

# WE WILL NOT FORGET

Rolling Thunder<sup>®</sup>, Inc.  
Holds 31st Ride for Freedom



Hundreds of thousands of motorcyclists and supporters roar into Washington, D.C., seeking full accountability of U.S. POW/MIAs from all wars



# National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2017



By President Donald J. Trump

Americans are blessed with many freedoms thanks to the hard-earned battle victories and tremendous sacrifices of our military men and women. The members of our Armed Forces shine a light of freedom throughout the world, and as we celebrate our returning heroes, we also remember our heroes

who never returned home. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, our Nation recognizes all American prisoners of war and service members missing in action who have valiantly honored their commitment to this great country.

It is our sacred obligation to pay tribute to the thousands of men and women of our Armed Forces who have been imprisoned while serving in conflicts and who have yet to return to American soil. We reflect on the brave Americans who, while guarding our freedom and our way of life, spent years of their youth imprisoned in distant lands. They paid an enormous price and remained dedicated to our sacred principles, even while under extreme duress.

We do not leave our fellow man or woman behind, and we do not rest until our mission is complete. For more than three decades, our country has conducted investigation and recovery operations in Southeast Asia with the help of the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Whether in Southeast Asia, or in South Korea, Europe, the South Pacific, and in all other corners of the globe, we are committed to this most

honorable mission of fully accounting for our missing personnel. We are encouraged by the progress made, but know our mission is ongoing until every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Coast Guardsman, and Marine missing in the line of duty is accounted for.

As Commander in Chief, it is my solemn duty to keep all Americans safe. I will never forget our heroes held prisoner or who have gone missing in action while serving their country. Today, we recognize not just the tremendous sacrifices of our service members, but also those of their families who still seek answers. We are steadfastly committed to bringing solace to those who wait for the fullest possible accounting of their loved ones.

On September 15, 2017, the stark black and white banner symbolizing America's Missing in Action and Prisoners of War will be flown over the White House; the United States Capitol; the Departments of State, Defense, and Veterans Affairs; the Selective Service System Headquarters; the World War II Memorial; the Korean War Veterans Memorial; the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; United

States post offices; national cemeteries; and other locations across our country. We raise this flag as a solemn reminder of our obligation to always remember the sacrifices made to defend our Nation.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 15, 2017, as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. I call upon the people of the United States to join me in saluting all American POWs and those missing in action who valiantly served our country. I call upon Federal, State, and local government officials and private organizations to observe this day with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this thirteenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-second.

## Missing, but not forgotten

More than 82,000 Americans remain missing from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, and the Gulf Wars and other conflicts, according to the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) in the U.S. Department of Defense. Of the 82,000 missing, 75 percent of the losses are located in the Indo-Pacific region, and some 41,000 of the missing are presumed lost at sea (i.e., ship losses, known aircraft water losses), the DPAA says.

### Missing U.S. military personnel, by conflict

World War II — 72,917  
Korean War — 7,702  
Vietnam War — 1,598  
Cold War\* — 126  
Gulf Wars — 5

\*Cold War incidents took place near North Korea, the East China Sea, the Straits of Formosa, the People's Republic of China, North Vietnam and over or near the Soviet Union.

Source: Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, U.S. Department of Defense



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# Three decades and counting ... for POW/MIA

By JENNIFER HARPER  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

It is an image of focus, determination and strength. Here stands Artie Muller, his gaze steady, his denim vest bearing an American flag and a POW emblem. This is a photo from another age, from the early days of Rolling Thunder. The world has changed since then — but not Artie Muller, an Army vet who co-founded the patriotic group over three decades ago to draw attention to the cause of prisoners of war and those who never made it home. He's still got the iron will to honor the original mission, and inspire others to do the same.

“Let us never give up and let our government forget about this issue. Our past POWs and those missing in action, and our future troops need our support should they be captured. American troops will always face the enemy in foreign wars for the freedom of others,” said Mr. Mueller.



Thirty-one years ago, Army Sgt. Artie Muller helped create the Rolling Thunder “Ride for Freedom” as a very loud and very public demonstration to force the return of living U.S. prisoners of war left in Southeast Asia after the Vietnam War.

It is a very personal calling, and one that emerged following a conversation with fellow vet Ray Manzo one autumn afternoon in 1987. Both men were

troubled by reported sightings of Americans still held as prisoners overseas. The pair called for a demonstration in the nation’s capital that could not be ignored. They were, Mr. Mueller recalled, “ordinary men who understood that they had a right to have their voices heard.”

That moment led to the creation of Rolling Thunder, named for the fierce bombing campaigns over North Vietnam, and of course, the thunder of the machines.

There was no social media, no internet. Close to 3,000 motorcyclists showed up for that first “Ride for Freedom,” with little notice but ready to roll.

The event now draws 750,000 riders from every state in the union and a dozen foreign nations, each with the same calling to “never forget” the absent or the fallen. They ride together from Pentagon to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in a dedicated biker battalion so vast that it takes five hours to assemble them into formation. American flags are everywhere and the cause paramount.

“What is our government doing to recover remains from crash sites and battlefields? When is someone going to take action and put the live POW/MIA issue out front at a meeting with all foreign countries involved in past wars? We must never give up and let our government forget about the issue,” Mr. Mueller observed.

His message is mighty — and influential. Former Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, along with President Trump have all met personally with Mr. Mueller and his closest Rolling Thunder officers. Members of Congress, military brass and cabinet members have all made the ride, along with such high-profile folk as Sarah Palin, Nancy Sinatra and actor Robert Patrick. C-SPAN covers the event, as does the national press.

The experience for both riders and public can be profound. The event has won praise for its patriotism, organization and the sheer scope of it.

“The camaraderie of the bikers, their generosity of spirit, and the rolling thunder of their engines was unique and awe-inspiring,” one witness advised in an online review at TripAdvisor.

“Truly humbling, and what a much needed show of patriotism for the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect us. God bless our troops and those who organize this,” another wrote.

Rolling Thunder, the organization, is run entirely by volunteers in 90

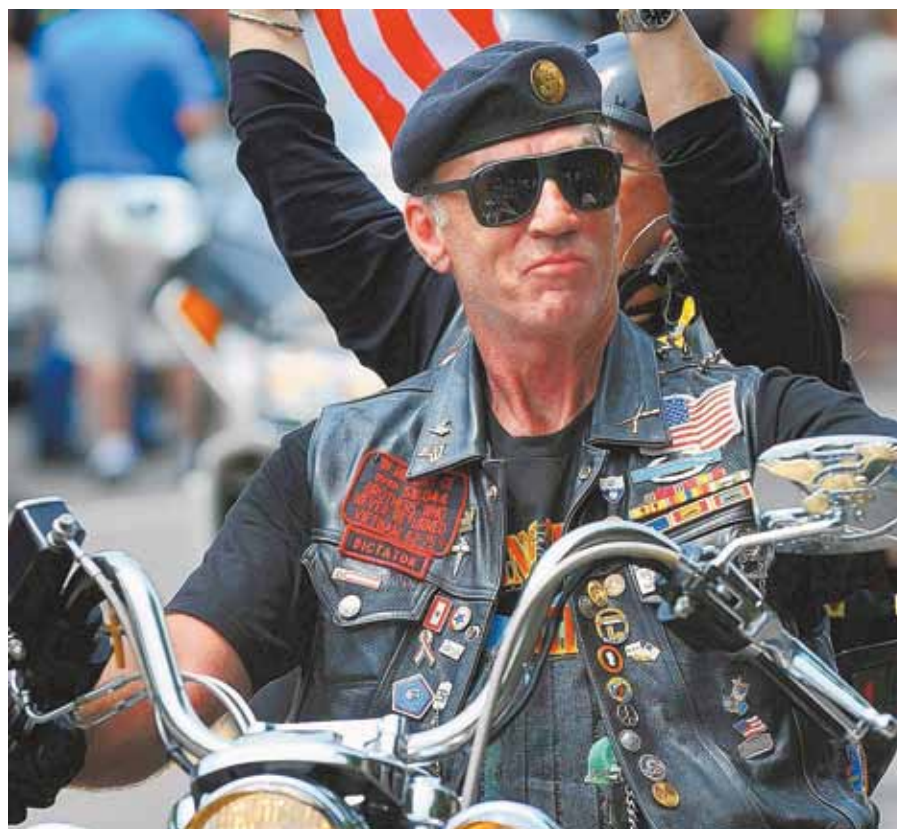


PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

U.S. Army Sgt. Artie Muller, founder and national executive director of Rolling Thunder®, Inc.



AP PHOTO/MANUEL BALCE CENETA

The annual ride, which now attracts hundreds of thousands of bikers and spectators, has also drawn many nationally known supporters like former Republican vice presidential candidate and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin.

chartered chapters across the nation. Anyone can join; a motorcycle is not required. The civic-minded organization also stages local and regional rallies to raise money through a separate charitable division for disabled and homeless vets, rehabilitation centers, military families in need and senior citizens.

The cause itself has inspired a well-received and beautifully illustrated children’s book, “Rolling Thunder,” by award-winning author Kate Messner. There’s a new “Rolling Thunder” anthem as well. It is a doozy, written and sung with gusto by Rockie Lynne, himself a chapter vice president from North Carolina who will perform the song on

Sunday. Mr. Lynne’s lyrics offer an apt summary:

*“You can feel them coming from all across the nation; chrome on steel, hell on wheels, to say what needs sayin’*

*They come from every walk of life, they’ve come to right a wrong; boots and chains, leather and lace, a million motors strong*

*Like pilgrims dressed in leather, the faithful get together; it’s a tattoo rendezvous, Woodstock with an attitude*

*So climb on, fire it up, roll back the throttle and let out the clutch; ride to live, live to ride — thunder, thunder — rolling thunder, roll on.”*



# Supporting our military every day

## By Giant Food

**O**n Memorial Day weekend in 1988, Rolling Thunder held a gathering and march in Washington, D.C. More than 2,500 motorcycles from all over the country converged into the city to demand from governmental leaders a full accounting of all POW/MIAs.

Since that moment, and for over 30 years, Rolling Thunder®, Inc., has kept our nation focused on fulfilling one of our most sacred promises — to never leave a service member behind. Millions of riders and spectators have called our attention to the stories of those imprisoned or who have gone missing in action while serving overseas. For over three decades, Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s trademark roar has served as an annual reminder that we each have a role to play in supporting those who wear a military uniform.

Like all who call Washington, D.C., home, our team at Giant Food eagerly awaits the unmistakable rumblings of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., every year. We are proud to see the groups of riders from across the country rolling through our neighborhoods. And we watch in awe at the endless stream of motorcycles that flood the District on Memorial Day weekend. Each year, we are left inspired to carry forward the spirit of the event by joining our customers in supporting causes that benefit those who serve.

In our 82-year history, Giant Food has grown, evolved and changed with the Greater Washington, D.C., area. More than a grocer, we strive to be a better neighbor by building bridges with our community to help address the needs of our customers in the areas we serve. And one of the most important communities in the Greater Washington, D.C., region is our military. Supporting the military is one of Giant's four major pillars, along with hunger relief; supporting health and wellness initiatives, such as pediatric cancer; and educating our youth. To us, being a better neighbor means finding different ways to support our military members and their families. This integral support starts at home — in our communities, in our schools, and, we hope, at a Giant Food store.

Our commitment to supporting our nation's military begins with our employees. We are fortunate to have a team of employees across our operating region that make supporting military members, their families, and veterans, a company priority. Members of Giant's internal Veterans Business Resource Group leverage Giant's competencies in education, assistance



Giant Food and its president Gordon Reid (far right) honored veterans at the Giant National Capital Barbecue Battle in 2017. Image courtesy of Giant Food.



Giant Food is pleased to donate a truckload of bottled water and snacks for participants of the Rolling Thunder®, Inc. Ride for Freedom. Image courtesy of Giant Food.

programs and workforce development to provide a robust framework that supports our troops and their families, overcoming their challenging transition to civilian life.

This includes being an employer of choice for veterans, who bring a wide variety of skills and a unique perspective to our team. We continuously look for opportunities to partner with organizations and supplement their work, and through those partnerships and collaborations, we are able to celebrate the work of others who support our military.

Since 2011, Giant has grown our partnership with the USO of

Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore, the largest chapter of the USO, a non-profit that has provided help to over 10 million military service members and their families. We are extremely proud to be a partner with an organization that provides services to the nearly 300,000 military members and their families living in the region and the 150,000 who travel through Washington, D.C. The USO has created a critical bridge between Americans and their military service members — a mission that continues to be critically important today, as many service members are deployed overseas.

In September 2017, Giant presented

a grant to the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) through Giant's Our Family Foundation. We were inspired by TAPS' mission to "offer compassionate care to all those grieving the death of a loved one serving in our Armed Forces." It is organizations like TAPS — dedicated to helping in the healing process and where family members and friends begin to rediscover peace and solace — that make our efforts even more important. We are honored to continue our partnership with TAPS because of the unyielding support it provides those who are grieving.

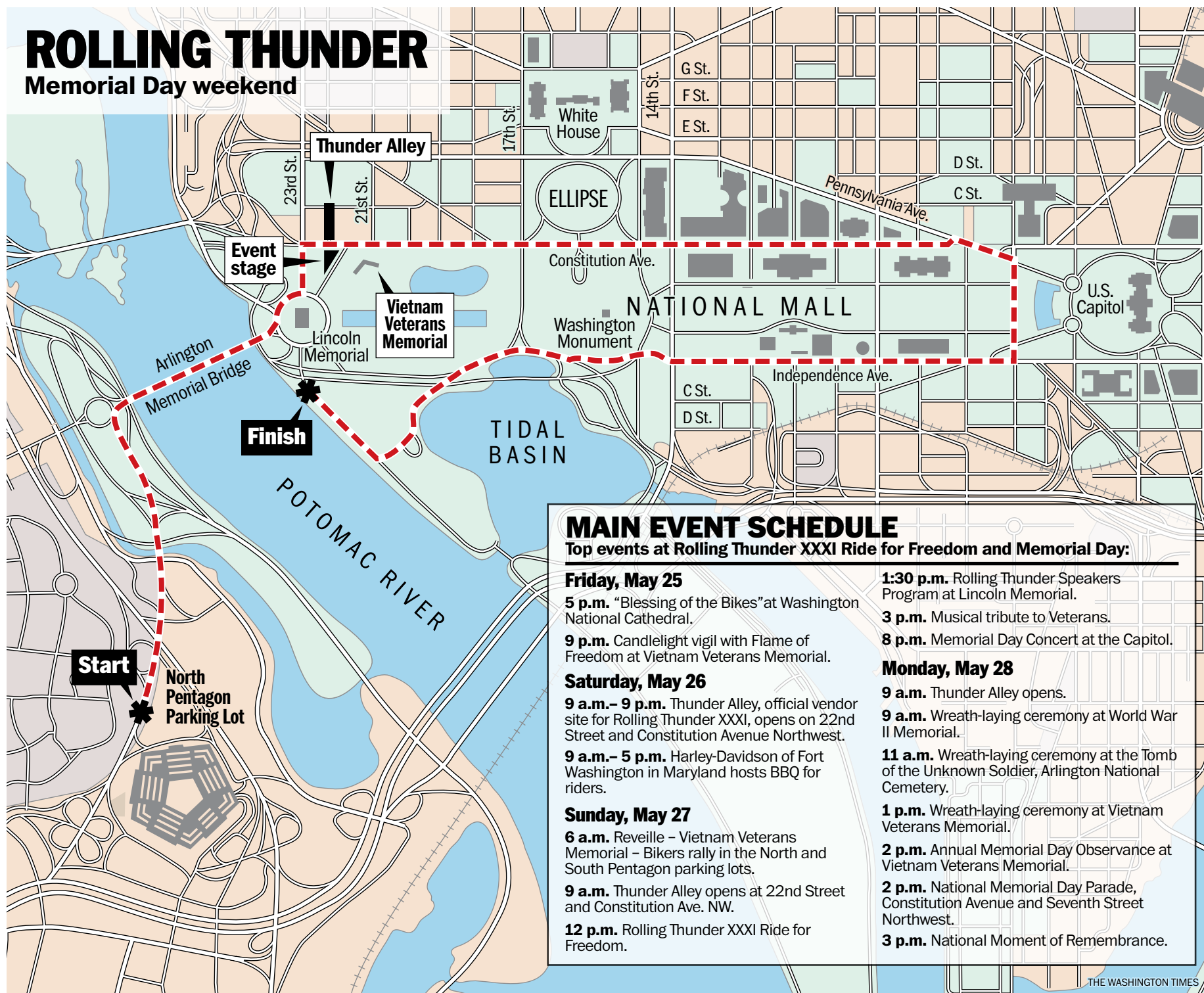
Since 1936, Giant Food has been the grocer of choice for many military members and their families. We know that they are the backbone of not just the Washington, D.C., community but the nation. Which is why we want to thank Rolling Thunder®, Inc., for their tremendous support for the military community.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc., has not only become an institution but a symbol of military solidarity. Their roaring parade serves as a somber reminder of those we have lost in service, those who are protecting our freedoms today, and those who have not yet joined but who will one day represent this great nation through their military service.



# ROLLING THUNDER

## Memorial Day weekend



### MAIN EVENT SCHEDULE

Top events at Rolling Thunder XXXI Ride for Freedom and Memorial Day:

#### Friday, May 25

**5 p.m.** "Blessing of the Bikes" at Washington National Cathedral.  
**9 p.m.** Candlelight vigil with Flame of Freedom at Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

#### Saturday, May 26

**9 a.m. – 9 p.m.** Thunder Alley, official vendor site for Rolling Thunder XXXI, opens on 22nd Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest.  
**9 a.m. – 5 p.m.** Harley-Davidson of Fort Washington in Maryland hosts BBQ for riders.

#### Sunday, May 27

**6 a.m.** Reveille - Vietnam Veterans Memorial - Bikers rally in the North and South Pentagon parking lots.  
**9 a.m.** Thunder Alley opens at 22nd Street and Constitution Ave. NW.  
**12 p.m.** Rolling Thunder XXXI Ride for Freedom.

**1:30 p.m.** Rolling Thunder Speakers Program at Lincoln Memorial.

**3 p.m.** Musical tribute to Veterans.  
**8 p.m.** Memorial Day Concert at the Capitol.

#### Monday, May 28

**9 a.m.** Thunder Alley opens.  
**9 a.m.** Wreath-laying ceremony at World War II Memorial.  
**11 a.m.** Wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Arlington National Cemetery.  
**1 p.m.** Wreath-laying ceremony at Vietnam Veterans Memorial.  
**2 p.m.** Annual Memorial Day Observance at Vietnam Veterans Memorial.  
**2 p.m.** National Memorial Day Parade, Constitution Avenue and Seventh Street Northwest.  
**3 p.m.** National Moment of Remembrance.

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES  
SPECIAL SECTIONS DEPARTMENT

## After the ride come the tributes

After Sunday's Rolling Thunder®, Inc. XXXI Ride for Freedom, spectators and riders can gather near the Lincoln Memorial for a program featuring:

**Former New York Rep. John LeBoutillier.** Elected to Congress in 1980, Mr. LeBoutillier served on the House Foreign Affairs Committee and on the Special House POW/MIA Task Force. Since leaving Congress, he founded the Sky Hook II Project, dedicated to recovering living POWs in Southeast Asia, and today writes and speaks on these and other issues.

**Robert David Steele.** A recognized author and leader on Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) and founder of Open Source Everything Inc., Mr. Steele has a long history in military service and

intelligence operations and training.

**Anoop Prakash, Harley-Davidson Motor Co.** A Marine Corps veteran, Mr. Prakash served four years active duty before becoming director of U.S. Retail Development for the Harley-Davidson Motor Co., a partner of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. since 2001.

**Lois Dawn Fritz.** A Navy veteran and forensic nurse, Ms. Fritz and her husband founded New Freedom Farm in Buchanan, Virginia, in 2016 to serve veterans and provide a "safe place" for those struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

**Chris Noel.** The model-turned-actress began entertaining troops in Vietnam in the early 1960s and received the Distinguished Vietnam Veteran award in 1984 from the Veterans Network for her



LeBoutillier



Lynne

wartime service. She is a member of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National.

**Nicolette Rose, National Alliance of Families POW/MIA.** The 1967 loss of her uncle, Air Force Maj. Victor J. Apodaca Jr., in North Vietnam — who retained MIA status until 2001 — spurred Ms. Rose and her family to become founding

members of the National Alliance of Families POW/MIA.

**Rockie Lynne.** An Army veteran and co-founder of Tribute for the Troops, which raises money for families who have lost a parent in active duty, Mr. Lynne is a nationally known singer-songwriter. His debut single, "Lipstick," stayed at the top of Billboard's Country Sales Chart for 10 weeks. His album, "Songs for Soldiers," benefits troop-related charities.

**Gordon Painter.** A dedicated supporter of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., Mr. Painter frequently offers musical performances to veterans.

**Ben Mason.** An orchestrator, conductor and pianist, Mr. Mason composes for film and other media in addition to teaching and performing publicly.



# POW/MIA priorities: Accountability for the missing, public education, health services for vets

By Rolling Thunder®, Inc.  
National

**W**e are an organization comprised of U.S. military veterans, the families of veterans and those who believe in and are supportive of our agenda. The Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard are represented in our members. While our organization came into existence in the shadow of the Vietnam War, our membership has included those who served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan and all of the conflicts that have occurred around the world and drawn upon the U.S. military.

The major function of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. is to publicize the POW/MIA issue: To educate the public that many American Prisoners of War were left behind after all previous wars, and to help correct the past and to protect future veterans from being left behind should

## POW/MIA

One of most recent accomplishments of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National, along with all Rolling Thunder®, Inc. members in 92 chapters throughout the country, was the April 2016 legislation that passed unanimously in the House and Senate to place a Commemorative Prisoners of War Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Chair in the Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol.

Joe D'Entremont, while president of Rolling Thunder, Massachusetts Chapter 1, was a key catalyst for the issue. In 2012, he asked Rolling Thunder®, Inc. Legislative Director Gus Dante, "What do you think about Rolling Thunder Inc. placing a POW/MIA Chair in the U.S. Capitol?" "Most definitely," was the quick reply.

On March 26, 2015, Rep. Stephen F. Lynch, Massachusetts Democrat, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts Democrat, introduced strongly bipartisan bills (H.R. 1670 and S. 885), both called the National POW/MIA Remembrance Act of 2015.



PHOTO BY PATRICK J. HUGHES, ROLLING THUNDER® INC. NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER WWW.PATRICKJHUGHES.ORG.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Massachusetts Democrat, who was instrumental in placing the POW/MIA Chair of Honor in the U.S. Capitol in November, greets Rolling Thunder®, Inc. Founder and Executive Director Artie Muller (center, in beret) and Legislative Director Gus Dante.

they become Prisoners of War/Missing in Action. We are also committed to helping American veterans from all wars.

Like the POW/MIA Chair of Honor, the flying of the POW/MIA Flag also represents a reminder and says to the families that our government has not forgotten you or your loved ones.

In August 2015, Joe traveled from Boston to Washington, D.C., to hand-deliver letters to all the members of the House Administration Committee and the Senate Administration and Rules Committee, urging them to move these bills out of their committees. Joe returned to Boston a few days later and suffered a

massive stroke at the age of 55.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. leaders, including Gus Dante, made the commitment to speak and advocate for Joe after his stroke. Joe is a nonveteran who dedicated his life to helping our military veterans and those who are POW/MIAs still unaccounted for, and Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National refused to let this dream die.

In November 2015, during Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s annual conference, National members met with staff in the office of Michigan Rep. Candice Miller, who was then chair of the House Administration Committee. We urged her office to move H.R. 1670 out of committee and to the House floor for a vote. In December 2015, Chairwoman Miller held a hearing on H.R. 1670 and the committee voted yes to bring it to the House floor for a vote.

On March 21, 2016, the House of Representatives unanimously passed H.R. 1670, and a few days later, on April 14, the Senate passed the same bill unanimously with the help of Sen. Warren, Sen. Marco Rubio, Florida Republican, and Sen. Roy Blunt, Missouri Republican.

It was then presented to President Barack Obama who on April 29, 2016 signed the National POW/MIA Remembrance Act of 2015 into law, thus directing the Architect of The Capitol

(AOC) to place a POW/MIA Chair in the U.S. Capitol.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National then worked with the AOC for 18 months to procure all the materials pertaining to the chair and negotiating the cost for all the materials, which Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National paid for.

Finally, on November 8, 2017, the POW/MIA Chair was officially dedicated in the Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol. Rep. Lynch and Sen. Warren were among the members of Congress and other officials present at the unveiling.

"I applaud Joe D'Entremont and Gus Dante, both Rolling Thunder Inc. National members, for their leadership, both in Massachusetts, New Jersey and across our country, in advocating for increased government accountability for POW/MIA and their families. It was the strong advocacy of Rolling Thunder that brought this bill to the finish line and on to the President's desk," said Rep. Lynch.

Our nation's POW/MIAs should never be forgotten. Every American visiting the Emancipation Hall of the U.S. Capitol who sees this POW/MIA Chair of Honor should know that it serves as a reminder of the incredible sacrifice made by those brave 83,000 Americans whose fate is still unknown

» see **POW** | C7



# POW/MIA Chair of Honor: A solemn reminder in the U.S. Capitol



By Rep. Stephen F. Lynch

It is said that there is loyalty in the simple act of remembrance. In November, the United States Congress unveiled a Chair of Honor that sits empty in the United States Capitol as a tribute to those brave men and women who, in the course of their courageous military service, have been rendered missing in action or prisoners of war.

The Chair of Honor serves as a solemn reminder of the sacrifice of more than 80,000 U.S. service members who remain classified as POW/MIA. Visitors to the U.S. Capitol, members of Congress and staff pass by the Chair and take a moment to pay their respects to the approximately 1,000 troops in Vietnam, 7,000 troops in the Korean War and 70,000 troops in World War II who have not come home. The Chair of Honor also serves as a reminder to members of Congress of the gravity of our decisions when we send our sons and daughters to war and of our enduring obligation to their families to see that they ultimately return.

In our country, the families of American service members who are POW and MIA have often suffered alone. Groups like Rolling Thunder have fiercely advocated for these families to ensure they remain at the forefront of our minds. In 2014, Joe D'Entremont, who was president of Rolling Thunder Massachusetts Chapter 1 at the time and is now a National member, met with me in Washington.

We discussed the importance of honoring POWs and MIAs, particularly in the U.S. Capitol.

POW/MIA Chairs of Honor already sit in ballparks and public spaces across the country. It seemed fitting that we honor those service members who remain unaccounted for within the U.S. Capitol, a symbol of our nation's history and enduring spirit.

I introduced the National POW/MIA Remembrance Act to authorize the placement of a POW/MIA Chair of Honor in the U.S. Capitol, and my colleague Sen. Elizabeth Warren introduced a companion bill in the Senate. In April of 2016, President Barack Obama signed the bill into law.

Members of Rolling Thunder have worked hard to promote government accountability for American POWs and MIAs. Joe, along with Gus Dante, another member of Rolling Thunder National, have been leaders in advocating for the placement of POW/MIA Chairs of Honor across the country and were instrumental in helping us place the Chair in the Capitol. I admire their loyalty and dedication to honoring these

brave men and women.

The Chair of Honor was also supported by the National League of POW/MIA Families, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, the Military Officers Association of America, and the Vietnam Veterans of America. It is a testament to the American spirit that so many organizations continue to fight to keep the memory of our brave service members alive.

As members of Rolling Thunder make their way into Washington, D.C., I hope they will have a chance to see the new Chair of Honor, a product of their dedication to those who have served our nation courageously and honorably.

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*Democrat Rep. Stephen F. Lynch represents the 8th Congressional District in Massachusetts. He has served in Congress since 2001 and is the Ranking Member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and also serves on the House Committee on Financial Services.*

## POW

From page C6

and the courage of the families that are left behind.

### Health care

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. members advocate for improvements in the health care provided to veterans by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

According to a survey by the VA, more than 8,000 U.S. military veterans are committing suicide annually. That means that an average of 22 veterans are taking their own lives each and every day.

A No. 1 priority for Rolling Thunder®, Inc. is to promote suicide awareness by advocating for and wearing the red patch that reads, "TOO 22 MANY." This patch is not just a patch to put on a vest but a message to bring awareness to our government and the public that 22 suicides a day among military personnel is too many.

We cannot allow our nation's veterans to die by their own hands because they can't get the help they need to cope with the pressures of returning to civilian life. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a long list of mental health issues can take anyone down the wrong path.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National

and our 92-plus Rolling Thunder®, Inc. chapters throughout the U.S. are dedicated to finding a way to helping our nation's heroes by funding programs such as:

- Project Horses for Forces, Inc., Long Valley, New Jersey.
- Spring Reins of Life, Three Bridges, New Jersey.
- New Freedom Farm, Buchanan, Virginia.

They all are assisting veterans who are at risk with suicidal tendencies. Rolling Thunder®, Inc. New Jersey Chapter 2 in Forked River, New Jersey, is instrumental in creating the red "22" patch.

Also, as we are all aware, the list of presumptive diseases and conditions associated with herbicide Agent Orange and other toxins is steadily increasing. The VA has recognized certain cancers and other health issues/problems that are associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides used during military service. Such presumptive diseases — and a list of U.S. Navy and Coast Guard ships that were exposed to Agent Orange and other toxins while in operation — may be accessed from the VA website.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc. strongly urges the new administration to keep our nation's commitment to our veterans.



PHOTO BY PATRICK J. HUGHES, ROLLING THUNDER® INC. NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER WWW.PATRICKJHUGHES.ORG.

Rep. Stephen F. Lynch, Massachusetts Democrat, is the lead sponsor of the House bill that placed the POW/MIA Chair of Honor in the U.S. Capitol (in background). Among those attending the Nov. 8, 2017, ceremony were Mr. Lynch (third from right) and leaders of Rolling Thunder Inc., (left to right) Massachusetts Chapter 1 Vice President Brian LaBlanc, Founder and Executive Director Artie Muller, President Joe Bean, Legislative Director Gus Dante and National Reports/Relations Officer Pete Zaleski.

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*Rolling Thunder®, Inc. is a national 501(c)(4) nonprofit incorporated in 1995 for the sole purpose to advocate for veterans and veterans' rights. Its 8,000-plus members in over 90 chapters volunteer in VA facilities, raise money to support veterans, and lobby state and federal government*

*agencies on behalf of veterans and their families. Charitable donations may be made to Rolling Thunder® Charities Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization created to serve veterans and their families.*





# Veterans feel free on ‘iron horses’

## *Wounded Warrior Project® connects veterans through motorcycles*



**By John Roberts**

**E**ver since we were children, the wind on our faces exhilarated us. Whether running as fast as you could or the first time accelerating on a bicycle, the feeling was exuberance. As adults, many of us seek ways to recreate those moments.

One way is to saddle up on an iron horse. Motorcycles help connect us to that childhood experience. For injured veterans, I find, it provides so much more. The promise of a motorcycle ride can convince a warrior to get out of isolation and connect with other veterans. The camaraderie built on the open highway can create new roads to recovery. And the support developed during these shared experiences lasts well after the ride, serving to refuel an individual’s personal tank and provide motivation to achieve his or her personal goals.

Air Force veteran Jermain Collins felt these bonds form on a recent ride in Houston.

“The other warriors, like me, seemed to have a great time and enjoyed the ride,” Jermain said. “Riding on the open

road with the wind in my face gave me a sense of peace and tranquility that no medication can offer.”

While each veteran’s journey is different, countless other warriors share Jermain’s sentiment. Last summer we connected warriors from Southern California, Arizona, and Nevada for a ride that spanned several cities and all branches of service.

“As soon as you get on that bike, you are not thinking about what you have gone through, you are thinking about where you are going,” said Navy veteran Raymond “Doc” Andalio, one of the veterans who made that ride. “We ride, weave through beautiful traffic; we feel free. It’s the only freedom we have at that moment. We all served. Many of us were taken from that duty. But when we ride, we understand the importance of that freedom, and we are blessed.”

Wounded warriors face transitions when they return from the battlefield. For some, it is a task they are ill-equipped to handle. Injury abruptly ended their career before they could put together a plan for life after the military. That is where veterans service organizations like Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) come in. Whether it is help finding the right fit in a civilian career, mental health care to address post-traumatic stress, or just a fun outing to get out of the house and connect with other veterans in a comfortable environment — WWP is there.

Doc said to ride is to heal.

“It is therapy! Wind therapy. You twist the throttle and enjoy the wind.”

Isolation is one of the most significant struggles wounded warriors deal with after serving their country. It can be difficult knowing how to overcome that challenge and rekindle bonds similar to those formed in the military. While you



may be alone on your motorcycle, you are not alone on the ride.

“The people you meet are amazing,” Doc said. “You ride once, and then it is instantly ‘when are we going to ride again?’”

You meet other riders on the road and at each stop. Not all are veterans; not all warriors are from the same branch of service. But the camaraderie is there.

“It is kind of like the Armed Forces,” Doc said. “But instead of Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, you have Yamaha, Harley-Davidson®, Honda, and Victory®, or any other brand of motorcycle. They all have something in common — the ride. The next thing you know, you have a network, then you have a friend who knows someone who can help you with your job search. Then you have another person to ride with.”

That network of riders grows from coast to coast. WWP connects warriors with one another on these rides to help grow their networks. It also gives us a chance to make sure warriors know about the programs and services we offer that help in mental and physical health, financial wellness, independence,

and government and community relations. And warriors never pay a penny for our programs — they paid their dues on the battlefield.

As I mentioned, one way to get warriors around other veterans is by hosting a motorcycle ride. The freedom of two wheels appeals to veterans, and some say it can be therapeutic. It is a chance to feel that wind in your face.

“The chance to ride with other warriors was a great way to relax,” Jermain said.

“When I am riding with other warriors, I feel like I am floating,” Doc said. “I know we are going in one direction, wherever that is.”

.....  
*John Roberts is the National Service Director of the Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP), which since 2003 has been meeting the growing needs of warriors, their families, and caregivers — helping them achieve their highest ambitions. Learn more: <http://newsroom.wounded-warriorproject.org/about-us>. For more information, please contact Rob Louis at [rlouis@woundedwarriorproject.org](mailto:rlouis@woundedwarriorproject.org) or call 1-904-627-0432.*



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**All treatment is provided at no cost to the warrior, and travel is provided free of charge to warriors and family members.**



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# Remembering those who laid down their lives for our freedoms



By Rep. Phil Roe

**M**emorial Day is a day we pay tribute to the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our country safe and free.

This year, Memorial Day takes on even greater meaning to me, as I just returned from an oversight visit to various World War I and World War II American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) sites. As chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I have oversight responsibility of ABMC's work, both at home and abroad. ABMC employees

have made it their life's work to make sure the sacrifice of the men and women who laid down their lives wearing the uniform of the United States of America is never forgotten. Walking those hallowed grounds that saw so much bloodshed for the cause of liberty is an experience I will never forget.

As time passes, it can become difficult to remember the horrors of war. Even spaces that were once sites of vicious battles can be turned into peaceful, beautiful memorials where we can reflect, but for the loved ones of the heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice, the cost of war is never far from their minds and hearts. They see it in the empty seat at the Thanksgiving table, and they feel the loss every day of their lives — even on the most joyful of occasions. We owe it to those men and women — and their families — to make sure we're honoring their sacrifice and delivering on the commitment we've made to those who serve. I carried this mission with me as I visited sites like Belleau Wood Battlefield, and when I paid my respects to three Tennessee brothers at Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery. I carry it with me when I sit in on the dais as chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, and it guides every piece of legislation I introduce and every vote I take that will affect the lives of our

heroes and their families.

Recently, for the first time ever, the committee came together to pass legislation to right one of the wrongs of the Vietnam War. Currently, Blue Water Navy veterans are prohibited from receiving the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange because current Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy is to limit the presumption to veterans who actually set foot in Vietnam or served in inland waterways. As a result, thousands of Blue Water Navy veterans have been denied benefits for conditions they may have developed because they came into contact with herbicides. The bipartisan Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017 — introduced by Rep. David Valadao, California Republican, and now headed to the House floor — would extend the presumption of exposure to Agent Orange to Blue Water Navy veterans.

The VA estimates that there are 6.6 million living Vietnam veterans and that there will only be 4.4 million remaining in 10 years. On average, we lose 523 Vietnam veterans every day. To simply wait for these veterans to die is not an option. I wholeheartedly believe we owe it to the brave veterans who served offshore during the Vietnam War to provide compensation benefits for conditions they may have developed

because of exposure to Agent Orange. Passing this legislation is a promise kept, and you can rest assured I will continue to do my very best to honor all who have served by delivering the compensation and benefits they have earned. In today's political climate, it's not always easy, but — to put it simply — we owe every man and woman who has honorably served this country a debt of gratitude we can never fully repay, especially when they make the ultimate sacrifice.

This and every Memorial Day, my prayers go out to the loved ones of the heroes who have laid down their lives so you and I can enjoy the freedoms we hold dear. I often turn to scripture to find adequate words to express my gratitude for the men and women who serve this country, and I was moved when I recently visited Lafayette Escadrille Memorial Cemetery — a site that was added to ABMC's portfolio last January — and read the words etched in the marble there. II Samuel 1:23 says, "And in their death they were not divided. They were swifter than eagles. They were stronger than lions."

.....  
*Rep. Phil Roe, M.D., Tennessee Republican, is Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He also serves on the House Education and Workforce Committee.*

## Americans in 50 states honor POW/MIA flag

By The Washington Times  
Special Sections Department

In a dramatic effort to make sure Americans prisoners of war/missing in action "are not forgotten," a veteran motorcyclist and thousands of allies have worked together to bring the haunting POW/MIA flag to all 50 states.

"A lot of kids today don't even know what a POW/MIA is," Army veteran Jim Ray told a University of Delaware campus reporter in March when the POW 50-State Flag Tour stopped at UD's Irabant University Center.

The flag — protected in a transparent display case — started its journey on Sept. 17, 2017, in Grundy, Virginia. It was passed along, baton-style, by motorcycle riders across the country — flown to Hawaii in February and displayed in North Pole, Alaska in November — and returned to Grundy on May 19.

Along the way, thousands of people coast to coast came to events to pay their respects to the flag — and the 83,000 U.S.

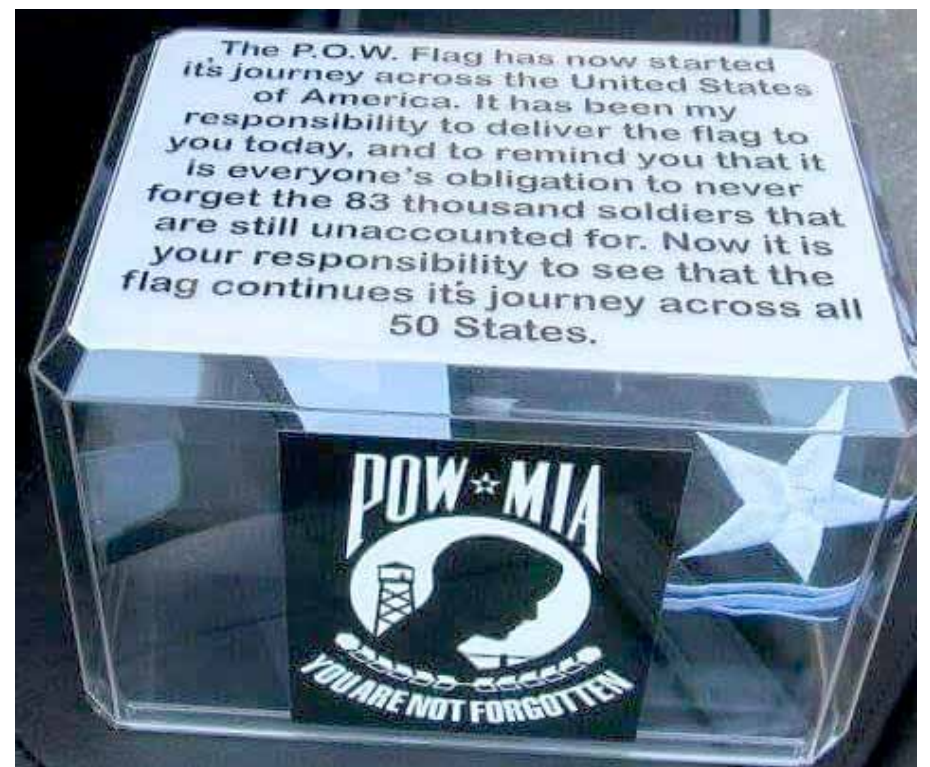
military personnel who have not returned from past wars — and many signed a commemorative book that travels with the flag.

"When we do [the flag tour], let's make sure there are plenty of tears to go with it," Mr. Ray said in an email for this article. Moreover, he added, "each point of contact in each state was instructed that the POW Flag 50-State Tour was never to be used a fundraising event and also to not allow the flag to be disrespected in any manner."

The POW flag tour came about after Mr. Ray and his wife, Pat, visited the Vietnam Memorial Wall, and he had a dream "about us as Vietnam veterans transferring POWs across the country to get them away from their daily torture," he said in an email.

The idea grew into having the POW flag escorted through all 50 states, stopping for local ceremonies.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc., and other veterans' and bikers' clubs around the nation swiftly responded to the idea — "they could not believe the POW flag had never toured the United States," Mr. Ray wrote — and the eight-month journey began.





# Honoring those who serve, today and every day



By U.S. Air Force Gen. (Ret.)  
Richard B. Myers

**T**o my fellow bikers, service members, veterans and to all who support our military members, as we pay our respects this Memorial Day to those who have given their lives to protect our great nation, let us recognize the contributions of all who have served.

Our country's legacy of service goes back to even before we officially became a nation. The United States Army was formed over a year before our nation's birthday. Almost every generation of Americans since has served and paid the price to defend the precious gift of our freedom, from the Revolutionary War to the Civil War; to World War I, the war

to end all wars; to World War II, which laid the foundation of the prosperity and the peace we enjoy today; to the Korean War where we drew the line and laid the foundation for our victory in the Cold War; to Vietnam where we laid the foundation for more recent military successes in Desert Storm, the Iraq War and the Afghanistan War.

Every generation of men and women who served or who are serving our country today — the soldiers, the sailors, the airmen, the Marines, the Coast Guardsmen, those on active duty, those in the National Guard or Reserves — bear or have borne the burden of preserving our freedom.

We are inspired by their sacrifices, their convictions, their patriotism, their courage, their power and their professionalism.

That is why we can never forget those who did not return from these battlefields and other conflicts, big and small. Our POWs and MIAs can never be forgotten heroes. We must ensure they — and all who have served — are remembered and cherished. They must never be forgotten.

This is why the installment of the new POW/MIA Chair of Honor at the U.S. Capitol was so important — so we will always honor our prisoners of war and the nearly 83,000 military members missing in action. It's why funding for helping veterans suffering from



post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues must be a priority — so that we honor our commitment to take care of those who safeguard us.

It's why memorials to our fallen are so vital — they remind us of their sacrifice and how unselfish they were in serving their country. As a young pilot, I conducted 600 combat hours in an F-4 in the Vietnam War, so I am particularly heartened to see the newly dedicated monument for Vietnam helicopter pilots and crews in Arlington National Cemetery.

It's why the work of Rolling Thunder and organizations such as American Gold Star Mothers, USO and more are so vital — so that in their time of need, we

serve those who have served us.

For as long as we have been the United States of America, it is has been those who serve who have made it possible to share the blessings of liberty around the world and to pass on to the next generation the gifts of freedom that were passed on to us. Let's honor them today and every day.

.....  
*Retired U.S. Air Force Gen. Richard B. Myers returned to his home state and alma mater to become the 14th president of Kansas State University in November 2016. He served as the 15th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and retired as a four-star general after 40 years in the Air Force.*

## Roll with Rolling Thunder's Memorial Day message

By DEBORAH SIMMONS

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is either 34, 35 or 36 years old, depending on whose facts — the U.S', South Korea's or North Korea's — are applied.

What seems to be certain is that Mr. Kim is a millennial, among the generational cohort that views history as a fluid set of values, laws and rules that are meant to be broken and changed.

Pause momentarily to consider the fact that in less than a month President Trump will be discussing peace with Mr. Kim, a reclusive kid among worldly men, many would say.

Their summit in Singapore is a life-and-death issue that — unlike America's War Between the States, which began and ended in the South — continues today as a peninsula divided as North and South Korea.

That's why, as we approach Memorial Day, it's important that millennials and younger people understand the purpose of the holiday and why we will honor



war dead such as Albert E. Quintero, who joined the Army in 1945 and served during the Korean War.

By then, Quintero was among an estimated 2,500 U.S. soldiers and 700 South Korean troops deployed in late November 1950 east of the Chosin Reservoir, tough terrain during any weather and freezing in the winter. Quintero, by then a corporal, members of his squad and other soldiers were attacked by Chinese forces. A surprise assault, it was brutal, it was ugly, it was hell.

The Army managed to evacuate about 1,500 wounded, but Quintero was not among them. He was reported missing on Dec. 2, 1950.

Since then, his family in California had been awaiting official word about his

remains — and this week their prayers were answered. On Wednesday, the very day North Korea released three American detainees, Quintero's descendants claimed his remains, which were in a casket draped with a U.S. flag. He was but 23 years old when he died.

Fortunately, we have organizations such as Rolling Thunder Inc. to remind us over and again the sacrifices made by troops who become prisoners of war or missing in action.

Rolling with Rolling Thunder gives us a resounding reminder about soldiers like Marine Lance Cpl. Ashton Loney, who was killed in a May 15, 1975, ambush during the last Vietnam War battle on Koh Tang in Cambodia. Loney is reportedly one of a handful of MIA servicemen from the battle.

The name Rolling Thunder itself stems from Operation Rolling Thunder, the military code name for the intense, long-term U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in the mid-1960s. By now you know what they do and where they do it every Memorial Day.

Each Memorial Day weekend in the

District, uniformed members of the military position themselves along key thoroughfares to salute the thousands of motorcyclists, veterans, families and current military men and women that Rolling Thunder brings to the nation's capital.

Spectators and participants roll in from around the country, and the thunderous applause for the bikers as they roll along the National Mall is as memorable as the tears and smiles of pride on the faces in the crowd.

Rolling Thunder has a simple message and mission, founder and former Army Sgt. Artie Muller once said: "Never forget all of our prisoners of war and those still missing in action from all wars, and never forget our veterans of all wars. That's our message, and that's our mission."

Smart.

Let's roll.

.....  
• Deborah Simmons can be contacted at [dsimmons@washingtontimes.com](mailto:dsimmons@washingtontimes.com). This column first appeared online in The Washington Times on May 10, 2018.



# Cherishing Old Glory — and the freedom it represents



By David G. Weber

**G**rowing up, I was blessed to be able to escape the frenzied, fast-paced life of New York City's suburbs by spending my summers with my grandparents.

Retreating to the mountains of northern New York, my grandparents taught me valuable and important life-lessons during my impressionable youth. I grew both in stature and in character each year as I modeled myself after the lessons my grandparents taught me, and all of those lessons were based on their faith. Looking back, I treasure those summers as having a lasting effect on the person I am today.

My grandparents taught me the value of good, old-fashioned hard work. They helped teach me to be firm and resolute, to never compromise my character and integrity, and to always act with kindness, compassion and forgiveness in my heart. Most importantly, my grandfather, or "Pop" as we called him, taught me to respect our flag and to appreciate the freedom it represented. A freedom that young

fair and just. He fought alongside the men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the "Purple Heart Battalion," as they stormed through Italy — facing an unrelenting enemy resistance. He and his brothers-in-arms endured barrage after barrage of heavy artillery, machine gun fire and sniper fire as they advanced through the Vosges Mountains in France against a German foe that was under orders to "fight until the last man falls." The men of the 442nd lived up to every word of their "Go For Broke!" motto. To this day, Pop is still one of the bravest men I have ever encountered.

Pop raised a flag on our front porch with the rising of the sun each day as I headed off to my summer job at the boat docks. Like clockwork, he lowered that flag at sunset. He taught me never to fly the flag in darkness. When we agreed that our flag had finally seen its better days, we didn't just toss it away like an old blanket. Rather, we properly and respectfully retired it. Our flag had served us honorably as an emblem of our freedom, and it deserved as much respect as we could offer.

Perhaps my grandfather's life experiences made him look at Old Glory a little differently than some, but the fact that our nation's flag meant so much to him left a lasting impression on me. I guess that's a big reason why I take it so personally when I see protesters on the news stomping on the Star-Spangled Banner like it is nothing more than a beat-up old rag.

Those who trample on the American flag tread on every American flag that has ever existed. They dishonor the flag my grandfather raised on our porch every morning and the flag



PHOTO COURTESY OF DAVID G. WEBER.

Army 1st Lt. George A. Buirkle, Mr. Weber's grandfather, served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, known as the "Purple Heart Battalion" for the heavy fighting and casualties it endured during World War II in Germany. The combat team was made up almost entirely of soldiers of Japanese descent.

**By teaching me what our flag meant to him, my grandfather also taught me the real meaning of Memorial Day. It's more than barbecues, beach days and long weekends. Pop taught me never to let our flag touch the ground. So many Americans have willingly given up their lives so that our flag would never, ever, feel the earth beneath it. Memorial Day is about remembering and honoring those selfless, brave American heroes.**

kids like me unknowingly and innocently took for granted.

Like so many of his generation, Pop was a combat-weathered World War II and Korean War veteran. He was tough as nails, but he was always

raised on Iwo Jima. They disrespect the battle-scarred flag that "so proudly we hailed" at Fort McHenry in 1812. They stomp on the tattered flag that I watched, with tears streaming down my face, being raised by New York's

Bravest at Ground Zero after it was pulled from the smoldering wreckage of our fallen Twin Towers. Those who walk all over the American flag dishonor the flag that graces the uniforms of every brave man and woman preserving and defending our freedom. And they desecrate the flags draped over the coffins and placed at the graves of our fallen heroes who made the ultimate sacrifice so that we could be free — may God rest their souls.

By teaching me what our flag meant to him, my grandfather also taught me the real meaning of Memorial Day. It's more than barbecues, beach days and long weekends. Pop taught me never to let our flag touch the ground. So many Americans have willingly given up their lives so that our flag would never,

ever, feel the earth beneath it. Memorial Day is about remembering and honoring those selfless, brave American heroes.

Take some time to teach your children and grandchildren the reason we celebrate Memorial Day. I'm pretty sure that, just like me, they'll remember the lesson for the rest of their lives.

.....  
*Chief Operating Officer David G. Weber is one of the key driving forces behind the Association of Mature American Citizens (AMAC). Since 2007, he has labored passionately to build the foundation of what has emerged as a leading advocate for America's older citizens, and has made enormous personal commitments to AMAC's mission. Learn more about AMAC at [www.AMAC.us](http://www.AMAC.us).*



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# ‘Save one vet a day, one vet at a time’

By The Washington Times  
Special Sections Department

BUCHANAN, VIRGINIA — “No matter what hardships we endure, we are strong enough to handle them — and they help us to become not only stronger but more compassionate.”

This can-do attitude is found throughout New Freedom Farm, Inc., from its founder Lois Dawn Fritz to the rescued horses who live at the farm to the steady stream of military veterans who come by for comfort and camaraderie.

The farm’s deepest wish is to provide a “safe space” for veterans, especially if they are trying to escape substance abuse, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and suicidal thinking.

“My life as I knew it changed forever in 2009 when someone I knew and loved committed suicide,” said Mrs. Fritz, a Navy veteran and forensic nurse who fought her way out of PTSD, in part by spending time with horses.

“He was a U.S. Marine who suffered



PHOTO BY DOUG WETZSTEIN/ SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

New Freedom Farm, opened in 2016 in Buchanan, Virginia, offers a “safe place” for veterans, especially those seeking camaraderie and relief from post-traumatic stress disorder and substance abuse.



PHOTO BY DOUG WETZSTEIN/ SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

New Freedom Farm has 19 equines, including some animals that were rescued from slaughter. Veterans may come to the farm at no charge to talk with each other, visit the horses and attend 12-step programs.



PHOTO BY DOUG WETZSTEIN/ SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

New Freedom Farm founder Lois Dawn Fritz and Joe Bean, president of Rolling Thunder, Inc., talked with a local Fox-TV news crew about the Freedom Rocks Fest on April 7, 2018.

with the disease of addiction and was a hurting soul,” she said. “Each and every day, we must try to make a difference in our veterans’ lives ...”

Mrs. Fritz and husband Mitchell opened New Freedom Farm in 2016. There is never a charge to veterans who wish to visit, talk and interact with some of the 19 equines, which include three mares and their foals saved from slaughter, two mustangs from the federal Bureau of Land Management, and mini horses, mini donkeys, a hinny and a mule.

No clinical “demographics” are taken

of visiting vets — “People can feel so judged” if they say they have PTSD, Mrs. Fritz said — and there are 12-step programs and meetings held at the farm, which is in Buchanan, near Virginia’s Shenandoah Mountains and about 30 miles north of Roanoke.

“Save one vet a day, one day at a time,” she said.

The nonprofit charity is endorsed by Rolling Thunder®, Inc.

“New Freedom Farm is doing essential work helping our veterans,” said Sgt. Artie Muller, founder and executive director of Rolling Thunder®, Inc.

“Lois’ work is literally saving lives every day. The mission of New Freedom Farm fits perfectly with our mission to aid all veterans in need,” he said.

On April 7, the farm hosted the First Annual Freedom Rocks Fest, featuring country music artist and staunch Rolling Thunder®, Inc. supporter Rockie Lynne. Several hundred participants — including Rolling Thunder®, Inc. members from at least eight states, according to Joe Bean, president of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. — braved the unusually cold day to enjoy food, booths, conversations, a F-4 Phantom jet from the Vietnam War era

and military vehicles from the Roanoke Military Vehicle Club. A large heated tent was prepared for the crowd, which included decorated veterans from World War II.

New Freedom Farm “is here for all the vets,” said Brandie Kessler, who came from Pennsylvania to help with the April 7 event. While Mrs. Fritz is tough, she said, she is also “magic — she believes [in the farm’s mission] with all her heart, and people feel it.”



# 'We are remembering our children'



By Sue Pollard

Imagine Memorial Day 1988. Some 2,500 bikes revving their engines at the Pentagon parking lot, waiting to begin the Memorial Day homecoming procession.

Now imagine 2018, with 600,000 bikes, mainly Harleys, and their riders revving their engines. It's an amazing noise and an even better sight to see!

Although Gold Star Mothers sit on the backs of these bikes, the adrenalin creeps in and the smiles on our faces get bigger and bigger as we round each corner and watch the crowds of people waving flags

and hands, trying to get a look at such a magnificent sight.

We are remembering our children. The children that have fought and died for this wonderful and great country of ours. Today is the day we remember them all, from every conflict, since our great nation was founded.

These wonderful men and women of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. wait patiently for hours for Gold Star Mothers to show up and proudly walk over to each one, extending an arm and placing them on their personal, customized bike. These patriots are so proud to be here ... so that they can honor and remember friends, family, and brothers and sisters in arms.

There is nothing more powerful than to be in Washington, D.C., during the weekend of Memorial Day. We remember *all* of our fallen as we wave back to the crowds with our American Flags. This event and homecoming procession will continue in Washington, D.C., annually and Gold Star Mothers are honored to be a part of such a great tradition!

.....  
*Sue Pollard is the National President of American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. She serves in honor of Army Spc. Justin W. Pollard, who was killed in action in Iraq on Dec. 30, 2003.*



PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

American Gold Star Mothers, who have lost a son or daughter in active military service, maintain the ties of fellowship born of that service and assist and further all patriotic work.



PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

Riders for Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s Ride for Freedom will begin gathering in the Pentagon's parking lots at 7 a.m. on Sunday.



# SonoSpine®: An optimal choice for veterans and military forces

By Seth Wade

**D**isbelief filled my mind as I passed by my co-worker's office door. My friend had complained about neck and back pain for as long as I had known him. He had decided to get something done about it not long after we completed a business review of an innovative spine surgery called SonoSpine®.

The review had revealed the amazing story of SonoSpine®'s founder and ultrasonic technology, but I had never imagined the surgery would be this effective. Here was a co-worker of mine whose quality of life and productivity had suffered greatly for the last few years and now, just days after getting the SonoSpine® procedure, he was ear-to-ear smiles. He was working joyfully for the first time in a long time!

He even told me how the tractor on his hobby farm was "calling his name." "Wow," I said. "I am so happy for you and what a difference SonoSpine® has made in your quality of life!"

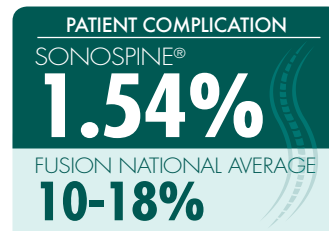
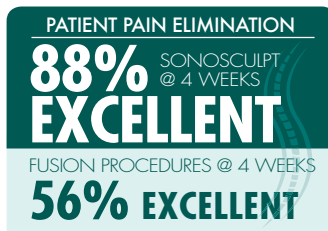
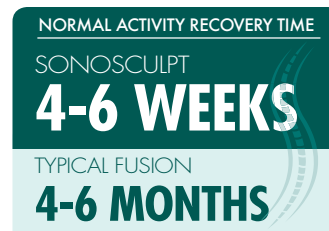
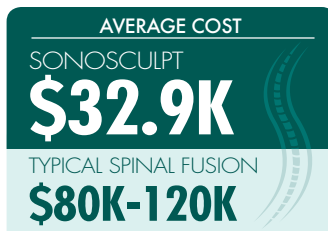
After making my way down the hall to my office, I sat in my chair and began to think.

SonoSpine®'s team of people and medical innovation had greatly improved this man's life. More than that, our team had received the added benefit of his quick return to work, plus added productivity now that he is pain-free. SonoSpine® is such a good thing, and good deserves attention.

Insurance was a key issue, though. The technology SonoSpine® uses is FDA-approved, but the procedure does not have a Medicare procedure code allowing for broad insurance coverage at this time. My friend was able to afford an out-of-network service that he believed would provide him with superior care. But this lack of insurance coverage seemed to be an injustice. Our whole office should have been able to take advantage of this care option.

Fortunately, not long after I witnessed this mini-miracle, an opportunity presented itself for me to contribute as the Chief Development Officer to the "good work" they were doing at SonoSpine®. A sense of service to something greater overwhelmed me, and I said yes, but on one condition — that we find a way to help more people. Dr. Dilan Ellegala, SonoSpine®'s founder and chief surgeon, smiled and said, "SonoSpine®'s fusion avoidance spine surgery as the standard of care is our goal, so welcome to the team!"

As we considered the best ways to reach new patients, we saw that self-insured employers have an optimal insurance-coverage path for their employees



who are suffering from chronic back and neck conditions.

Some 90 million workers and dependents were covered by their employers' self-funded insurance plans in 2011, according to the Self-Insurance Institute of America (SIIA). More than half of employers in industries — such as transportation, manufacturing, finance, retail, healthcare and wholesale — self-insure, SIIA said.

While commercial insurance will surely one day cover SonoSpine® procedures, self-insured employers already have advantages, as they can determine what procedures their insurance will cover. This means self-insured employers can simply include SonoSpine® as a covered procedure for their employees.

Our medical outcomes and the bundled benefits approach show a clear win-win-win for providers, patients and employers:

Employers/payers have significant cost savings, realized first from the lower initial cost of the SonoSpine® procedure compared with traditional surgical spinal fusion, and secondly from savings derived from a patient's speedy return to work and community after a SonoSpine® procedure.

Patients benefit from a higher level of care (and far fewer complications) and ultimately have excellent quality of life due to the fusion-avoidance focus of the SonoSpine®.

We here at SonoSpine® believe we are so fortunate to assist with patients' pain alleviation. Surgery is NOT the goal, but if

it is clearly the best option, we should do it in as minimally disruptive a method as possible.

Our desire to push ourselves further in patient care creates a ripple effect in their communities and organizations: Patients' ability to enjoy their days pain-free is so impactful to others around them. For us, that never gets old.

We are asking others to join us in the effort to expand the coverage for SonoSpine®'s procedure.

We see clearly that this technology, which evolved out of DARPA-funded programs, would greatly benefit veterans and U.S. service members with TRICARE, Tri-West and Healthnet benefits.

Please contact us as we would love to band together with others who are blazing healthcare paths — such as the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation and the VA Center for Innovation in the Department of Veterans Affairs — and supporting the country's ability to utilize better outcomes and cost-saving procedures such as SonoSpine®.

Ultimately, America is what you make it! The 18 percent of the nation's GDP that is represented by healthcare expenses can be something that unites us in heart. We can tackle this if only we are willing to take the risk to stop for a moment and help where possible.

.....  
*Seth Wade is the Chief Development Officer for SonoSpine® and a proud U.S. Army veteran. Contact Seth at [swade@sonospinesurgery.com](mailto:swade@sonospinesurgery.com).*





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# REMEMBERING BRAVERY

## Monument dedicated to pilots, crew members of 'helicopter war'

By Carlo Muñoz

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

**N**early 50 years ago, Col. Carl McNair was in South Vietnam's Mekong Delta, a new Army aviator piloting the service's iconic Bell UH-1 Huey helicopter. Decades and thousands of flight hours later, the now-retired Maj. Gen. McNair recalled his harrowing baptism under fire flying the unfriendly skies above Vietnam.

"We flew 13 hours that day," he told the crowd of Vietnam veterans at Arlington National Cemetery, gathered on a sunny but cool Wednesday afternoon for the dedication of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument. "We all flew to the sounds of the guns," he said.

On another helicopter mission in the Vietnam War, a crew member aboard another Army Huey would have his life cut short. David Kink was one of the nearly 5,000 American helicopter aviators who lost their lives during the course of the conflict. To the family of Kink and all those pilots and crew members who lost loved ones in Vietnam, the familiar whomp-whomp of the Huey's rotor blades in flight is a reminder of what they had lost.

"When I was growing up, the sound of a helicopter was the sound of sadness," David Kink's sister, Julie, said during the dedication ceremony, held in the cemetery's outdoor auditorium near Section 35 and just a few feet from the iconic Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

But in her grief, Ms. Kink said, she found solace in the fact that the same sound that brought so much pain for her family was the sound of salvation for the soldiers and Marines who depended on the fleet of Hueys and CH-47 Chinooks as their lifelines in the jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia, delivering supplies, providing cover and evacuating the wounded.

"To the men fighting the war, it was the sound of hope ... to carry them out of hell," she said.

To the veterans of the air war in Vietnam, Wednesday's event was a long time coming. Over 12,000 helicopters participated in combat operations throughout the war. Given the Vietnamese topography and the nature of the fighting, helicopters assumed an outsized role in a war they had never seen before.

"Vietnam will always be known as



PHOTO BY CARLO MUÑOZ/THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

The new Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument stand in Section 35 of Arlington National Cemetery, not far from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

the helicopter war," Gen. McNair said.

The National Mall's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, with its iconic black granite slabs bearing the names of the 58,000 Americans killed, received international acclaim for its somber but emotional take on one of the most divisive conflicts in U.S. history. But erecting the 2.5-by-2.5-foot granite block engraved with an image of an Army Huey commemorating Vietnam's air warriors proved an unexpectedly difficult fight.

Army officials declined the request by the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association in 2014, saying Arlington Cemetery's hallowed grounds lacked the space to support another war memorial. Undeterred, association officials reached out to Congress and eventually garnered enough support for a law authorizing the memorial.

"It's hard to get a memorial here,

and it should be," Rep. Mark E. Amodei, Nevada Republican and a key sponsor of the legislation, said during the ceremony. He said the tenacity of the association and other Vietnam veterans groups was a testament to the groups' dedication to honor their fallen comrades in arms.

"Helicopter pilots and crew members risked their lives again and again to lead offenses, transport troops and save lives. A monument in Greater Washington, D.C., to their bravery is overdue," Rep. Matt Cartwright, Pennsylvania Democrat and another co-sponsor of the legislation, said in a statement.

The memorial, Ms. Kink said, was not built by the government but "by the men who flew alongside our loved ones" in Vietnam. "They will never be forgotten," she said. To those who survived the war, Vietnam will always be a part of them."

"I think about it every single day. Every single day," said Jim Holden, who flew Hueys in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968. He recalled telling his grandson's Boy Scout troop about his experiences during the war.

"We survived," said Hugh Adams, who flew and fought in Vietnam in 1968 and 1969, as several Hueys flew in formation above the cemetery to mark the memorial's dedication. It was the duty of those who made it out of the war to remember the ones who gave their lives there, Mr. Adams said.

"Anyone who experienced a single taste of war ... you all likely have the scars and the medals to show" for the sacrifices made in Vietnam, Gen. McNair said. "I salute you all for your service. We are soldiers for life."

This news story was first published online by The Washington Times on April 18, 2018.





By Sen. Tammy Baldwin

**D**uring the Vietnam War, nearly 5,000 American helicopter pilots and crewmembers lost their lives, fighting in what is often referred to as the “Helicopter War.” When I heard from Vietnam veterans in Wisconsin about the need for a national monument to honor these fallen heroes, I wanted to take action.

I worked across party lines with Alaska Sen. Dan Sullivan and Nevada Rep. Mark Amodei to introduce the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Monument Act to move this memorial forward.

This year, after pressure from Congress and veterans, the Secretary of the Army agreed to place the monument in Arlington National Cemetery to honor Vietnam helicopter pilots and crewmembers and allow their friends, family and brothers in arms to pay tribute to their courageous sacrifice.

This would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of Bob Hesselbein of Middleton, Wisconsin, who served as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam and has spent years working for this monument. With Bob’s leadership and the work of countless other veterans in the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, we were able to do right by our veterans and secure this memorial.

In April, I had the honor of attending the unveiling and dedication at Arlington Cemetery. The brave heroes who served as helicopter pilots and crewmembers during the Vietnam War have earned this recognition. I’m so proud to see this monument become a reality at long last so we can honor their sacrifice and remember their courage for generations to come.

.....  
*Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Wisconsin Democrat, serves on the Senate Appropriations Committee where she is on the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Subcommittee. Sen. Baldwin also serves on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.*

# Vietnam helicopter pilots and crewmembers are not forgotten



PHOTO BY CARLO MUÑOZ/THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

Commemorative wreaths surround the new Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument in Arlington National Cemetery, honoring the nearly 5,000 U.S. helicopter aviators killed during the war.



PHOTO BY CARLO MUÑOZ/THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

A member of the Marine Corps Band plays Taps during the dedication ceremony for the new Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crewmember Monument in Arlington National Cemetery.



# Shining the spotlight on a group of true American heroes



By Rep. Mark E. Amodei

**T**he Vietnam War was the first in which the United States military relied heavily on helicopters for transportation and combat. These pilots and crew members touched every aspect of efforts during the war, serving as transportation for soldiers and civilians, and providing critical battlefield support. However, before last month, there was no national monument inside Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) honoring the heroic efforts of the nearly 5,000 pilots and crew member casualties from what has commonly become known as the “Helicopter War.” These fallen heroes account for nearly 10 percent of all Vietnam casualties.

Efforts to place a monument in ANC began in April 2015, the year of the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam War, when the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association (VHPA) submitted a proposal for a monument to be placed in ANC. However, the former Secretary of the Army declined the association’s proposal and instead granted a tree marker, even though this has never been used to honor a common sacrifice of this magnitude.

Immediately following the Secretary’s decision, a constituent of mine brought the VHPA’s efforts to my attention. After learning that the application process had failed these veterans, I was honored to work alongside the VHPA to advance their effort through the legislative process.

During the 114th Congress, I introduced H.R. 4298, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Memorial Act. This bill, which would have directed the Secretary of the Army to place a monument within the cemetery, successfully passed the House but was not taken

up in the Senate before the end of last Congress.

Maintaining my commitment to advancing this effort, similar legislation was reintroduced in February 2017 as H.R. 887. Shortly after the introduction of this bill, the incoming executive director of Army National Military Cemeteries reached out to the VHPA, and a compromise was agreed upon to place a monument near the location where the VHPA dedicated a tree in August 2015.

Measuring 22 inches high, 21 inches deep and 32 inches wide, the monument contains all design elements of the original Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew Member Monument first proposed to the Secretary of the Army.

In April, I had the opportunity to attend the dedication ceremony at ANC to witness the unveiling of the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew Member Monument. It was a humbling experience to speak before a crowd of 3,400 spectators, a group that included Vietnam helicopter pilots and crew members, their families, members of the VHPA, the Vietnam Helicopter Crew Members Association (VHCMA), members of Congress,

and several others who worked tirelessly over the last three years to properly recognize this tremendous joint sacrifice.

In the history of America’s Profession of Arms, these veterans represented their generations in a way that is second to none. They combined cutting-edge technology, the warrior-spirit, patriotism, and bravery in the face of enemy fire in a way that is uniquely American and merits the honor they received last month after working more than 40 years.

I would like to thank everyone involved in this effort for teaming up with me to support such a deserving group of veterans, particularly Mr. William Dennison, the constituent who first alerted my office in April 2015 of the efforts to place a commemorative monument in ANC. I would also like to recognize Rep. Ralph Abraham, Louisiana Republican, who is a pilot, member of the House Committee on Armed Services, and someone who was instrumental in helping advance this issue through the House during the 114th Congress.

Other special thanks go to my former Veterans’ Affairs legislative assistant, Ms. Lauren Billman, for all

of her hard work on this issue, and to Ms. Kelly Dixon, director of legislative operations for Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy, for working alongside my office last Congress to get this effort moving. Together, we were able to successfully shine the spotlight on a group of true American heroes.

Finally, I would like to thank Ms. Karen Durham-Aguilera, who recently assumed the post of executive director of Army National Military Cemeteries, for making this a priority and whose leadership was essential in arriving at a favorable and appropriate decision. Not only does this monument properly recognize these deserving veterans, but it creates a commemorative space that will allow the memories of those lost to live on for generations.

.....  
*Republican Rep. Mark E. Amodei is serving in his fourth term and represents Nevada’s 2nd Congressional District. He serves on the House Appropriations Committee and its subcommittees on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies; Financial Services and General Government; and the Legislative Branch.*



Rep. Mark E. Amodei, Nevada Republican, spoke at the dedication ceremony for the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot and Crew Member Monument at Arlington National Cemetery on April 18, 2018. Photo by Brandon Leggero.



# Pressing ahead with bills to serve, honor vets



By Rep. Leonard Lance

Hello, Rolling Thunder!

**F**or over 30 years, you have contributed to great legislative efforts to give veterans the rights, health care and support they have earned in service to this great country.

Now in Washington, your voices roar like your motorcycles, and lawmakers and the Trump administration can hear you loud and clear: better and faster care, improved services for female veterans, and the freedom to see a doctor when and where you want are the

priorities in Congress.

In theaters of war around the world, you advanced the cause of liberty, liberated millions, stopped the spread of disease and injustice, and been a global force for good. Now at home, you have kept up your duty to other warriors and led the fight for the rights and benefits veterans have earned in service to this nation.

I am proud to join with your organization in introducing two measures important to Rolling Thunder: legislation to end the 40-mile rule for private care through the Department of Veterans Affairs, and legislation to display the

POW flag on federal properties. These ideas came from meetings with your membership. This is how the process is supposed to work. The ideas and insight from your experiences make their way into legislation to help veterans. Lobby your representatives and senators to co-sponsor these bills and to support them into becoming law.

.....  
*Rep. Leonard Lance, New Jersey Republican, is the lead Republican sponsor of H.R. 2037, the Veterans Health Care Freedom Act, and H.R. 504, requiring the POW/MIA flag be displayed on federal property.*

## Legislative alerts: Flying POW/ MIA flag daily, establishing investigative committee

By Rolling Thunder®, Inc.  
National

In Congress, Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National supports the following legislation:

**H. R. 504** - To amend U.S. Code (title 36) to “require that the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days that the flag of the United States is displayed on certain Federal property.”

This is a bipartisan issue. There are no Congressional Budget Office monies involved. Similar to the POW/MIA Chair of Honor that Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National placed in the Emancipation Hall on Nov. 8, 2017 in the U.S. Capitol, the POW/MIA flag would fly all days that the American flag is displayed as a constant reminder to the families of our missing and the public that our government has not forgotten those that did not come home.

Sponsor: Rep. Leonard Lance [R-NJ-7]. Introduced 01/12/2017. Cosponsors: 8. Committees: House Judiciary. Latest Action: House - 02/06/2017 Referred to the Subcommittee on Constitution and Civil Justice.

**H. Res. 219** - “Establishing a Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs”



PHOTO BY THE WASHINGTON TIMES.

The mission of Rolling Thunder, Inc., is to bring “full accountability for the Prisoners of War/Missing in Action (POW/MIA) of all wars, reminding the government, the media and the public by our watchwords, “We Will Not Forget.”

The bipartisan select committee shall “conduct a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to any United States personnel unaccounted for from the Vietnam era, the Korean conflict, World War II, Cold War Missions, Persian Gulf War, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation Enduring Freedom, including MIAs and POWs missing and captured.”

Sponsor: Rep. Mark Walker [R-NC-6]. Introduced 03/21/2017. Cosponsors: 8. Committees: House Rules. Latest Action: House - 03/21/2017 Referred to the House Committee on Rules.

**H. R. 299** - “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017”

This bill includes as part of the Republic of Vietnam its territorial seas for purposes of the presumption of service connection for diseases associated with exposure by veterans to certain herbicide agents while in Vietnam.

Sponsor: Rep. David G. Valadao [R-CA-21]. Introduced 01/05/2017. Cosponsors: 329. Committees: House Veterans’ Affairs. Referred to Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs. Latest Action: House - 04/05/2017 Subcommittee hearings held.

**S. 422** - “Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2017”

This bill includes as part of the Republic of Vietnam its territorial seas for purposes of the presumption of service connection for diseases associated with exposure by veterans to certain herbicide agents while in Vietnam.

Sponsor: Sen. Kirsten E. Gillibrand [D-NY]. Introduced 02/16/2017. Cosponsors: 49. Committees: Senate - Veterans’ Affairs. Latest Action: Senate - 02/16/2017 Read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans’ Affairs.



# Advocating for return, accurate accounting of POW/MIAs



By Janella Apodaca Rose

**T**he National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen (The Alliance) was formed in June 1990 when Dolores Apodaca Alfond, former POWs, and some family members of POW/MIA from World War II, Korean War, Cold War, and the War in Southeast Asia grew dissatisfied with what they were witnessing regarding the POW/MIA accounting mission. Our founding members did not start their quest for truth in 1990 but had been involved in the POW/MIA issue for several decades prior.

The Alliance is a respected and honest advocate for our missing Americans and their families. We strive to work truly as an "alliance" and work with other nonprofits, academia and concerned citizens to reach our goals, which are simple:

1. The return of any live POW.
2. An accurate accounting of our missing.
3. The recovery and scientific identification of remains or a reasonable explanation as to why return, recovery or full accounting is impossible.

Achieving these goals has been an uphill battle since our inception. Our original National Chairperson Dolores Apodaca Alfond (sister to Maj. Victor Apodaca, Jr., the first Native American to be



Lynn O'Shea of the National Alliance of Families POW/MIA addressed the Rolling Thunder program in May 2013. Image courtesy of National Alliance of Families POW/MIA.



Former Vietnam War POW Mike Bengé stands with Janella Apodaca Rose while Lynn O'Shea speaks at a meeting of the National Alliance of Families POW/MIA. Image courtesy of National Alliance of Families POW/MIA.

accepted to and graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy and who was shot down in North Vietnam on June 8, 1967), primary researcher and concerned citizen Lynn O'Shea, our Board of Directors (including former Vietnam POW Mike Bengé), and volunteers worked tirelessly for decades with people around the world to move the POW/MIA accounting process forward. Of note, The Alliance testified before

the Senate Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs during the George H.W. Bush administration; participates and speaks in Rolling Thunder®, Inc's Ride for Freedom; provides research to families regarding their missing loved ones; and has hosted and participated in meetings with North Korea, Russia, and China. When Dolores, my sister, passed away in 2010, I was nominated into the National Chairperson

position. As from our beginning, we are an all-volunteer, nonprofit organization made of former POWs, family members of POW/MIA still unaccounted for, U.S. military veterans and concerned citizens.

The Alliance's fight is still ongoing. This fight can be witnessed in our current world news. A key issue for The Alliance involves an accounting from North Korea for Americans last known *alive* in their hands but not returned. According to voluminous declassified files (with a lawsuit by a POW/MIA family to get more information), some of these men were sent from North Korea through China to the former Soviet Union.

A Vietnam War-era POW/MIA family The Alliance works with is currently in debate with the U.S. government over the status of their loved one. The U.S. government declared their loved one Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered (KIA/BNR). Research we provided has assisted the family with their fight in requesting for status change from KIA/BNR to MIA, as it is believed their loved one was alive in Laos

after being shot down.

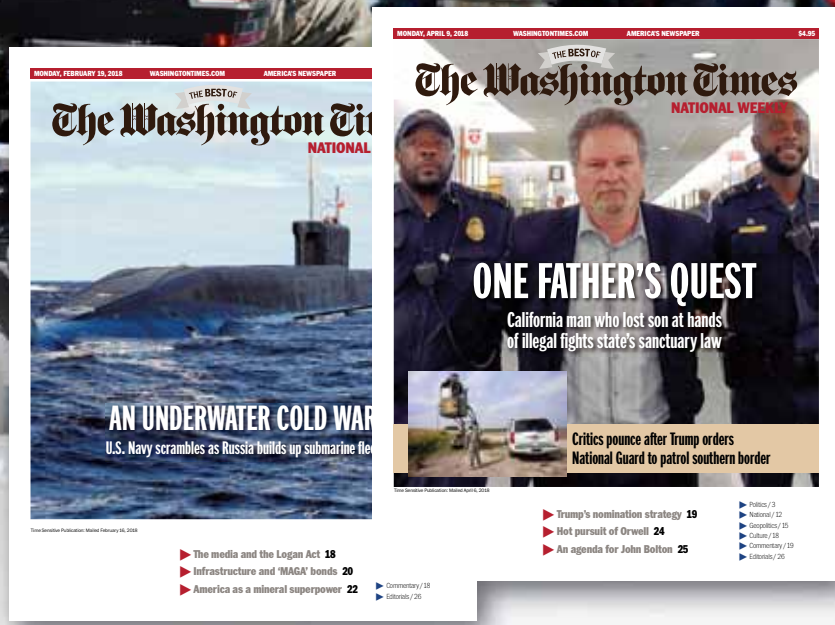
We have several decades' worth of our research that can be found on our website, [nationalalliance.org](http://nationalalliance.org). We can also be found by searching for our name on YouTube, Pinterest and Facebook, and on Twitter @AlliancePOWMIA. We share information throughout the week through these social media outlets.

The Alliance further provides updates on various POW/MIA issues through our newsletter, Bits 'N Pieces, which can be found on our website and Facebook page. If you are interested in contacting The Alliance, we can be reached at [info@nationalalliance.org](mailto:info@nationalalliance.org).

Please join us at our 29th Annual Meeting on May 26, 2018 from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Crystal City. It is free to the public and all are welcome. For more information, please see our Facebook page for a complete agenda.

.....  
Janella Apodaca Rose is National Chairperson of The National Alliance of Families for the Return of America's Missing Servicemen.





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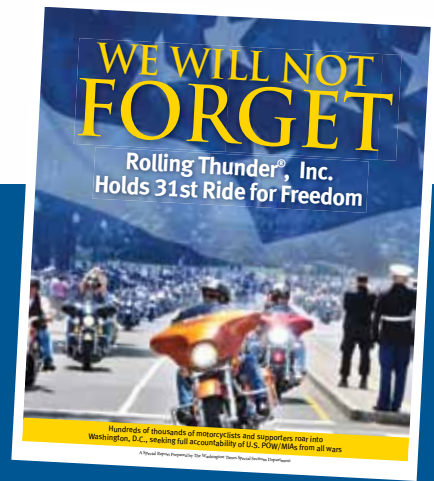
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