you message from Cliff Pena's niece all the veterans. Cliff was a sergeant in the second platoon of the company I was in. He was wounded in the Ia Drang November, 1965. Please take the time to read this message. And if you don't mind, send Cliff a short reply to let him know how much you appreciate the message at: Cliffiedoo@aol.com. Cliff is one heck of a guy and I'm hoping he will join us on RFTW 2003. -"Jumper" jlbraga@raytheon.com

Night falls, and as I tuck myself safely in my bed, my mind races, thinking of all the duties I've done today and will do tomorrow. Then I think how small and insignificant they are compared to the duties of American Veterans. How everyday I take my freedom for granted, how I just expect it to be there and always have, then I think, tomorrow I will thank all the Veterans I know for putting their lives, limbs, and sanity on the line for me and for all Americans...tomorrow never comes because by the time I awake I've forgotten everything I thought about the night before, then I'm busy doing all my little tasks and I remember, but I'm busy so I'll do it later, later never comes...until now.

I am setting everything else aside now because I want you to know that whether I know you or not I am very grateful for the freedom that I and so many others take for granted, and without you it wouldn't be here and maybe I wouldn't be either! I want you to know that when I'm safe in my bed I say prayers for those of you who can't sleep, who can't keep the nightmares from coming, who can still hear all terror you must have gone through, and I wish that for you the war had ended, but I know for some of you the real war started when you came home.

I pray that people won't forget you , that the government would be as loyal to you as you were to them, after all it is THEIR freedom too, but I guess they don't see it that way.I pray for the unsung heroes and all of you whose home since the war[s] has been a tiny room in a V.A. hospital, and I pray that someday you find that innocence that you once knew, the peaceful nights sleep you once had and the sanity that once filled your heads and hearts. Thank you ! Thank you ! Thank you ! God Bless you all!

Peace and Joy,
An All American Girl

[top of page](#)

Veterans History Project

There are 19 million war veterans living in the United States today, but every day we lose 1,500 of them. Motivated by a desire to honor our nation's war veterans for their service and to collect their stories and experiences while they are still among us, the United States Congress created the Veterans History Project. Public Law 106-380 calls upon the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to collect and preserve audio- and video-taped oral histories, along with documentary materials such as letters, diaries, maps, photographs, and home movies, of America's war veterans and those who served in support of them.

The Veterans History Project covers World War I, World War II, and the Korean, Vietnam, and Persian Gulf wars. It includes all participants in those wars--men and women, civilian and military. It documents the contributions of civilian volunteers, support staff, and war industry workers as well as the experiences of military personnel from all ranks and all branches of service--the Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy, as well as the U.S. Coast Guard and Merchant Marine.

Veterans, active military personnel, and civilians are invited to join the Volunteer Corps. Volunteers are the individuals who interview war veterans and identify documents to donate. If you are a veteran, you possess a valuable resource in your war memories and military knowledge, you are especially encouraged to participate as both an interviewer and an interviewee. An on-line project kit contains all the information and forms you need to participate as a volunteer interviewer.

To learn more about how you or your group can participate in the Veterans History Project, visit their website at
<http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/vets-home.html>

[top of page](#)

[CENTRAL ROUTE](#) | [SOUTHERN ROUTE](#)

[About Run For The Wall](#) | [Our Mission Statement](#) | [Contacts](#) | [Newsletter Online](#)
[Run Road Report](#) | [Board of Directors](#) | [Photo Gallery](#)
[Merchandise](#) | [Our Links](#) | [HOME](#)

Please direct website comments or questions to [webmaster](#)
This website hosted & maintained by:

