

# AFSA

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2016

DEFENDING THE ENLISTED CORPS AND THEIR FAMILIES SINCE 1961 | [www.hqafsa.org](http://www.hqafsa.org)

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RECRUITING**

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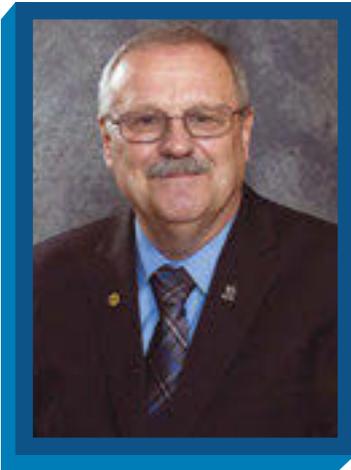
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**Daniel Yeomans,**  
CMSgt, USAF Retired,  
AFSA International  
President

## THANK YOU AND FAREWELL

This is my final commentary before I turn over AFSA's reigns of command to a new International President. I want to thank all of our members and our great HQ AFSA staff for all of your support, encouragement, and guidance over the past four years. I feel truly honored to have served side-by-side with so many dedicated American patriots. I wish

I could name everyone who made a difference. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I want to share what I believe are our accomplishments over the past four years. Some are good, some are O.K., and others are still "under construction." It should be no surprise that I will use the AFSA four pillars as my final goodbye.



**Legislation:** The past four years have been a great success. AFSA assumed a number of leadership positions in The Military Coalition (TMC), and as a result, was able to steer the Coalition in the right direction on many occasions. True—we didn't win everything we sought. However, we held off pay freezes, maintained educational benefits, the commissaries are still open for business, healthcare for our Veterans and active members is still viable and cost effective, and our retirement benefits remain intact. When AFSA wins, every member who wears a uniform, whether they are Air Force or not, is a winner. AFSA bleeds blue, but talks purple on Capitol Hill.

**Membership:** Many great members in the past four years went PCS to heaven. The numbers were staggering. Our ability to conduct business as usual at the Chapter level became more challenging. The number of recruiters and retainers decreased. AFSA lost 2,500 members over the past four years. While we were losing 2,500 members, many membership groups of TMC closed their doors. Other membership groups experienced dramatic decreases. Sounds bleak—right? Despite these challenges, AFSA stayed the course thanks to you and a great

**“Despite reduced troop strength and an unforgiving mission workload, our chapters have continued to support veterans, communities, and their bases.”**

HQ AFSA staff that has picked up the recruiting and retention duties previously placed solely on the shoulders of our members. At this PAC, we will ask you to consider allowing members from all service components to join AFSA as full members. There are many enlisted in other services looking for a home. Help us approve a by-law change that will allow us to open those doors.

**Communications:** What a change four years make! We improved our communications by leaps and bounds. Our website is now informative and state of the art. We updated our outdated records management system, and while the road was rocky, we are finally getting to where we need to be. Voter Voice allows our members to support key legislative issues on a real-time basis. We have developed a communications rhythm that allows us to reach out to our members at the right time with the right information. I would be lying if I told you everything is perfect—we have miles to go before we sleep. But thanks to your input, and great HQ AFSA support, we are getting there.

**Fraternity:** I am continually amazed by the level of involvement of our Chapters. Despite reduced troop strength and an unforgiving mission workload, our chapters have continued to support veterans, communities, and their bases. My greatest regret, however, was our inability to solve the family membership dilemma. Family membership has dropped by over 6,000 members during my time in office. While some Chapters have superb family programs, they are nonexistent at others. We need to solve the “relevance” challenge for our family members. How can we be an attractive choice for family members moving forward? We are trying!

With that, a final thank-you. I never realized how much is involved to be an effective International President. Like others, I leave office with a list of “things to do” that I will turn over to our next International President. Know that I care for AFSA, will continue to do all I can to support our great Association, and will walk with you until I can't walk any longer. God Bless all of you—see you soon, I hope.

*Daniel C. Yoman*



**PRESIDENTS CLUB**

*Thank you to the following charter members of the AFSA VIP President's Club.*

*We honor your firm commitment to our Association and its mission to protect and serve our 100,000 members, and the future of our Air Force enlisted corps and their families.*

<i>Geno Piccoli</i>	<i>Michael Parente</i>	<i>CMSAF Gerald Murray</i>
<i>Robert Frank</i>	<i>Elaine Warner-Savage</i>	<i>Colin Mike Gates</i>
<i>Mark Stevenson</i>	<i>Dan Yeomans</i>	<i>Marylynn Scherlin</i>
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<i>Maria McDowell</i>	<i>Carolyn Piccoli</i>	<i>Sandra Valdezate</i>
<i>Michael Carton</i>	<i>Carol Ruholl</i>	<i>Stephen Francis</i>
<i>Kathryn Oden</i>	<i>Dale Lutzen</i>	<i>Frank Bearse</i>
	<i>Jeff Ledoux</i>	<i>Timothy Dickens</i>
	<i>David Bamburg</i>	<i>Sarah Sullivan</i>
	<i>Maureen Bamburg</i>	<i>Jeffrey Foreman</i>
	<i>CMSgt Steve Nichols</i>	<i>Michael G. Holmes</i>
	<i>SMgt Angell Nichols</i>	<i>Fred Dembinski</i>
	<i>David McCoy</i>	
	<i>James Monahan</i>	
	<i>Frank Ruholl</i>	



**Geno Piccoli**  
*Honorary Chairman  
AFSA Presidents Club*

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## EDITORIAL STATEMENT

**AFSA Magazine** is the only magazine  
dedicated solely to serving the Total  
Enlisted Corps and their families. We  
are obliged to serve the interests and  
concerns of enlisted personnel and our  
members by striving to report timely

and accurate information. The editors  
reserve the right to edit all submissions  
but will never materially alter the author's  
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## AFSA

Founded in 1961 by four Air Force  
enlisted people, AFSA is a non-profit,  
tax-exempted organization representing  
the professional and quality-of-life  
concerns of the Total Air Force (active  
duty and components) enlisted  
members in active, retired, and veteran  
status, and their families, on Capitol Hill  
and in the Pentagon. Through its many  
programs and worldwide chapters,  
AFSA also reaches out to bases  
and communities to help those in  
need and to raise awareness of the  
sacrifices, concerns, and contributions  
of those who have worn or are wearing  
enlisted chevrons.

## AMF

An AFSA affiliate, the Airmen Memorial  
Foundation (AMF) provides educational  
assistance to dependent children of the  
Total Air Force enlisted force. It is also  
an annual participant in the Combined  
Federal Campaign (CFC #10517).

## AMM

An AFSA affiliate, the Airmen Memorial  
Museum (AMM), located in AFSA's  
Airmen Memorial Building, features  
rotating exhibits and stands as a tribute  
to those who have served. It is also  
an annual participant in the Combined  
Federal Campaign (CFC #10518).

## IMPORTANT AFSA NUMBERS

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Div. 2, MSgt Steven Haro;  
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Crissinger; Div. 5, MSgt Trey Horn;  
Div. 6, Kerry Wright;  
Div. 7, MSgt Michael Shelley

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**On the Cover:** The POW/MIA flag was created  
by the National League of Families and officially  
recognized by Congress in conjunction with the  
Vietnam War POW/MIA issue, "as the symbol of  
our Nation's concern and commitment to resolv-  
ing as fully as possible the fates of Americans  
still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in  
Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for  
their families and the Nation."

# BELLEVUE UNIVERSITY—AN AFSA PREFERRED PARTNER

Bellevue University is proud to be selected as a Preferred Partner for AFSA. Founded 50 years ago to serve military and adult learners, Bellevue University is a private, non-profit, regionally accredited institution located just outside the gates of Offutt AFB in Bellevue, Nebraska.

With more than 50 bachelor's and 25 master's degree programs, Bellevue University understands the needs of busy, working military. Our commitment is to make your education affordable and equip you with the confidence, professional skills, and relevant knowledge to apply in the workplace.

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**Earn your degree today for your best possible future. Contact us at [military@bellevue.edu](mailto:military@bellevue.edu), or 866-676-5440.**

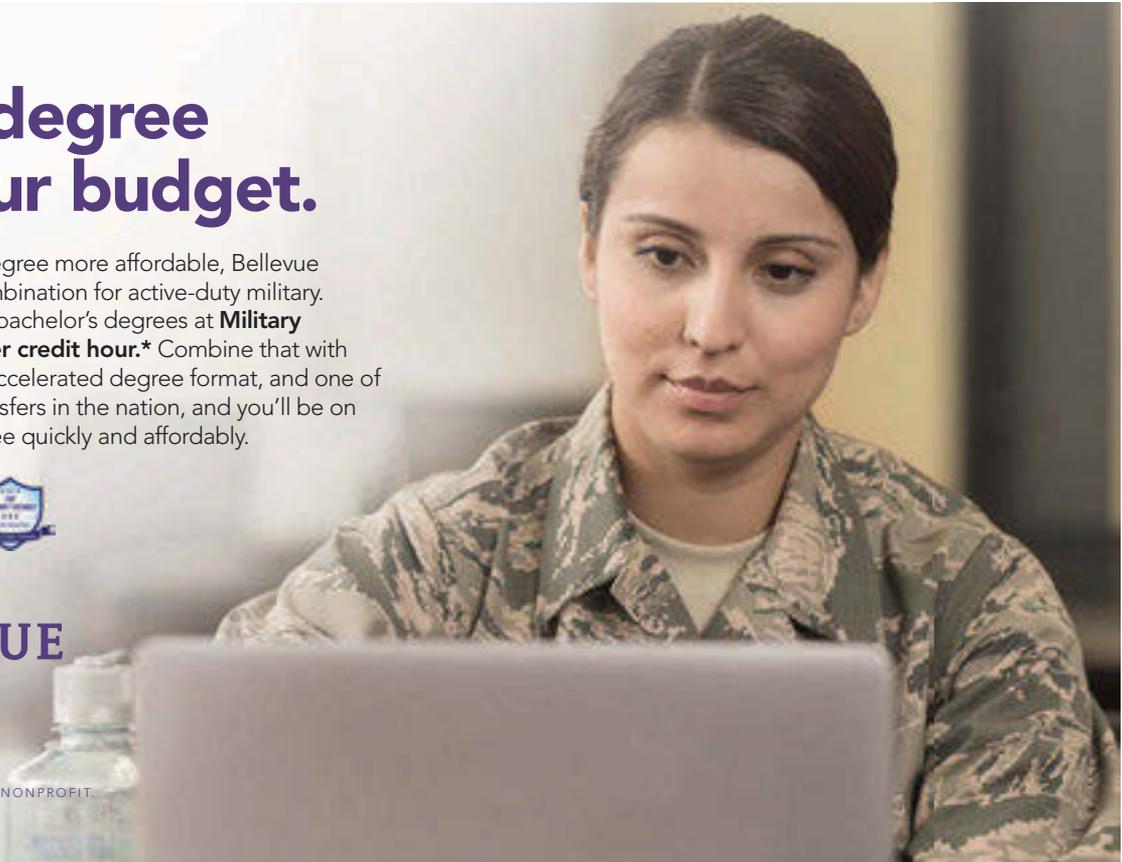
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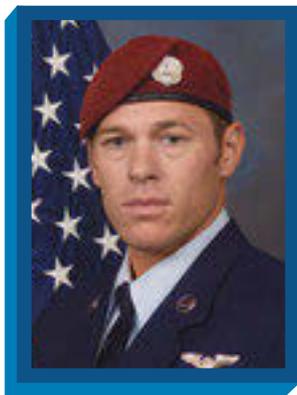
# CONVENTION AWARD RECIPIENTS

**HOT  
NEWS**

DIRECT FROM THE 2016 AFSA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION &  
PROFESSIONAL ARMEN'S CONFERENCE

Held August 20–24, 2016, in San Antonio, Texas, the 2016 AFSA International Convention & Professional Airmen's Conference brought together AFSA Members with Senior Air Force and Congressional leaders for professional development, the sharing of ideas and information and to conduct Association business. A major highlight of the event is the Award and Recognition Ceremonies, which recognize specific members and supporters who have accomplished great things in support of our Airmen, Veterans, and their families. We are proud to recognize the names of the following International Award Recipients.

## **WILLIAM H. PITSENBARGER HEROISM AWARD**



**SSgt Daniel Flechsenhaar**

## **2015 AFSA EXCELLENCE IN MILITARY LEADERSHIP**



**Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force  
Gen. Mark A. Welsh III**

## **2015 L. MENDEL RIVERS AWARD OF EXCELLENCE**



**U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski**

## **AMERICANISM AWARD**

**The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS)**

## AFSA MEMBER OF THE YEAR



Division 6  
**TSgt Michael J. Burd**  
Chapter 1328,  
Edwards AFB, CA



Division 1  
**MSgt Angell L. Nichols**  
Chapter 102,  
JB Andrews AFB, MD



Division 2  
**TSgt Ryan R. Trandell**  
Chapter 358,  
Langley AFB, VA



Division 3  
**CMSgt (RET) Kevin M. Ott**  
Chapter 951,  
Ellsworth AFB, SD



Division 4  
**TSgt Brandon D. Scamardo**  
Chapter 652,  
Keesler AFB, MS



Division 5  
**MSgt Jeffrey A. Koeing**  
Chapter 1556,  
Osan AB, Korea

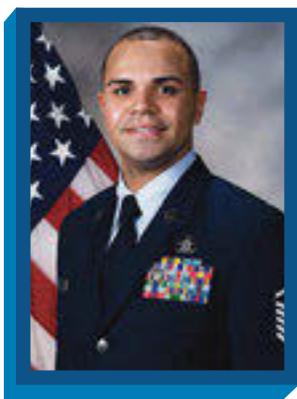


Division 7  
**MSgt Krista M. Thomas**  
Chapter 1669,  
RAF Lakenheath, UK

## CMSGT. RICHARD L. ETCHENBERGER NCO OF THE YEAR AWARD



Division 4  
**TSgt Jessi L. Baugh**  
Chapter 1066,  
Goodfellow AFB, TX



Division 1  
**TSgt Alexander Collazo**  
Chapter 201,  
Dover AFB, DE



Division 2  
**TSgt Sarah A. Mrak**  
Chapter 371,  
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



Division 3  
**SSgt David A. Trevino**  
Chapter 985,  
Tinker AFB, OK



Division 5  
**TSgt Carey D. Burgess**  
Chapter 1178,  
F.E. Warren AFB, WY



Division 6  
**TSgt Heather L. Celano**  
Chapter 1253,  
Creech AFB, Indian Springs, NV

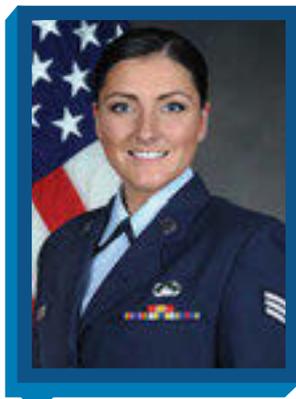


Division 7  
**TSgt Michael J. Denapoli**  
Chapter 1674,  
Ramstein AB, GE

## AFSA AIRMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD



Division 6  
**SrA Bryan W. Holland**  
Chapter 1356,  
Vandenberg AFB, CA



Division 1  
**SrA Jessica L. Carlton**  
Chapter 751,  
Wright-Patterson AFB, OH



Division 2  
**SrA Dale A. Janik**  
Chapter 371,  
Seymour Johnson AFB, NC



Division 3  
**SrA William J. Harrison, Jr.**  
Chapter 988,  
Altus AFB, OK



Division 4  
**SrA Sarah A. Flynn**  
Chapter 1076,  
Lackland AFB, TX



Division 5  
**A1C Summer R. Seale**  
Chapter 1474,  
Eielson AFB, AK



Division 7  
**SrA Jeffrey R. Hawkins**  
Chapter 1674,  
Ramstein AB, GE

## AFSA FAMILY MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD



Division 4  
**Debra A. Oesterreich**  
Chapter 615,  
Barksdale AFB, LA



Division 1  
**Peggy D. Caldwell**  
Chapter 155,  
Portsmouth, NH



Division 2  
**Jessica L. Boseman**  
Chapter 554,  
Eglin AFB, FL



Division 3  
**Patricia Dalzell**  
Chapter 804,  
Kansas City, MO



# AFSA AWARD NOMINEES AND RECIPIENTS— RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

## AFSA INTERNATIONAL MEMBERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Division 1: **SMSgt Joe C. Dittman**,  
Chapter 751, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH

Division 4: **CMSgt (Ret) Paul G. Hulgan**,  
Chapter 1075, Randolph AFB, TX

Division 5: **MSgt Jeffrey A. Koenig**,  
Chapter 1556, Osan AB, Korea

Division 7: **MSgt Carrie L. Nunez**,  
Chapter 1674, Ramstein AB, GE

## AFSA CHAPTER OF THE YEAR OVER 500 MEMBERS

Division 4: Chapter 652, Keesler AFB, MS

Division 1: Chapter 751, Wright-Patterson  
AFB, OH

Division 2: Chapter 460, Moody AFB, GA

Division 3: Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO

Division 5: Chapter 1474, Eielson AFB, AK

Division 6: Chapter 1328, Edwards AFB, CA

Division 7: Chapter 1669,  
RAF Lakeheath, UK

## AFSA CHAPTER OF THE YEAR UNDER 500 MEMBERS

Division 6: Chapter 1253, Creech AFB, NV

Division 1: Chapter 779, Fort Wayne, IN

Division 2: Chapter 455, Columbus, GA

Division 3: Chapter 988, Altus AFB, OK

Division 4: Chapter 1066,  
Goodfellow AFB, TX

Division 7: Chapter 1661, Volkel, NL

## AFSA CMSGT RICHARD L. ETCHBERGER CHAPTER COMMUNICATION AWARD

Division 2: Chapter 404, Robins AFB, GA

Division 3: Chapter 951, Ellsworth AFB, SD

Division 4: Chapter 652 Keesler AFB, MS

Division 6: Chapter 1252, Nellis AFB, NV

Division 7: Chapter 1674, Ramstein AB, GE

## AFSA CMSGT RICHARD L. ETCHBERGER DIVISION COMMUNICATION AWARD

Division 3: Omaha, NE

Division 4: Randolph, TX

## AFSA VSP OF THE YEAR

Division 2: **SMSgt Kristi M. Tellier**,  
Chapter 358, Langley AFB, VA

Division 1: **TSgt Christopher A. Revier**,  
Chapter 751, Wright-Patterson AFB, OH

Division 3: **Ms. Helen F. Hatz**,  
Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO

Division 4: **SMSgt Kara E. Vaughn**,  
Chapter 1054, Sheppard AFB, TX

Division 5: **Ms. Beverly I. Patrick**,  
Chapter 1178, F.E. Warren AFB, WY

Division 6: **SSgt Johnny T. O'Hagan**,  
Chapter 1252, Nellis AFB, NV

Division 7: **SSgt Alexandra V. Meekins**,  
Chapter 1674, Ramstein AB, GE

## AFSA VAVS AWARD

Division 4: **MSgt (Ret) William A. Braidwood**, Chapter 615, Barksdale AFB, LA

Division 1: **TSgt (Ret) Ralph Appleby**,  
Chapter 155, Portsmouth, NH

Division 3: **Ms. Adeline (Addy) Davidson**,  
Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO

## AFSA INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AWARD (CHAPTER)

Division 2: Chapter 404, Robins AFB, GA

Division 3: Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO

## AFSA INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATIVE AWARD (INDIVIDUAL)

Division 2: **SSgt Thorval Munksgaard**,  
Chapter 404, Robins AFB, GA

Division 3: **CMSgt (Ret) Mark R. Clark**,  
Chapter 804, Kansas City, MO

Division 6: **SSgt Christina M. Preston**,  
Chapter 1252, Nellis AFB, NV

## AFSA COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Division 3: Chapter 985, Tinker AFB, OK

Division 1: Chapter 751, Wright-Patterson  
AFB, OH

Division 2: Chapter 460, Moody AFB, GA

Division 4: Chapter 652, Keelsler AFB, MS

Division 5: Chapter 1550, Hickam AFB, HI

Division 6: Chapter 1181, Peterson AFB, CO

# REWARDING EXCELLENCE

## CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

AFSA and the Airmen Memorial Foundation (AMF) joined together to conduct a scholarship program to financially assist the undergraduate studies of eligible, dependent children of the enlisted Total Air Force members. AFSA, AMF (including the CMSAF Scholarship Program), and AFSA International Auxiliary award scholarships valued from \$500 to \$3,000 to students attending an accredited academic institution. The grant amount and total number of scholarships awarded are dependent upon funds available. To date, over \$2 million in scholarships have been awarded to Air Force dependent children.

### AFSA SCHOLARS

The 2016 AFSA Scholarship Program awarded 12 scholarships totaling \$23,500. AFSA's top scholarship went to Natalie Ebreo, who will be continuing her education at Virginia Tech University.

**\$2,500 Fini Scholarship**  
Natalie Ebreo

**\$2,500 Abbott Scholarship**  
Rachel Kriete

**\$2,500 Klobus Scholarship**  
Brianna Gresham

**\$2,500 Staton Scholarship**  
Mueller MacKenzie

**\$2,000 Garner Scholarship**  
Carson Wilber

**\$2,000 Rouser Scholarship**  
Lauren Gawel

**\$2,000 Page Scholarship**  
Jacob Dempsey

**\$1,500 The AFSA Excellence in Military Leadership Scholarship in honor of Gen. Gilmory Michael Hostage III**  
Maria Seitz

**\$1,500 The AFSA Americanism Scholarship in honor of Honor Flight Network**  
Jessica Wisniewski

**\$1,500 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Adam Johnson

**\$1,500 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Hali McDonald

**\$1,500 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Emma Hobby

### CMSAF SCHOLARS

The 2016 Chief Master Sergeants of the Air Force Scholarship Program awarded 11 scholarships totaling \$16,500. The top scholarship—the CMSAF Paul W. Airey Memorial Scholarship—goes to John Phillip Hendershott. He will continue his education at the University of Utah.

**\$3,500 CMSAF Paul W. Airey Memorial Scholarship**  
Sponsored by GEICO®  
John Phillip Hendershott

**\$2,500 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Jordan Elizabeth Lipinski

**\$2,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Michael Thomas Sheehan

**\$1,500 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Dalton James Wright

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Jordan Alyssa DuBose

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Kyle Thomas Henry

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Alia Quinn Pappas

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Christina Elizabeth Visciotti

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Kelsey MacLeod Corcoran

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Shannon Elizabeth Corcoran

**\$1,000 CMSAF Scholarship**  
Savannah Paige Cowen

### AMF SCHOLARS

The 2016 AMF Scholarship Program awarded 23 scholarships totaling \$33,500. Without the support of the gracious donors and sponsors, the AMF would be unable to grant the number of scholarships provided to deserving recipients each year.

**\$3,000 Veterans United Home Loans Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Erin Rowcliff

**\$2,000 Richard Howard Scholarship**  
Kaitlin Ferrari

**\$2,000 Julene Howard Memorial Scholarship**  
Elaine Phillips

**\$2,000 Sharon Piccoli Memorial Scholarship**  
Tabitha Gillespie

**\$2,000 Sgt James R. Seal Memorial Scholarship**  
Nathalee Andrews

**\$2,000 Academic Excellence Scholarships**  
Joshua R. Smith

**\$1,500 Academic Excellence Scholarships**  
1. Elizabeth Evans  
2. Joanie Rosas  
3. Gabrielle Alls  
4. Rachel Sanford  
5. Cecelia Pletan  
6. Karis Pitts  
7. Melissa Pugh

**\$1,000 USAA Scholarship**  
1. Jacob Baker  
2. Andrew Brannon  
3. Jessica Delgado  
4. Bethany Lovell  
5. Brandon Lundmark

**\$1,000 GEICO Scholarship**  
1. Dustin Pletan  
2. Sarah Cheney  
3. Valerie Welch  
4. Jacob Freer  
5. Cameron Wright

### AUXILIARY SCHOLARS

**\$1,000 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Allyson Marlett

**\$1,000 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Boone Always

**\$1,000 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Lauren Moran

**\$1,000 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Brianna Geis

**\$1,000 Academic Excellence Scholarship**  
Anne Hobby



A wreath placed in remembrance of POWs and MIAs on Memorial Day 2016 stands at the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Virginia.

# A HARD FOUGHT HOMECOMING

## WHAT THE NATIONAL LEAGUE OF POW/MIA FAMILIES MEANS TO AMERICA

By Ann Mills-Griffiths, Chairman of the Board & CEO, National League of POW/MIA Families

Contemplating the impact of the accounting mission over the last 40-plus years, one must look to the League. I take great pride in the role we have played in changing our nation's view about the importance of standing with and behind those who serve our country. The worldwide impact has been astonishing as we've seen nations around the world—from Kuwait, to Russia, South Korea, Japan; from South America to the Balkans—seek answers about their own missing citizens though, of course, Israel has always been at the top seeking answers. This is especially true in relation to those captured or missing while serving their respective countries.

Frustrated by uncertainty over the fate of missing loved ones, the National League of POW/MIA Families was formed in 1970. Our POW/MIA flag is the compelling symbol necessary to rally support and convey the plight of captured and missing loved ones and their families.

It has taken decades of political and policy changes, intervening wars, scientific advances, increased communication

capability and more to reach the level of visibility that exists today. The confluence of such diverse factors and personal engagement to deal with them while seeking to achieve humanitarian accounting objectives has not only motivated my life's work, but allowed me the privilege of being part of historical change reflecting America's commitment to accounting—as fully as possible—for veterans not yet returned.

On January 27, 1973, all celebrated the imminent release of our POWs and heard unrealistic promises that all American POWs were coming home and “the missing would be accounted for within a 60-day time frame.” That promise by President Richard Nixon was not met. By the end of the war in 1975, the accounting mission foundered and the going was tough.

Reeling from what was then the longest war in American history, there was no political will or policy priority, little focus or effort and very few answers. Our battle to raise and sustain public interest brought formation of the POW/MIA



Service members assigned to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) escort human remains during a disinterment ceremony honoring a fallen military member from the Vietnam War at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, on Nov. 5, 2015. The remains were found in Vietnam and transported to the laboratory in Hawaii for examination and DNA testing. DPAA conducts global search, recovery, and laboratory operations to identify unaccounted-for Americans in support of the Department of Defense's personnel accounting efforts. *(Photo courtesy Vernon Young Photography)*

Interagency Group (IAG) and, by early 1982, my low-level security clearance to review intelligence reporting was raised to TOP SECRET so I could participate fully.

President Reagan authorized a ten-part strategy: raising policy-level attention, partnering with the League, developing public diplomacy to reach governments withholding answers, increasing intelligence collection priorities, and ensuring timely, factual communication with the families and the veteran community.

There were more elements and, thankfully, the chief architect of that strategy, Richard Childress, is today the League's Senior Policy Advisor, a volunteer position he accepted in early 1989 when he retired as an army colonel and left the Reagan National Security Council staff after an unprecedented eight years as Director of Asian Affairs.

Recently, accusations—the vast majority false, but a few true—again came to the attention of Congress and the media. Unlike in the mid-1980s, the primary targets of accusations were not political leaders, the DC bureaucracy or me. This time, the focus was internal operational dysfunction—field and laboratory—and mismanagement of the accounting process.

Fortuitously, Vietnam Veteran Chuck Hagel was then Secretary of Defense and it was to him I proposed a solution: forming a new agency comprising existing organizations. The proposal was fully coordinated with and developed by

trusted people in and out of government who had knowledge, experience and commitment to the mission and thus ability to contribute rationally. Very importantly, military personnel and civilians working in the accounting community were willing to risk contributing. They did so outside of official channels and incognito due to relationships formed from decades of responsible engagement with the League.

Correcting internal dysfunction is always challenging. It became more difficult than Secretary Hagel or any of us thought when the wrong people were initially charged with reorganization. Thankfully, Chuck Hagel stepped in and listened to the League and our strong veteran supporters, stating categorically, "Failure is not an option." Just before his resignation, or removal, as Secretary of Defense, he demanded transparent, responsible action from the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy.

Today, following two years of turmoil generated by uninformed and ill-informed "leaders," the newly formed Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is struggling. Despite more personnel, massive restructuring, increased funding, and significant focus on efficiencies and effectiveness, dysfunction persists. The abrupt departure of the selected director after only one year on the job devastated most POW/MIA families, supportive veterans, and over 600 dedicated military and civilian personnel working on the issue. Very importantly, his broken promises also reneged on

pledges to foreign counterparts whose nations' partnerships are indispensable.

Determination and commitment will prevail. They simply must! President Reagan's admonition applies: "Trust, but verify!" Our nation and countries around the world will be watching, as will the members of our military and their families. We'll be counting on AFSA, active duty counterparts in sister services, and our long-committed national veteran community to do the same.

We cannot allow dysfunctional government entities to disrupt the policy priority of seeking answers about personnel who are captured or become missing and unaccounted-for in combat. Accounting for them as fully as possible is vital to the commitment of our military members and their families.

A master sergeant about to leave for his third deployment to Iraq sent a letter to one of our volunteers. Paraphrasing, he said "I can do this because I know you have my back." The League has the backs of all of you as you wear our country's uniforms and deploy throughout this world to protect our freedom.

A young soldier, recently returned from Afghanistan, sent our volunteer a POW/MIA flag he had carried on every patrol, including finding and disposing of 150 IEDs. He had protected the flag by carrying it between his body and his

body armor. His accompanying note stated: "This flag means a lot to me personally and (it) was my honor to carry it."

These two examples help explain why we do what we do, working not only to account for our missing loved ones, but for all of you and your families.

I've been engaged with AFSA for many years, most often as a guest speaker, motivated by then-first lieutenant, now Col. Danny Davis, USAF. Everywhere he was assigned to serve—from the UK to Texas, to Germany, South Carolina, Virginia, and now at Keesler AFB in Mississippi—he supported our humanitarian quest with a dedication and principled sense of mission that continue to inspire my admiration and gratitude.

Recently, while participating in an AFSA event at Joint Base Andrews, I was honored to be asked to join as an associate member. After being assured that my inability to attend meetings wouldn't disqualify me, I readily agreed, so am now a proud associate member and supporter, grateful for your service to our nation. I'm inspired by the countless sacrifices and contributions you and your families make for all Americans.

We are in your debt!

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For additional information, visit [www.pow-miafamilies.org](http://www.pow-miafamilies.org)



Kim Maeyama, site recovery leader, cordons off coordinate points where human remains are located at a DPAA dig site in Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, on Nov. 15, 2015. A team of 35 Americans and approximately 75 Vietnamese locals took part in the search for remains of a service member shot down in the Vietnam War. (Photo courtesy Vernon Young Photography)

# ONE FAMILY'S QUEST

## COLLEEN SHINE'S STRUGGLE TO RETURN HER FATHER'S REMAINS

In December 1972, the Shine family learned that Air Force fighter pilot Capt. Anthony Shine was declared missing in action when he failed to return from a fighter escort and reconnaissance mission in Vietnam. Shine's daughter Colleen was 8 years old at the time, and she and her mother and brothers were, of course, very distraught. Months and then years went by, however, and government officials were never able to make a determination of the pilot's whereabouts; whether he was still alive, a prisoner of war, or killed in action.

That murkiness drove Colleen Shine to pursue an unrelenting personal mission to determine her father's fate. Colleen's mother, Bonnie, had already set an example by networking with other POW/MIA families and paying for a thousand postcards to be printed asking for information about her husband and having them air-dropped in the region of northern Vietnam where his plane was last seen. Bonnie and her children went to Washington, D.C., to press their case. Colleen was quoted in a press report reposted on the Arlington Cemetery website saying, "I remember the first time I saw the White House was with the 'President Carter, where's my Daddy?' picket sign in my hand."

Fourteen years after the first notification from the military, the Shines learned of reports coming out of Vietnam about a crash site, wreckage, and a pilot's helmet. In 1987, U.S. relations with Vietnam were just beginning to normalize, but there was no official mechanism for checking the information. The Shines were told that the reports couldn't be verified and that further searching was useless.

But for Colleen, those flimsy reports were something to hold onto. Even as she took on a position as director of public relations for the not-for-profit National League of POW/MIA Families, Colleen requested documentation from the Air Force Casualty Office. She pressed them for more action. Still, nothing definitive ever materialized.

In the early 1990s the pieces started falling into place. The Joint Task Force—Full Accounting identified a crash site near the Laotian border and spoke with a man, Mr. Quynh, from a nearby village who remembered seeing two planes on that



Colleen Shine brought a message of hope to the National POW/MIA Recognition Day ceremony at the Pentagon, Sept. 17, 2010. The recovery of her father, Lt. Col. Anthony Shine, after 24 years, demonstrates to all families of missing service members that "answers are possible," she said. (Defense Department photo/Elaine Wilson)

long-ago December day. He even produced a helmet that he had kept as a memento of the war. The task force investigators took photographs of the helmet and reported that there were "no identifying markings" on it, nor were there enough human remains to make a positive connection to Capt. Shine. JTFFA passed the information on to the DoD, who changed Capt. Shine's status to "pending," essentially dropping his case.

This wasn't good enough for Colleen. In February 1995, she flew to Vietnam—even before diplomatic relations had been fully established—to mount her own search. She traveled in a Soviet Jeep with Vietnamese government handlers to the remote village of Huu Kiem, near the crash site, determined to learn if her father had survived or not. She prepared herself emotionally; she knew that this was a last-ditch effort and that she would have to live with whatever results she found.

Colleen found Mr. Quynh, who handed her the helmet that he had kept. She turned it over to look inside and found her father's name handwritten on the inner liner in black ink. (She later said, in reference to the earlier JTFFA report, "They took 23 photographs of the helmet and never looked inside.")

Mr. Quynh led Colleen and the handlers to the crash site at the top edge of a ravine. She looked closely at the ground and found several pieces of metal, some marked with serial numbers. She scooped some soil from the area into a plastic bag and took it with her back to the States where she turned it over to the Defense Department. Colleen showed U.S. officials the helmet and reinstated her plea for a more thorough examination of the crash site.

Within months, that examination was under way. A detailed excavation uncovered more plane fragments, part of Capt. Shine's dog tag and pieces of human bone. After DNA and other forensic tests conducted at the Central Identification Lab in Hawaii confirmed the remains as belonging to Anthony Shine, they were transported to the mainland. Colleen placed her POW/MIA bracelet in the casket with her father's remains and uniform. With a posthumous promotion to lieutenant colonel, and burial with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery, Lt. Col. Shine was finally laid to rest.

Bonnie Shine and Colleen continue to work on POW/MIA issues. Colleen has brought her own children to see the

The AFSA editors gratefully acknowledge Colleen Shine and the following sources for the background information for this article.

Arlington National Cemetery website "Anthony Cameron Shine, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force."

"Daughter solves mystery of pilot's Vietnam death" by Barry Petersen, "CBS This Morning," May 28, 2012.

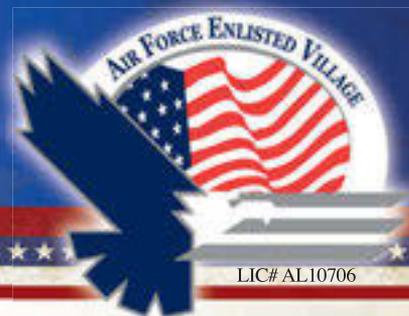
"Digging for Answers." Airman Online, Jan. 12, 2016.

"What Remains" by Jennifer McFarland Flint, Wellesley Magazine, Winter 2013.

name of their grandfather inscribed on the granite face of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington.

In a CBS interview about her family's journey and seeing her father's name on the wall, Colleen said, "I think one of the most amazing qualities of the wall is you see yourself in it. I see my father's name here, and he's no longer living, and his legacy is living. That reflection is me and that's how I honor his service; and his sacrifice is how I live my life."

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our family and our country."*

*—Marjorie, Bob Hope Village resident*

**Read Marjorie's story at [afev.us/news](http://afev.us/news)**

For more information about residency at Bob Hope Village or Hawthorn House, call 800-258-1413  
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# DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency's mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting of our missing personnel from past conflicts to their families and the nation. Within this mission, the DPAA searches for missing personnel from World War II (WWII), the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Gulf Wars, and other recent conflicts. Research and operational missions include coordination with hundreds of countries and municipalities around the world.

## UPDATED NUMBERS PROVIDED BY DPAA 8/5/16

### Still unaccounted for:

- Cold War = 126
- Korean War = 7802
- Vietnam War = 1618
- WWII = 73,133
- Iraq and Other Conflicts = 6

On April 11, 1944, Rothman was a member of the 311th Fighter Squadron, 58th Fighter Group, and was the pilot of a single-seat P-47D Thunderbolt, on a bombing escort mission to Wewak Territory of New Guinea, when he was attacked by enemy fighter aircraft. When the escort flight returned from the mission, Rothman was reported missing. The War Department declared Rothman deceased as of Feb. 6, 1946.

In late 1946, remains were located and examined, but an identification could not be made.

In July 2004, a contractor for the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command investigated a crash site in Papua New Guinea, and found material evidence and aircraft data. Additional remains and artifacts were found by a U.S. recovery team in 2009.

Report: Recently accounted for

### AIRMAN MISSING FROM WORLD WAR II ACCOUNTED FOR | JULY 28, 2016

Army Air Forces 2nd Lt. Marvin B. Rothman, killed during World War II, has now been accounted for.

### Augmentees lead the way in Laos.

Joe Griffin, a senior archeologist with the Army Corps of Engineers and recovery leader augmentee for the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and Petty Officer 2nd Class Cody Wilcoxson, recovery non-commissioned officer augmentee for DPAA, use mobile screening stations to screen excavated dirt in the Xiangkhoang Province, Lao People's Democratic Republic, March 19, 2016. Members of DPAA deployed to the area in hopes of recovering the remains of a pilot unaccounted for during the Vietnam War. DPAA's mission is to provide the fullest possible accounting for our missing personnel to their families and the nation. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jocelyn A. Ford)

### Success in the hearts of DPAA

Members of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) work side-by-side at screening stations with local villagers, November 18, 2015, in the Vietnamese National Forest, in search of missing service members from the Vietnam War. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jocelyn A. Ford)



Lab analysis, in conjunction with the totality of circumstantial evidence available, established Rothman's remains were included.

Interment services are pending.

Welcome home and rest in peace, 2nd Lt. Rothman.

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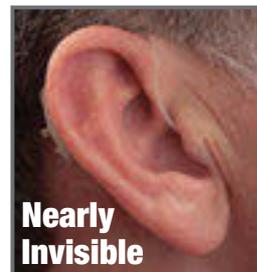
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Rex Hodges, a life support investigator, carries shovels toward a Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency dig site in Dien Bien Phu, Vietnam, on Nov. 13, 2015. A team of 35 American military and civilian service members, assisted by Vietnamese workers, worked to retrieve remains of military members lost in the Vietnam War. (Photo courtesy Vernon Young Photography)

# DO YOU REMEMBER THE POW/MIA BRACELETS? HERE IS THEIR STORY...

By Carol Bates Brown

— Courtesy of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, The Wall-USA —

I was the National Chairman of the POW/MIA Bracelet Campaign for VIVA (Voices In Vital America), the Los Angeles-based student organization that produced and distributed the bracelets during the Vietnam War. Entertainers Bob Hope and Martha Raye served with me as honorary co-chairmen.

The idea for the bracelets was started by a fellow college student, Kay Hunter, and me, as a way to remember American prisoners of war suffering in captivity in Southeast Asia. In late 1969, television personality Bob Dornan (who was elected to the U.S. Congress several years later) introduced us and several other members of VIVA to three wives of missing pilots. They thought our student group could assist them in drawing public attention to the prisoners and missing

in Vietnam. The idea of circulating petitions and letters to Hanoi demanding humane treatment for the POWs was appealing, as we were looking for ways college students could become involved in positive programs to support U.S. soldiers without becoming embroiled in the controversy of the war itself. The relatives of the men were beginning to organize locally, but the National League of POW/MIA Families had yet to be formed.

During that time Bob Dornan wore a bracelet he had obtained in Vietnam from hill tribesmen, which he said always reminded him of the suffering the war had brought to so many. We wanted to get similar bracelets to wear to remember U.S. POWs, so rather naively, we tried to figure out a way to go to Vietnam. Since no one wanted to fund two

sorority-girl types on a tour to Vietnam during the height of the war, and our parents were livid at the idea, we gave up and Kay Hunter began to check out ways to make bracelets. Soon other activities drew her attention and she dropped out of VIVA, leaving me, another student, Steve Frank, and our adult advisor, Gloria Coppin, to pursue the POW/MIA awareness program.

The major problem was that VIVA had no money to make bracelets, although our advisor was able to find a small shop in Santa Monica that did engraving on silver used to decorate horses. The owner agreed to make 10 sample bracelets. I can remember us sitting around in Gloria Coppin's kitchen with the engraver on the telephone, as we tried to figure out what we would put on the bracelets.

This is why they carried only name, rank, and date of loss, since we didn't have time to think of anything else.

Armed with the sample bracelets, we set out to find someone who would donate money to make bracelets for distribution to college students. It had not yet occurred to us that adults would want to wear the things, as they weren't very attractive. Several approaches to Ross Perot with a proposal that he loan us \$10,000 at 10 percent interest were rebuffed. We even visited Howard Hughes' senior aides in Las Vegas. They were sympathetic but not willing to help fund our project. Finally in the late summer of 1970, Gloria Coppin's husband donated enough brass and copper to make 1,200 bracelets. The Santa Monica engraver agreed to make them, and we could pay him from any proceeds we might realize.

Although the initial bracelets were going to cost about 75 cents to make, we were unsure about how much we should ask people to donate to receive a bracelet. In 1970, a student admission to the local movie theater was \$2.50. We decided this seemed like a fair price to ask from a student for one of the nickel-plated bracelets. We also made copper ones for adults who believed they helped their "tennis elbow." Again, according to our logic adults could pay more, so we would request \$3 for the copper bracelets.

At the suggestion of local POW/MIA relatives, we attended the National League of Families annual meeting in Washington, DC, in late September. We were amazed at the interest of the wives and parents in having their man's name put on bracelets and in obtaining them for distribution. Bob Dornan, who was always a champion of the POW/MIAs and their families, continued to use his Los Angeles television talk show to publicize the issue and promote the bracelets.

On Veterans Day, November 11, 1970, we officially kicked off the bracelet program with a news conference at the Universal Sheraton Hotel. Public response quickly grew, and we eventually got to the point we were receiving over



During the Vietnam War, American citizens commonly wore these bracelets in support of POWs. It was customary to mail the bracelet to the soldier when he returned home. This is a small selection of the hundreds of bracelets that were sent to the Galantis upon Paul's return in 1973. (*Virginia Historical Society, Mss1 G1315 a, Section 4*)

12,000 requests a day. This also brought money in to pay for brochures, bumper stickers, buttons, advertising, and whatever else we could do to publicize the POW/MIA issue. We formed a close alliance with the relatives of missing men—they got bracelets from us on consignment and could keep some of the money they raised to fund their local organizations. We also tried to furnish these groups with all the stickers and other literature they could give away.

While Steve Frank and I ended up dropping out of college to work for VIVA full-time to administer the bracelet and other POW/MIA programs, none of us got rich off the bracelets. VIVA's adult advisory group, headed by Gloria Coppin, was adamant that we would not have a highly paid professional staff. As I recall, the highest salary was \$15,000 a year, and we were able to keep administrative costs to less than 20 percent of income.

In all, VIVA distributed nearly five million bracelets and raised enough money to produce untold millions of bumper stickers, buttons, brochures, matchbooks, newspaper ads, etc., to draw attention to the missing men. In 1976, VIVA closed its doors. By then the American public was tired of hearing about Vietnam and showed no interest in the POW/MIA issue.

For additional information on POW/MIA bracelets, visit [www.pownetwork.org/bracelet.htm](http://www.pownetwork.org/bracelet.htm)

# ALL IN THE AIR FORCE FAMILY

**DYNAMIC DUO WIFE AND HUSBAND RECRUITERS**



The journey that every service member takes coming into the armed forces is unique. Every once in a while, however, there comes along a journey that is special not only for the participants, but for the influence they have had with other members of the service.

This is certainly true in the case of Air Force Staff Sgt. Samantha Acosta and her husband, Tech. Sgt. Ariel (Ray) Acosta. The couple met while serving in the Air Force medical branch and their trajectories took them into active duty recruiting from 2006 to 2010, which they both enjoy immensely, after which they returned to medical administration and medical technician posts.

Ray and Samantha are once again serving in recruiting roles. They shared their story with *AFSA Magazine*.

### **SAMANTHA**

“Ever since I was a little girl I knew I was joining the Air Force. When I was in the 8th grade I remember telling my grandparents I wanted to visit the New Mexico Military Institute. I fell in love and begged to go there for high school, but for financial reasons, I could not attend. As soon as I turned 17, I enlisted during my junior year of high school, and signed up as an Air Traffic Controller.

Fate had something else in mind and during my senior year I became a statistic—a teenage pregnancy. My daughter Zoe Noel was born in August 2002, the month I was originally shipping out for basic military training. I was not willing to give up on my dream of serving and now I had Zoe to support, which was even more motivation. I remember wanting Air Traffic Control again but realized life with a baby was stressful enough so I asked for a less demanding job. When my daughter was 6 months old, I left for basic military training.

After three years in the Air Force, I reflected on everything the Air Force had done for me. I remember wondering how I could give back and express my gratitude. I was so eager to share my story and express how amazing the Air Force was, so I became a recruiter. I was able to change the lives of 93 young men and women in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. I went back to my career field, but after another three years, recruiting was calling my name again. This time I recruited my husband to join as well!

I am extremely grateful for everything the Air Force has given me. At such a young age I was able to provide for my family and make something of myself. I am honored to have worked for some incredible leaders and to have served next to some amazing peers. I was also able to cross paths with my husband and now we have two amazing boys, Cruz and Cortez. When the Air Force says my time is up, I will start my new career as a nurse and vow to continue serving the men

**“When the Air Force says my time is up, I will start my new career as a nurse and vow to continue serving the men and women who fight for our country.”**

**—Air Force Staff Sgt. Samantha Acosta**

and women who fight for our country. I want my family and my country to look back on my life and see how dedicated and appreciative I was of our military.”

### **RAY**

In May of 1980, Cuba opened up its harbor in a movement named “The Mariel Boatlift,” allowing any Cuban the chance to leave Cuba and go to the United States. My mother, who was nine months pregnant with me at the time, hopped on a ship from Cuba to Miami with my 9-year-old sister, Iris. She risked her life and our lives so we could come to the United States and be FREE. Two days after my mother arrived in the United States, I was born. I was born an American!

Fast-forward—growing up in Miami, Florida. My parents divorced when I was an infant. I grew up with very little money and I just tried to find my way as many young boys do. I graduated high school and attempted college. I was working full-time and trying to pay for college on my own and soon realized that college at that time was not for me.

In May 1999, I remember getting a 911 page on my beeper from my sister Iris. I drove home in a hurry wondering what could have happened. I remember thinking it was probably my mother just being overdramatic, as usual, and was going to yell at me for something I did wrong. However, as soon as I walked through the doors, I saw my stepfather and mother in tears. I instantly knew something horrible had happened. They grabbed me and told me that my father, who was my hero, had committed suicide. My whole world was turned upside down. I recall wanting to run, but my stepfather grabbed me and told me I had to be a man for my sisters. At that moment in time I changed from a boy to the man of the family. I recall the last conversation I had with my father before he took his life: He told me he knew I had dropped out of college and that he wanted me to make something of myself. He wanted me to be better than him.

A few months later I enlisted in the Air Force and became an Aerospace Medical Technician. After 14 years as a medic and various deployments, I was thinking of how I could give back to the Air Force. I was thinking of becoming a Professional Military Education instructor at first, but

## UPDATE

Shortly before this story went to press, AFSA learned that the Acostas lost their eldest daughter, Zoe Noel Carr, in an all-terrain-vehicle accident. Support for the family from their Air Force family has been swift. Family members have set up a GoFundMe page in memory of Zoe Carr, and

proceeds will help them establish a Scholarship Foundation in her honor; please consider making a donation, and send your love to these two outstanding individuals and their families during this difficult time.

➔ [gofundme.com/zoecarrmemorial](https://gofundme.com/zoecarrmemorial)



then my wife told me about recruiting. I realized recruiting was perfect for me! Not only would I be able to give back to the Air Force, I would be able to change the lives of others forever. I would be giving civilians the opportunity to better themselves and serve our great country in the greatest Air Force in the world.

Being a recruiter is everything I thought it would be and more. It is definitely one of the best jobs in the Air Force. The Air Force has given me so many things to be grateful for and proud of. The most important of those things is my beautiful wife and children, and a career I am proud to have.

### **THEIR CURRENT ASSIGNMENTS**

Staff Sgt. Samantha Acosta is currently posted at the 314th Recruiting Squadron in Burlington, New Jersey, assisting

with marketing and logistics. Ray Acosta was recently promoted to master sergeant and serves as a recruiting supervisor based in Haddonsfield, New Jersey. Both Acostas still enjoy the challenge and fulfillment they get from recruiting young men and women into the Air Force.

Ray says that a lot of people gravitate toward the service because of the educational benefits. “Others are excited about knowing their job in the Air Force is transferable to outside,” he says. “Some of them like mechanics and electronics—we [as recruiters] have to figure out what they like and are interested in as we speak with them. My job is to find out why they are joining the Air Force.”

Samantha shares that both of them want to stay in recruiting for the next few years. “We enjoy what we’re doing and we’ll do it as long as that’s what the Air Force wants us to do.”

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“Port Mortuary” at Dover AFB has an Honor Guard component attached to it. That way when bodies come home to the U.S., they land at Dover with the utmost respect and honor. (USAF photo)

# WHEN THEY COME HOME

PORT MORTUARY & AMERICA'S MISSING HEROES

By Sean M. Miskimins

“Really? That is crazy!” Teachers of today will tell you over and over that this sort of spirited response from the 21st century American student is harder and harder to come by. Thus, when you “wow” these iPhone-obsessed adolescents with a simple fact or story, you really feel like you’ve achieved something. The fact I shared that returned to me such a reaction was that of the 400,000 Americans killed in World War II, still today—some 71 years later—over 78,000 of these men’s remains are still unaccounted for. Even with all this technology, *still* nearly 1 in 5 Americans missing/killed in WWII remains lost. Sons, fathers, fiancés, and neighborhood pals all are still out there—lost and unaccounted for.

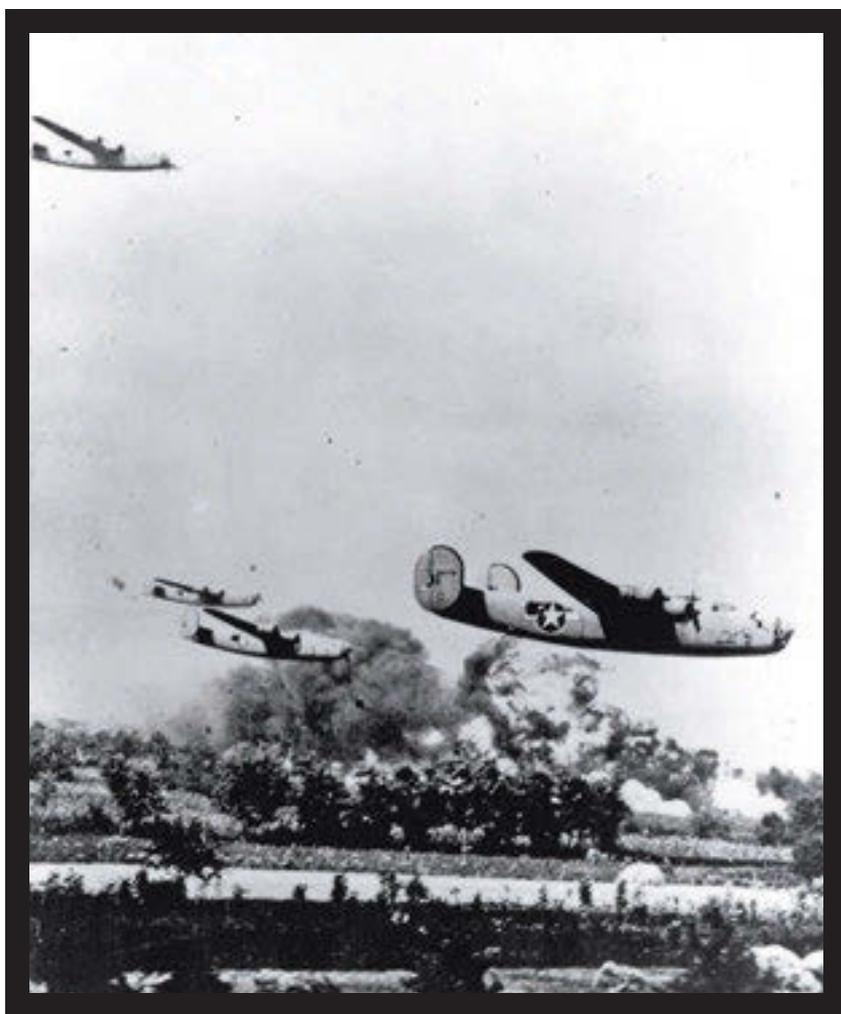
Following the end of the war in 1945, it soon became an option for the families of the roughly 326,000 men whose bodies had been recovered and buried overseas to have the U.S. government bring the bodies “home” to a cemetery of the family’s choice here in the States. Over 233,000 families did this, including the family of Medal of Honor recipient Staff Sgt. Archibald Mathies. Mathies’s remains were brought home to Pennsylvania. Roughly 93,000 other families made the other choice. These families chose to have their boys “stay where they lay.”

Some families, around 80,000 in 1945, had NO choice to make. The body of their loved one had not been found. The mounds of paperwork at the end of such a calamitous war—one which basically saw two continents lying in ruins—left overstretched governments and militaries trying to hold this new post-war world together. Finding bodies buried under collapsed cities or in sunken ships would be something they would “do their best” to eventually get to. Sadly, for many of these 80,000 patriotic families here at home, this wasn’t good enough and the letter or phone call with answers never came.

Some couldn’t sit by and wait, they had to try to take a more active role to find out what had happened to their loved one. The Reverend Jesse D. Franks Sr. of Columbus, Mississippi, was one such man. A widower, Rev. Franks had two children, his son “Red” (Jesse Jr.) and a daughter, Nancy. When word came that Red was missing in the summer of 1943, Rev. Franks, Nancy, and Red’s fiancée, Dottie Turner, all hoped word would soon come to their door with answers. By the time the surrender documents had been signed in Tokyo Bay, some two

years after Red was listed as missing in action, Rev. Franks, Nancy, and Dottie still had no answers.

Red had been a part of one of the most famous air raids of the war—a bold daylight attempt to cripple Hitler’s war machine in 1943. Red had taken part in the epic tree-top attack on Ploesti, Romania: Operation Tidal Wave. That August 1, 1943, mission saw 532 American B-24 Liberators of the AAF (Army Air Forces) take off to bomb the oil refineries that Hitler had taken over in Romania. Sixty of these B-24s would never



B-24s fly over top of the exploding refineries at Ploesti, Romania. Staff Sgts. Vest and Reed, along with Lt. Warner, were the only survivors of the B-24 *Euroclydon the Storm*, which crashed during its August 1, 1943, mission. (*National Air & Space Museum [NASM]*)

Enlisted and Officers of the USAF prepare several dozen bodies found in Vietnam in the mid-1990s for the flight to Dover. (Smits collection, AMM)



Romanian civilians, middle left, sort through rubble after the Ploesti raid. While many helped bury American bodies after the raid, some also looted the dead before doing so. (NASM)



not turned up on any P.O.W. camp roll sheets. With the war over and the Soviet-American Cold War dawning, Rev. Franks soon found he had another problem. His son had gone missing not in the skies over western Europe but rather over Romania—which was now behind the Iron Curtain. The answers he sought would be even harder to find thanks to the Cold War. Tired with dead-end phone calls and letters, Rev. Franks sought a position in his church—the Presbyterian church—that would send him to Europe, closer to where Red had been lost. In 1947 he set out for Switzerland to follow “God’s call” to service. In reality he was also embarking upon a mission to find out what happened to his son.

return. *Euroclydon the Storm* was one such B-24.

By all accounts, *Euroclydon the Storm* was the first Liberator shot down over the target area on that August day. Only three men would survive the plane’s crash—two of whom were Staff Sgts. Jack Reed and James Vest, who would become two of the 75 men from Tidal Wave who would become P.O.W.s (prisoners

of war) held by the Germans. Little did the Frankses and Dottie know that their beloved Red was not one of *Euroclydon the Storm*’s survivors.

Fast-forwarding to the end of the war, Rev. Franks knew only that Red’s plane had been shot down and Red was unaccounted for. The Reverend, of course, had received government letters after a year stating that Red was now presumed killed in action since he had

Romanians, of course, were polite and civil people and had buried the dead men that had been recovered from Operation Tidal Wave. Of course, an air raid over top of oil refineries meant a lot of burned and charred corpses. What information they knew and wrote down was passed on to the American military authorities that came to Romania at war’s end looking for American remains. Rev. Franks kept up his dedicated task—writing

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- [www.bentprop.org](http://www.bentprop.org)
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letters to the American War Graves Commission. He had also found Lt. Jack Warner—the third survivor of *Euroclydon the Storm*. Warner provided scant but chaotic details of the plane's crash. He was certain Red got out of the plane but that his parachute hadn't opened (they hadn't been high enough when he bailed out—not time enough to deploy the parachute).

The War Graves Commission also passed along word to Reverend Franks that American bodies had been transferred from Romanian cemeteries to Belgium—a country in western Europe that he could access. Some of the grave detail notes on airmen's remains even said things like, "has red hair." By 1949, some two years after the Reverend had come to Europe and some six years after his boy had gone missing, the U.S. government had remains they identified as those of Lt. Jesse Red Franks Jr. His remains now rested in the Ardennes-American Cemetery in Belgium. At least for Red Franks, the story had as "happy an ending" as the story about a dead soldier in war could have—his body was identified and placed under a marker that his father was able to visit several times during his eight-year ministry in Europe. What about the 78,000 others?

Ten years after the end of the war, what is now known as "Port Mortuary" was established at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. It is where all remains of military personnel killed abroad are processed. In special circumstances—such as the 1978 Jonestown Massacre, the 1986 space shuttle *Challenger*

disaster and the 9/11/2001 attacks, it has also been used to identify civilian remains as well. Thanks in large part to the Vietnam War, as well as the recent War on Terror of the past 15 years, The Air Force's Mortuary Affairs Operations at Dover, thanks to the work of enlisted and officer personnel alike (the Port Mortuary staff consists of roughly 100 people), has now processed the remains of over 50,000 military personnel. The work there is part funeral home (preparation of remains), part detective agency (making sure all evidence and items with the bodies are documented, as well as attempting to locate next of kin), and part clerical (contacting next of kin and finding out where the remains are to be shipped once they are ready).

Perhaps because the number of missing from WWII is so large compared to other conflicts (for example a combined total of roughly 10,000 U.S. service men and service women are unaccounted for from the Korean and Vietnam Wars), some private volunteer groups have sprung up and done work around the globe for the past 30-odd years to attempt to find and bring home more boys from WWII. MIA Hunters out of Minnesota is

one such group, as is Operation Bent Prop which specializes in working on American plane wrecks in the Pacific theater. Both groups, despite a lack of major funding, have had some small successes in identifying lost heroes and getting more loved ones lost some 70 years ago back to Dover. Once there, Air Force personnel process a lot of paperwork and prepare the bodies/remains for their final resting place somewhere in the United States. Due to the respectful nature of bodies of fallen heroes arriving via flights at Port Mortuary, the USAF Honor Guard is also constantly present there.

NOTE: *Bryan Moon, of MIA Hunters, discovered in trips to Ploesti in the 1980s that civilians had looted the bodies of American airmen killed in Operation Tidal Wave. He saw items such as wallets, ID cards and personal photos on display for sale in local pawn shops. Mr. Moon passed away in 2015 at the age of 82.*

Nowadays, when large numbers of bodies need to be moved to Port Mortuary, the C-5 Galaxy is often the plane of choice. Here, a C-5 moves living bodies (survivors of Hurricane Katrina) out of harm's way. (USAF photo)



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