

WE WILL NOT FORGET



Rolling Thunder[®], Inc. Holds 30th Ride for Freedom

Hundreds of thousands of motorcyclists and supporters roar into Washington, D.C. to seek full accounting of U.S. POWs/MIAs

30 years later, still roaring for POW/MIA freedom

By JENNIFER HARPER

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

For three decades, they have faithfully fired up their machines, raised up Old Glory and taken off on a mission of freedom, remembrance and resolve. This is the true essence of Rolling Thunder, an annual event which draws 500,000 motorcyclists to the nation's capital each year to underscore the rights and importance of veterans who fought our wars, those soldiers missing in action, and the POWs who never made it home.

It is a riveting display. And a noisy one.

Rolling Thunder is the perfect name: These riders do roll, and there is thunder. Faith is not overlooked. There's a "blessing of the bikes" at Washington National Cathedral and a candlelight vigil for the fallen. Camaraderie and remarkable spectacle is paramount. When the 30th annual "Ride for Freedom" begins on Sunday, the half-million stalwarts will gather at dawn in a staging area at the Pentagon. In a process that can take five hours, the biker battalion slowly but surely assembles in a unique but efficient formation — lines of four ready to roll, a million chromed wheels set to make the short journey to the National Mall.

And so it begins.

Wave after wave of riders from every state in the union and a dozen foreign countries pass in solemn formation along this route of honor. American flags are everywhere, the motorcycles are immaculate and the prime directive is paramount.

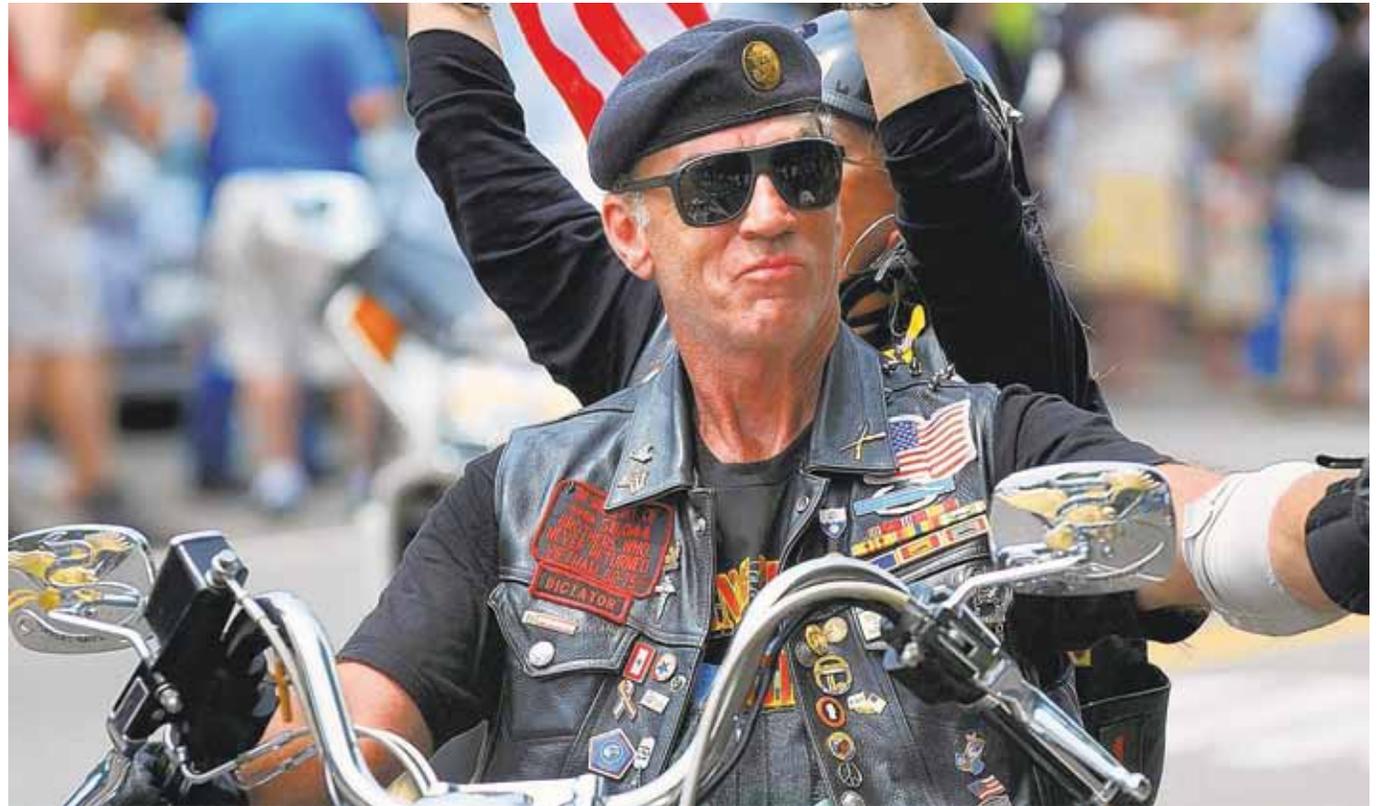
"No attitudes. Confirmed: everyone must wear a helmet," reads a terse advisory to participants.

"This is a demonstration, not a parade. POWs, MIAs — we will never forget," said Artie Muller, a Vietnam-era veteran who co-founded the nonprofit organization in 1987 with fellow vet Ray Manzo.

They took their name from "Operation Rolling Thunder" — the U.S. military code name for the intense, long-term bombing of North Vietnamese targets in the mid-1960s. The pair sent out a call to fellow riders to descend on Washington in a show of support for American military; 2,500 showed up.

Mr. Muller remains adamant about the true nature of the ride on its 30th anniversary, and is quick to praise the 90 chartered Rolling Thunder chapters, plus thousands of supporters, businesses, organizations and serious corporate sponsors for their loyalty and commitment to a cause. Above all, the group seeks a full accounting of all POWs and MIAs, plus improved veteran's benefits. Their outreach also includes work for multiple charities.

"What have we gained in the past years? Together we have helped foster legislation for our troops and our veterans. We continue to put pressure on the government to



Artie Muller, national executive director and founder of Rolling Thunder®, Inc.

do something about the POWs and MIAs who were left behind and never returned," Mr. Muller said. "The government and legislators in Washington know Rolling Thunder and our mission. But much more has to be done."

Which does not sound like he's ready to retire from his efforts anytime soon.

"His heart will be with Rolling Thunder until the day he dies," one close friend remarked.

Like many of his peers, Mr. Muller, 71, is still troubled by films of Americans prisoners marched through the streets of Hanoi during the Vietnam War. Mr. Muller says there have been 10,000 reported sightings of live Americans still living in "dismal captivity," a phenomenon that he believes is ignored by officials and the mainstream press.

"Keep the pressure on our government and maybe, just maybe, our government will wake up and do its job," Mr. Muller said. "Talk is cheap when our government states they will do everything possible to bring all live POW and MIAs home. We need to see some action taken."

President Donald Trump appears to be an ardent Rolling Thunder fan. He was the sole presidential candidate who appeared at the event in 2016, standing before an appreciative crowd gathered at the Lincoln Memorial, many of them already pledging to vote for him when election time came.

"We're going to take care of our veterans. Our veterans have been treated so badly in this country. In many cases, illegal

immigrants are taken much better care of by this country than our veterans," Mr. Trump told them, also vowing to "knock the hell" out terrorists.

Veterans themselves voted for Mr. Trump at a 2-1 ratio over Democratic rival Hillary Clinton according to 2016 exit polls. Meanwhile, the president remains on cordial terms with Rolling Thunder — both the membership and the event alike.

Things were, perhaps, a little cooler in the previous administration. Former President Barack Obama and other White House officials met briefly with the organization on at least two occasions; there were photo ops and conversation.

During his time in office, former President George W. Bush personally met with Mr. Muller and Rolling Thunder officers multiple times, welcoming the riders and their mammoth Harley Davidsons himself, right in the White House driveway. In 2004, Mr. Bush brought the group to the Oval Office for a friendly visit, where he accepted an invitation to become an honorary member, then quickly donned a black leather vest emblazoned with the fierce Rolling Thunder emblem.

Vice President Mike Pence is hands-on active with the group. Last year, he rode with the Indiana Rolling Thunder unit, back when he was still governor of the Hoosier State. Mr. Pence was aboard a fine, burgundy colored Harley, decked out in denim and black leather.

"I commend Indiana Rolling Thunder and all of its members for the work they

continue to do on behalf of our veterans, active duty military personnel and their families," Mr. Pence said at the end of the ride, in his straightforward Indiana style.

Republicans and Democrats agree on very little these days, meanwhile. They do agree on the Rolling Thunder mission, though. A better life for U.S. veterans is something both parties consistently support according to research. The military and its vets tops the list of the nation's most trusted public institutions, according to Gallup and other polls. Gallup also found that Americans across the board support improved benefits for vets; 91 percent say they should be able to get medical care with any provider which accepts Medicare; three-fourths approve modernization of the Department of Veterans Affairs itself.

The cause also attracts famous folks and serious military brass. Iconic singer Nancy Sinatra has ridden in the demonstration on multiple occasions, as has Robert Patrick, the formidable sci-fi film star, and veteran actor John Amos.

"This means more to me than anything in Hollywood. This is real life," Mr. Amos once said of the Rolling Thunder experience.

High-profile riders over the years have also included Sarah Palin; former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairmen Michael G. Mullen and Richard B. Myers; Sergeant Major of the Army Ken Preston; and Anthony J. Principi, former secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Advocating for America's veterans, loved ones and survivors



By Veterans Affairs Secretary David J. Shulkin, M.D.

Memorial Day is a sacred observance. It is a time to remember and honor those who died to protect our freedoms and preserve our way of life.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and to the families and survivors they left behind. Repaying that debt is the solemn responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

At times, VA has not always performed to the standard that veterans deserve. I came to VA during a time of crisis. Veterans were not getting timely access to high-quality health care. We were failing those who needed us most. That is why we are implementing fundamental changes in the way we do business.

But we cannot do it alone. We are fortunate to have strong support from President Trump, Congress and organizations across the nation dedicated to serving America's veterans and their families. One such organization — Rolling Thunder — is celebrating 30 years of advocacy this Memorial Day weekend.

More than 1 million riders and spectators are expected to participate in this year's "Ride for Freedom" on the National Mall, and I am proud to be one of them. My family has a long tradition of military service and caring for those who served. My father was an Army

psychiatrist, and both of my grandfathers were Army veterans, one who served as chief pharmacist at the VA hospital in Madison, Wisconsin.

Serving as Secretary of Veterans Affairs is my opportunity to give back

VA or from a community provider. Already this year, we have authorized an estimated 6.1 million Community Care appointments, nearly 1.8 million more than the same time frame last year — a 42 percent increase.

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice and to the families and survivors they left behind. Repaying that debt is the solemn responsibility of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

to the men and women who secured the freedoms we all enjoy because of the sacrifices they made.

One of my first goals for VA was to improve access to care. Veterans shouldn't have to wait months for medical appointments. The president recently signed legislation reauthorizing the Veterans Access, Choice and

We recently launched an online tool that allows veterans to view wait times and quality measures at their local VA facilities. No other health system in the country has this type of transparency.

We are making progress, but it will be short-lived if we don't regain the trust of veterans and the American public. One of the ways we are earning



Motorcyclists from across the country shook the ground during the Rolling Thunder in the 25th anniversary of the Rolling Thunder Ride for Freedom at the base of the Memorial Bridge. Khalid Naji-Allah/ Special for the Washington Times.

Accountability Act. This will ensure veterans receive the care they need, when they need it, whether it's from

trust is by taking swift action in cases of wrongdoing by our employees. We removed directors of our hospitals in

San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Shreveport, Louisiana. We relieved the director in our Washington, D.C., medical center, and we removed other senior leaders due to misconduct or poor performance. We will not tolerate employees who act counter to our values or who put veterans at risk.

We are also rebuilding trust by helping those who need us the most. May is Mental Health Awareness Month and suicide prevention is one my top clinical priorities. An average of 20 veterans die by suicide every day. This is unacceptable. Just last month, one of my senior leadership team lost a member of his family, a veteran, to suicide. This is personal to me, my team, and to the families who are at risk of losing a loved one.

VA is taking steps to address this national crisis. Several months ago, the Veterans Crisis Line had a call rollover rate of more than 30 percent. Now, that rate is less than 1 percent. We launched a predictive modeling tool called REACH VET that analyzes existing data from veterans' health records to identify those who might be at risk for suicide. We also extended mental health services to former servicemembers with Other Than Honorable discharges because we know this group is at greater risk for suicide.

Many organizations — including Rolling Thunder chapters — are joining our efforts by raising awareness of suicide prevention and encouraging veterans to seek help.

We have made progress, but there is still much more to be done. We are striving for VA to be a lifelong partner and trusted advocate for all veterans, their families, survivors and caregivers.

As we gather this Memorial Day weekend, I offer my sincere gratitude to the men and women who have sacrificed on our behalf and to the families of those who are no longer with us.

Veterans Affairs Secretary David J. Shulkin, M.D., was confirmed on Feb. 13, 2017 by a Senate vote of 100-0. He previously served as VA undersecretary for health and has held many distinguished academic and medical positions.

The Washington Times

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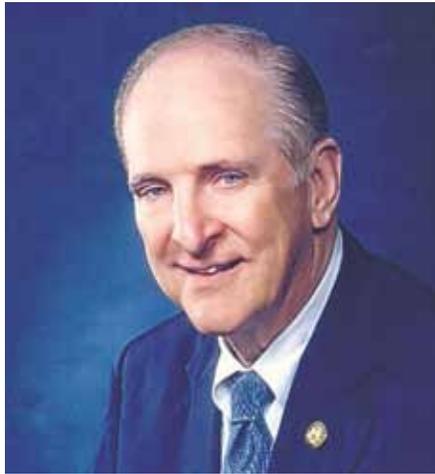
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‘Hanoi Hilton’ veteran: ‘We must do all we can’ for POW/MIA



By Rep. Sam Johnson

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Rolling Thunder. Each year, its Ride for Freedom is an inspiring reminder that we must do all we can to ensure a full accounting for American forces who remain missing in action (MIA). It is a call to action, and as a 29-year Air Force veteran and former POW, I speak from personal experience when I say that taking action can change lives — it can even save them.

It was during the 25th combat mission of my second tour in Vietnam that my co-pilot and I were shot down over North Vietnam. We were flying low to the ground when we took on enemy fire, but when we tried to shoot back, our guns jammed.

Our engine caught fire and we were forced to eject. The North Vietnamese quickly captured us and moved us to the Hoa Lo Prison in Hanoi. Translated,

it means “Hell’s Hole,” and I can assure you that it lived up to its name. I spent the next nearly seven years of my life there — 42 months of that in solitary confinement.

Our captors blatantly disregarded the Geneva Convention and we POWs endured torture, starvation and grossly unsanitary conditions. The North Vietnamese also worked hard to make us POWs feel forgotten and alone. We had to lean on each other and our faith in God to carry us through.

I know my wife Shirley and other POW wives also struggled during the Vietnam War because of the lack of support they received. They were told not to talk about their loved ones’ imprisonment ... but that didn’t last long. Many brave POW wives found each other and banded together to bring about action.

Even though the country was divided, they were able to get people to rally behind the cause of the POWs. The media started to take notice. Pressure was put on the North Vietnamese, and gradually conditions in the camp started to improve. Ultimately, we POWs were brought home in 1973 because of the determination and hard work of these fearless women.

Today, I remain committed to carrying on that same hard work and bringing home fellow servicemembers who were left behind in previous wars and conflicts. These efforts are part of a promise my POW buddies and I made to ourselves — a promise that when we got out, we would stop just griping about our government and instead work to make things better.

As the U.S. congressman for my home



Rep. Sam Johnson and co-author Jan Winebrenner wrote about his years in the infamous “Hanoi Hilton” prison camp in “Captive Warriors: A Vietnam POW’s Story” (Texas A&M University Press, 1992).

district in Texas, part of this promise includes supporting a strong military and ensuring our troops and veterans have the resources they need, both on the battlefield and when they return home.

I’m also pleased that last year my bill to allow for the inclusion of a Wall of Remembrance at the Korean War Memorial was signed into law. This wall will list the names of all members of the U.S. Armed Forces who gave their lives

in support of freedom during the Korean War. It will also list the total number of all American POWs and MIAs from the Korean War.

As we honor the 30th anniversary of Rolling Thunder, I hope you will also be encouraged to know that earlier this year I introduced a resolution (H.Res. 129) that calls for intensified efforts to recover and repatriate every American troop who remains unaccounted for. Sadly, there are about 83,000 unaccounted for American troops to this day.

Our Armed Forces swear to leave no man behind, which is why I have vowed I will never stop fighting for our defenders of freedom — just like our POW wives did for us.

My commitment to this country and those who fight for it will never end. Thank you to all the brave men and women in our Armed Forces, past and present, for your service and sacrifice to the greatest nation in the world — the United States of America. And thank you to the military families who support your loved ones — it means more than you could ever know. God bless you and I salute you.

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Republican Rep. Sam R. Johnson has represented the 3rd Congressional District in Texas since 1991. He serves on the House Ways and Means Committee, where he is chairman of the subcommittee on Social Security. He and co-author Jan Winebrenner chronicled his years in the infamous “Hanoi Hilton” in “Captive Warriors: A Vietnam POW’s Story” (Texas A&M University Press, 1992).

A haunting reminder of POW torture

By The Washington Times Advocacy Department

Since 1990, Army veteran Gerald McCullar has joined Rolling Thunder®, Inc. demonstrations in a most memorable way: Rain or shine, he travels the route seated inside a bamboo “tiger cage” to remind others of the suffering and torture of U.S. service members who were held as prisoners of war in Southeast Asia.

Mr. McCullar’s flowing white beard and raggedy clothes are by design. It “makes a statement,” he said, adding he has met people who remembered seeing him in the cage when they attended an event as children.

The POW “tiger cage” journey started with the help of a local chapter of Rolling Thunder, Mr. McCullar said.

Having a man ride inside a cramped cage helped people imagine the kind of isolation, confinement, starvation, brutality and torture that was meted to POWs during the Vietnam war. “I did it one time” and it got people talking, he said. “And it just went on from there.”

Today, Mr. McCullar, who is in his mid-70s and lives in Illinois, often brings the cage to vigils, ceremonies and other events to keep the POW/MIA issue fresh in people’s minds. And yes, he will soon be in the District to join the May 28 Rolling Thunder®, Inc. XXX Ride for Freedom.

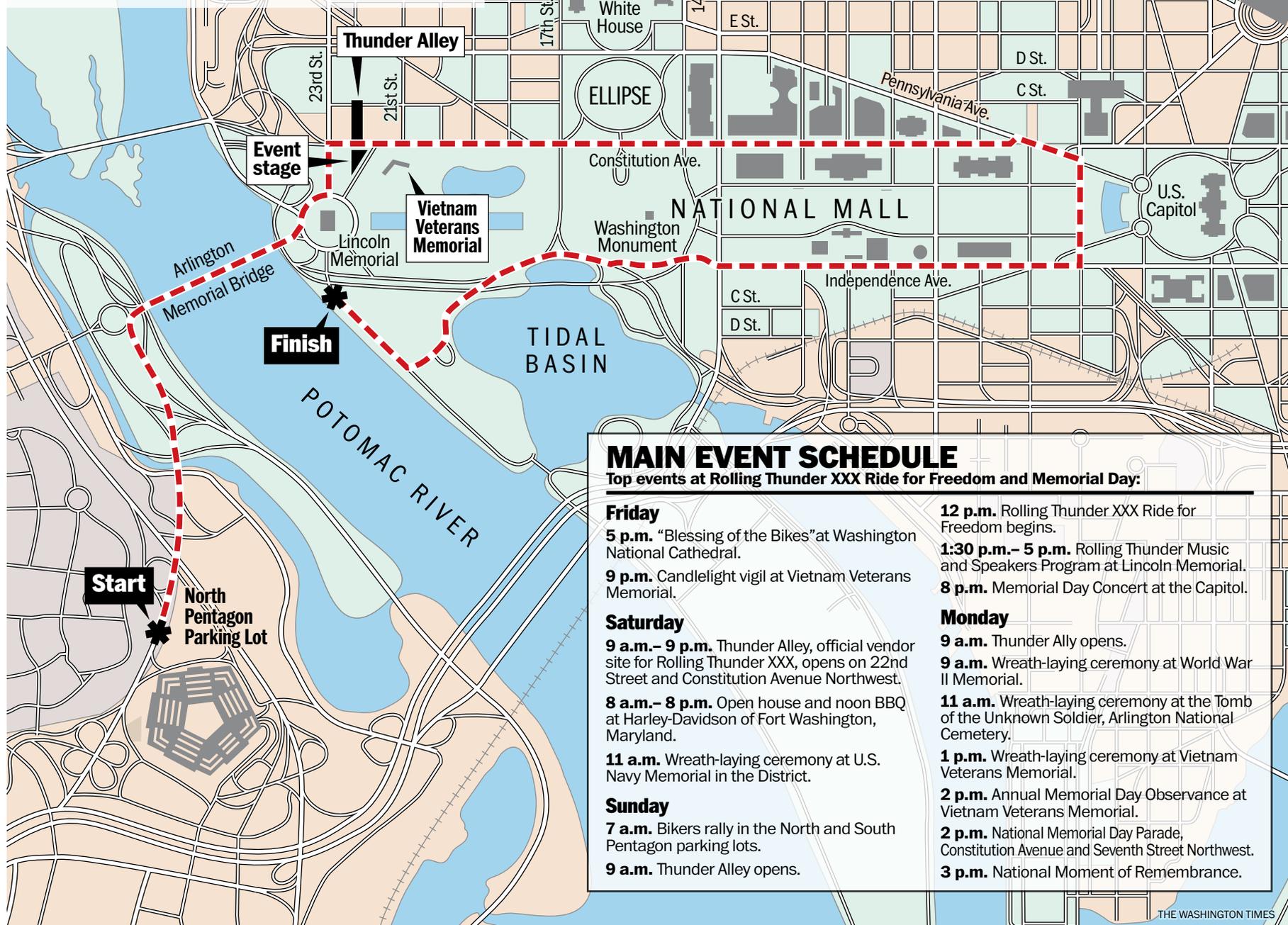
“I like to think that it gives them something to take home besides a piece of paper,” he said.



For 28 years, Army veteran Gerald McCullar has brought home the POW/MIA message by traveling in a “tiger cage” during Rolling Thunder® demonstrations and other veterans’ events. (Barbara L. Salisbury/The Washington Times)

ROLLING THUNDER

Memorial Day weekend



MAIN EVENT SCHEDULE

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

Friday

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

Saturday

- 9 a.m. – 9 p.m.** Thunder Alley, official vendor site for Rolling Thunder XXX, opens on 22nd Street and Constitution Avenue Northwest.
- 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.** Open house and noon BBQ at Harley-Davidson of Fort Washington, Maryland.
- 11 a.m.** Wreath-laying ceremony at U.S. Navy Memorial in the District.

Sunday

- 7 a.m.** Bikers rally in the North and South Pentagon parking lots.
- 9 a.m.** Thunder Alley opens.

- 12 p.m.** Rolling Thunder XXX Ride for Freedom begins.

- 1:30 p.m. – 5 p.m.** Rolling Thunder Music and Speakers Program at Lincoln Memorial.
- 8 p.m.** Memorial Day Concert at the Capitol.

Monday

- 9 a.m.** Thunder Ally 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.

After the ride come the tributes

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

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

- **Veterans Affairs Secretary David Shulkin, M.D.** Prior to his Feb. 13 confirmation, Dr. Shulkin served as the VA undersecretary of health in the Obama administration, as well as holding numerous medical and academic positions.
- **Retired Navy Admiral James A. Lyons Jr.** Commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet from 1985 to 1987, Admiral Lyons now leads

an international consulting firm specializing in international defense issues.

- **Tom Porter**, legislative director of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. Mr. Porter is a veteran military public affairs officer with service on four continents and leads IAVA's advocacy efforts for veterans on Capitol Hill.
- **Robert Patrick.** Famed for his roles in "Terminator 2," "Die Hard 2," "Cop Land" and the TV hit, "Scorpion," Mr. Patrick is a lifelong supporter of the military and the USO. This is his eighth year riding from California to Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s Ride for

Freedom.

- **Nicolette Rose, National Alliance of Families.** The 1967 loss of her uncle, Air Force Major 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 in 1990.
- **Anoop Prakash, Harley-Davidson Motor Co.** A Marine Corps veteran, Mr. Prakash served four years active duty before becoming director of U.S. Marketing and Market Development for the Harley-Davidson Motor Co., a partner of Rolling

Thunder since 2001.

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

A sacred vow — and solemn acts of remembrance



By Rep. Stephen F. Lynch

Ahead of Memorial Day, Washington, D.C., will welcome thousands of members of Rolling Thunder from across the country to mark the 30th anniversary of the organization's tireless efforts to ensure that, as a nation, we never forget about the over 83,000 men and women from this country that are Prisoners Of War-Missing In Action.

It is not simply during the annual rally in Washington that members of Rolling Thunder make their voices heard to ensure that the public and the government never forget our POWs and MIAs as well as veterans of all ages; it is each and every day in communities around the country.

Members of Rolling Thunder participate in Honor Flight celebrations helping to provide these American heroes with the celebration they deserve by escorting buses of veterans to the National World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. And Rolling Thunder chapters across the country log thousands of hours of community service at local VA hospitals. By visiting with veterans and providing moral support and a listening ear, Rolling Thunder ensures that veterans faced with the hidden wounds of post-traumatic

stress disorder and traumatic brain injury do not suffer alone. And when a family loses a son or daughter on the battlefield, Rolling Thunder advocates work hard to make sure the Gold Star family is taken care of. By holding events in local communities across the country, Rolling Thunder creates a gathering place for families who have lost loved ones and promotes a critical support system for the families of our fallen servicemen and women.

Chapter 1 President Joe D'Entremont and National Board Member Gus Dante, I was proud to introduce the *National POW/MIA Remembrance Act of 2015*, alongside my colleague Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, with strong support from both Democratic and Republican members of Congress. In April of 2016, President Barack Obama signed the *National POW/MIA Remembrance Act of 2015* into law after it passed both the House and Senate unanimously.

this chair every day, we will be reminded of our commitment to our POWs and MIAs and their families that we have not forgotten them and we will never forget them. Soon, Members of Congress and visitors to the U.S. Capitol will pass by the Chair of Honor and take a moment to pay respect to our Prisoners of War and Missing in Action who serve our nation with honor and valor.

Rolling Thunder's incredible work helps to tell the stories of all of America's veterans, including our POWs and MIAs. Through the efforts of veterans' groups like Rolling Thunder, we, as Americans, stand together to ensure that our POWs, MIAs, and their families do not suffer alone. With these solemn acts of remembrance, we do our small part to help shoulder the burden of their sacrifice.

As Rolling Thunder rides into Washington, the entire nation salutes you and your work. By supporting our servicemen and women, our veterans and their families and by honoring our fallen heroes as well as our POWs and MIAs on Memorial Day and every day, you reflect what is truly the best of America, that we will not forget those who have served.

God bless our POWs and MIAs and their families and God bless these United States of America.

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Democrat Rep. Stephen F. Lynch has represented the 8th Congressional District of Massachusetts since 2001. He serves on the House Committee on Financial Services and House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

As Rolling Thunder rides into Washington, the entire nation salutes you and your work. By supporting our servicemen and women, our veterans and their families and by honoring our fallen heroes as well as our POWs and MIAs on Memorial Day and every day, you reflect what is truly the best of America, that we will not forget those who have served.

Rolling Thunder's efforts are widely recognized in local city halls, professional sports stadiums and schools, such as Braintree High School in the 8th Congressional District of Massachusetts, where you can take a moment to reflect in front of a POW/MIA Chair of Honor.

After years of advocacy by members of Rolling Thunder Massachusetts Chapter 1 and Rolling Thunder, Inc. National, we are moving closer to having a Chair of Honor on the grounds of the United States Capitol.

Through the tireless dedication of former Rolling Thunder Massachusetts

The legislation honors American servicemembers who are POW and MIA by placing a commemorative chair on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol. That chair will forever stand unoccupied as a solemn reminder of the over 83,000 brave Americans who are still waiting to be brought home. The U.S. Capitol serves as a symbol of our nation's history and enduring spirit, so it is appropriate to recognize those who remain unaccounted for under its dome. When our fellow Americans go to war, we make them a promise never to leave them behind. That vow is sacred. When we pass

National Chair of Honor at FedExField

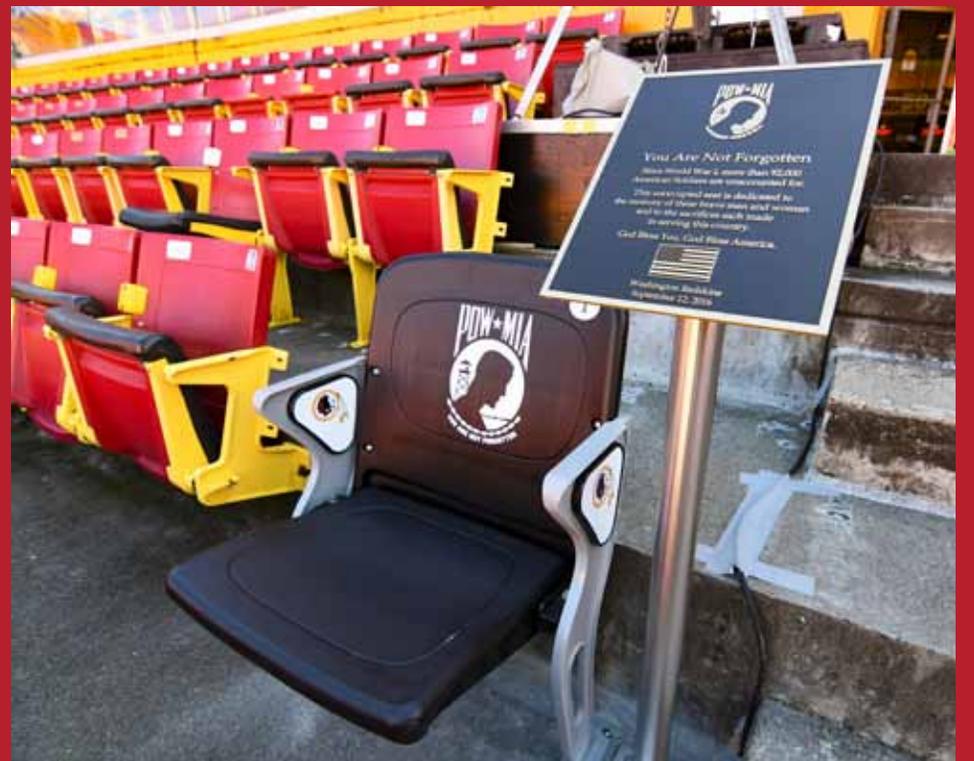
By The Washington Redskins

The Washington Redskins' official military appreciation program, Redskins Salute, and Rolling Thunder Washington, D.C. Inc., unveiled a Prisoner of War (POW)/Missing in Action (MIA) Chair of Honor at FedExField during the Redskins 2016 home opener on Monday, Sept. 12.

The POW/MIA Chair of Honor is dedicated to those American heroes that are still POW or MIA to symbolize that there will always be a place in FedExField awaiting their return. The POW/MIA chair's permanent location is in the Club Level on the 50-yard line.

"We are forever grateful to the brave men and women of our Armed Forces, and even though POWs and MIAs may not be present, they will never be forgotten," Redskins President Bruce Allen said. "This seat will remain perpetually empty for every Redskins home game in their honor."

Redskins Salute would like to thank Hussey Seating for donating the National Chair of Honor. To view the recap article from the unveiling and photos of the POW/MIA chair, go to: <http://bit.ly/2cUHlSe>.





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Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™: Helping wounded vets ride again

By Wendy Koro

On August 17, 2004, Marine Corps Sgt. Richard Silva and his recon unit in Fallujah, Iraq, were attacked by mortars, rocket-propelled grenades and relentless enemy fire, leaving him critically wounded from shrapnel and the impact of the blasts.

Richard was medically evacuated and returned stateside as the only survivor from his unit. The injuries to his right knee left him unable to safely ride a two-wheel motorcycle. But in December, he was delighted to be the recipient of a three-wheel Can-Am Spyder motorcycle donated by Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™.

Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™ takes great pride in sponsoring and supporting hundreds of worthy veterans clubs, organizations and nonprofits across the U.S., including Rolling Thunder®, Inc. As the Original Attorneys Who Ride™, our entire practice is dedicated to helping motorcyclists.

Forty years ago, our founder, Russ Brown, also created BAM (Breakdown and Legal Assistance for Motorcyclists), the largest free biker buddy system in the world, now numbering over 2 million members. Since an estimated 30 percent of our BAM riders at one time served in the Armed Forces, our connection and commitment to veterans is very strong. We hope the Rolling Thunder®, Inc., message reminds everyone that our men and women in uniform sacrifice so much.

Veterans Charity Ride (VCR), sponsored by White Heart Foundation and others, is one of our very favorite veteran nonprofits, as it combines our passion for two-wheels with our desire to give back to those who have served. Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™ recently donated a 30-foot trailer to VCR to help them accomplish their goals.

VCR is a year-round nonprofit program conceived and developed by veteran Army Airborne Paratrooper Dave Frey (“Indian Dave”), while riding solo to the Sturgis Bike Rally in 2014 in South Dakota. Along the way, he met a fellow paratrooper, and they commiserated about extreme hardships experienced by their friends and compatriots returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, such as severe injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and adjusting to civilian life.

On the ride home, Dave couldn’t stop thinking about his fellow veterans and wanted to do something special for them and make a difference in their lives. Then it hit him ... let’s use motorcycles to help our veterans. Dave and his business partner Robert Manciero, Emmy Award-winning producer/director, came up with the concept of a veterans ride to Sturgis ... incorporating the therapeutic effects of riding a motorcycle on an “adventure of a lifetime” for wounded veterans. They scrambled for backers — like Indian® Motorcycles — who were instrumental in making their dream a reality.

The Veterans Charity Ride program encompasses:

- Motorcycle therapy rides and excursions.
- Personalized nutrition, physical therapy, exercise and therapy with certified health coaches.
- Motorcycle safety course; maintenance, repairs and upgrade assistance.
- Trusted vet mentors to renew hopes, goals and a sense of purpose.
- Special events and activities to keep veterans engaged and active.
- Veteran family support outings to share wins, breakthroughs and peace of mind with family.
- New and used motorcycle/ATV donations for vets — VCR will refurbish and modify bikes if necessary.

Testimonials from the vets tell the story:

“I was going through a really hard time. I was at rock bottom ... with almost 12 years of active service, all served in the time of war, during which I suffered multiple combat injuries, and was awarded two Purple Hearts for being wounded in action. This ride changed my life forever, physically, emotionally, and most importantly, mentally. Once I left the Marines, I found myself without an identity, dealing with traumatic brain injury (TBI), severe PTSD, and many other physical injuries. The Veterans Charity Ride Organization came to my aid. They rescued me and saved my life.” — Doober H., Marine veteran, Idaho

“I want to thank Veterans Charity Ride for all you’ve done ... lifelong friendships, amazing memories, and a forever support system for me, as well as my family. The healing and happiness I’ve experienced in this short period of time takes me to a place I never thought I’d be again.” — Keith H., Army veteran, Texas.

“In October of 2007, while deployed to Mosul, Iraq, I had my left leg blown off below the knee. I tried to build myself back up by participating in activities like scuba diving, snowboarding and softball. However, these proved only to be superficial distractions from the mental agony I felt. Despite my best efforts, I was losing the mental battle and grew to have a jaded, love/hate relationship with all aspects of my life. ...Veterans Charity Ride to Sturgis provided me the tools needed to process, confront and overcome my damaged mental state. Equally important, it strengthened my network of friends I can turn to when needed. Now every time I feel the stress of life bearing down on me, all I have to do is

take a ride on my motorcycle and the positive memories and experience of the ride to Sturgis washes over me. I would highly recommend it to anyone going through tough times.” — Michael Brown, Army active-duty, Alabama.

“The trip helped me to take stock and appreciate what I have in my life. It helped to empty my mind of all the junk that was stuck up there. It gave me a peace I have been looking to find for the last decade, and it has truly helped me to finish my healing process. So, thank you Veterans Charity Ride; those 14 days really helped put the last 10 years to rest.” — Damon, S., Army veteran and sidecar passenger, Michigan

“After losing both of my legs in Afghanistan, I had no idea what mobility would look like for me, let alone any sort of fun activities anymore ... Once I was fitted for prosthetics, I tried to go and engage in the activities I had always wanted to, but never had. Veterans Charity Ride gave me the opportunity to experience being on a motorcycle ... Even with how amazing that was, it is the people that make it so worth it! Having that military-squad feel ... that sense of camaraderie that is lost when you leave ...VCR gave me another family through all these veterans I rode with, and honestly that is the hardest thing to leave behind once you get out. Thank you VCR for such an amazing opportunity!” — Jed M., Marine veteran, sidecar passenger, Oregon.

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Wendy Koro is marketing director at Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™ (russbrown.com). VeteransCharityRide.org is a program run by White Heart Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charity. All donations and contributions are 100 percent tax deductible.



Marine Corps Sgt. Richard Silva, an amputee veteran, accepts a three-wheel Can-Am Spyder donated by Russ Brown Motorcycle Attorneys™ in December 2016. VeteransCharityRide.org, a nationwide program using motorcycle therapy to help wounded combat veterans adjust to civilian life, and its fiscal sponsor, White Heart Foundation, enable industry giving to deserving vets. Jay Leno helped surprise Richard with the gift.



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By Rep. Glenn "GT" Thompson

As a nation, we celebrate and give thanks to our veterans. We mourn those whom we've lost in defense of this great nation. And, we must never forget the unthinkable pain for families whose loved ones have not returned home.

To serve one's country is a selfless act. Our men and women in uniform uphold the promise they made to serve this nation with honor and courage. We must redouble our commitment to never leaving one of our own behind.

Currently, more than 83,000 American service members remain unaccounted-for from World War II, the Korean War and Vietnam. While several nations have worked to assist the United States in research and

Trade relations should open doors to POW/MIA recovery

recovery efforts, many challenges still exist when it comes to negotiations and operations.

That's why I have introduced the "Keeping Our Promise to MIA/POWs"

for trade deals, but sends a message that this nation will uphold its eternal promise to our Armed Forces to always work to bring our men and women home. No matter the circum-

this to the depths of their souls. May they know that the United States of America will never give up searching for one of our own, and we will do everything in our power to bring them back on American soil.

This nation is united by our liberties and freedoms that our men and women in uniform take an oath to protect and defend. We will never stop searching for our brothers and sisters who fought in battle to uphold our way of life. May God always carry them, and all our service members, in the palm of his hand.

Republican Rep. Glenn 'GT' Thompson represents Pennsylvania's 5th Congressional District. He serves on the House Agriculture Committee, where he is chairman of the subcommittee on nutrition, and also on the House Natural Resources Committee and House Education and the Workforce Committee.

Our freedom is not free. The families of our prisoners of war and those missing in action truly understand this to the depths of their souls. May they know that the United States of America will never give up searching for one of our own, and we will do everything in our power to bring them back on American soil.

resolution in the House of Representatives. H. Con. Res. 61 expresses the sense of Congress that any nation seeking to potentially enter into a mutually beneficial trade agreement with the United States should provide reasonable access and partnership with the United States for the purposes of research and recovery of our unaccounted service members.

This noncontroversial, bipartisan resolution — Rep. Gerry Connolly, Virginia Democrat, is a co-sponsor — does not serve as a precondition

stances we face. No matter the time that has passed.

Our freedom is not free. The families of our prisoners of war and those missing in action truly understand

Veterans' voices are being heard



By Rep. Leonard Lance

Hello Rolling Thunder!

For 30 years, your voices and motorcycles have been roaring in Washington, and lawmakers and the Trump administration are listening. Veterans' issues are front and center in the halls of Congress, and Secretary Shulkin is reforming the Veterans Administration to restore the trust you

all demand. Keep up your fight for the rights and benefits you 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 VA and legislation to display the POW/MIA 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.

Republican Rep. Leonard Lance has represented the 7th Congressional District in New Jersey since 2008. He 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 daily on federal property.

POW/MIA bills in the 115th Congress

H.R. 504

Introduced Jan. 12, 2017 by Rep. Leonard Lance, New Jersey Republican, and co-sponsors Rep. Kathleen Rice, New York Democrat, and Rep. Walter B. Jones, North Carolina Republican.

To require the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days the U.S. flag is displayed on federal properties.

H.Res. 129

Introduced Feb. 15, 2017 by Rep. Sam Johnson, Texas Republican, and 49 co-sponsors.

Calls upon: (1) the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, other elements of the Department of Defense and the federal government, and all foreign governments to intensify efforts to investigate, recover, identify and account for all missing and unaccounted-for U.S. personnel; and (2) all foreign governments with information on missing U.S. personnel, or with missing U.S. personnel within their territories, to cooperate fully with the U.S. government to provide the fullest possible accounting for all missing U.S. personnel.

H.Res. 219

Introduced March 21, 2017 by Rep. Mark Walker, North Carolina Republican, and co-sponsors Rep. Richard Nolan, Minnesota Democrat; Rep. James Comer, Kentucky Republican; Rep. Ron Kind, Wisconsin Democrat; and Rep. Thomas Suozzi, New York Democrat.

To establish a 10-member Select Committee on POW and MIA Affairs. The committee's mission would be to investigate all unresolved matters involving any U.S. 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.

Stepping up in support of our servicemembers

By Giant Food

For 30 years, Rolling Thunder®, Inc., has kept our nation focused on fulfilling one of our most sacred promises — to never leave a servicemember 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 81-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 communities we serve. And one of the most important communities in the Greater Washington, D.C., region is our military. 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 store.



The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), which offers “compassionate care” to those grieving the death of a loved one serving in the Army Forces, received support from Giant Food in September. Image courtesy of Giant Food.

Our commitment to support our nation's military begins with our employees. We are fortunate to have a team of employees across our operating region that makes 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 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



USO offers “care packages” from Giant Food. Image courtesy of Giant Food.

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



Giant Food works with USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore to benefit U.S. servicemembers. Image courtesy of Giant Food.

support our military.

Since 2011, Giant has grown our partnership with the USO of Metropolitan Washington-Baltimore, the largest chapter of the USO, a nonprofit that has provided help to over 10 million military servicemembers 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 servicemembers — a mission that continues to be critically important today, as many servicemembers are deployed overseas.

In September 2016, 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 re-discover 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.



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.

Cherishing Old Glory — and the freedom it represents



By David G. Weber

Growing 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. Pop was a combat-weathered World War II and Korean War veteran. He was tough as nails, but he was always 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



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. Photo courtesy of David G. Weber.

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.

represented. A freedom that young kids like me unknowingly and innocently took for granted.

Like so many of his generation,

the flag my grandfather raised on our porch every morning and the flag 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.

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POW/MIA priorities: Accountability for the missing, suicide prevention

By Rolling Thunder®, Inc.

We are an organization comprised of U.S. military veterans, the families of veterans and those who believe and are supportive of our agenda. The Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard are represented in our membership. And while our organization came into existence in the shadows of the Vietnam War, our membership has included those who served in WWII, Korean, Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, and all of the conflicts that have occurred around the world and drawn upon the U.S. military.

And while the theaters of battle and the participants may have been different, a constant has, and always will be, the resoluteness of our military to go into harm's way to accomplish the missions that they've been charged with.

With the above in mind, a major function of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., is to publicize the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action issue: to educate the public that many American POWs were left behind after all previous wars, to help correct the past, and protect future veterans from being left behind, should they become POW/MIA.

Another major function is to add ours to the clarion of voices calling for improvements in the health care outcomes experienced by veterans as a result of inadequacies in the Veterans Administration (VA)-administered health care system.

POW/MIA

If one were to go back just 100 years for the purpose of reviewing how well this country has done in the area of accounting for the millions of American men and women who have been sent off to fight in distant theaters for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms which this country's citizenry hold so dear, we as a country have not done so well.

Some say we've done well by accounting for more than 99 percent of all who've been sent into harm's way. The problem with that line of thinking is that included in the less than 1 percent are the 91,000-plus who have not been accounted for. Meaning that 91,000-plus families have sent loved ones off to war, but have not seen nor heard from them since — nor has the government said anything more than they are prisoners or otherwise missing.

The 91,000-plus moms and dads have raised a child, only to have them sacrificed for the "greater good." To know one's child has died in the line of battle is a sorrowful thing. But not to know their whereabouts years after the war or conflict has been terminated should be thought of as more than a parent should have to stand.

And we've not begun to mention the pain and sorrow of a wife, or a child that must grow up fatherless, or siblings who must continue their lives without the love of a brother or sister who has been lost to them forever.

It should not be too much to ask for this country to advance those things of a commemorative nature that could have the effect of soothing the hearts of loved ones.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc., thinks so, and that is why we've gone to great measure in support of 1) flying the POW/MIA flag on the White House and on the Capitol building whenever the American flag is flown, as a way

of saying to these families and to the public at large that our government has not forgotten that they did not come home, and 2) the positioning of the "Chair of Honor" in the Capitol Rotunda, as a way of saying to the world that those who are missing are always welcome home.

Health care

For those who've fought in this country's wars, it is certainly not new that many instruments of war are used in order to effect a positive outcome in the field of battle. Couple this with those toxic agents that may have been inadvertently released into the air as a result of enemy actions.

The problem is that quite possibly those instruments of a chemical nature may not have been thoroughly researched, at the time of use, in terms how it



may affect our troops — a principal case being the use of chemically derived defoliating agents used in Vietnam. At the time of the war, our troops used Agent Orange, as well as numerous other agents, to remove the foliage that could conceal the enemy. And in the Gulf War, the enemy took to setting fire to oil wells, releasing thick, toxic plumes into the atmosphere.

Our troops went into these areas soon after release. It was realized only much later that these chemicals were health-altering, remaining in the body possibly as long as for generations.

This could very well mean that our troops were exposed to chemical agents that could affect their family lines for generations to come, thus affecting our troops and possibly their children and children's children.

Rolling Thunder®, Inc., thinks it's only right that research finally be done to determine the potential extent of this problem. In prior sessions of Congress, legislation had been introduced that, if enacted, would address this matter head on, but it will take the political will of this country's leadership to make this happen.

There is another matter that is of grave concern to Rolling Thunder®, Inc., which deserves as much attention as can be brought to bear.

It is signified by the red patch with the number 22 on it that we are placing on the vests that we wear.

This red patch represents the suicides that are occurring every day. The number 22 represents the number of suicides committed by military personnel, who are either active-duty or of veteran status. *This is truly an American tragedy. Something must be done to end this.*

The VA appears to be overwhelmed and in need of new leadership and/or direction. The backlogs are legendary, as the health care being provided is falling short of what is required of it.

Additionally, Rolling Thunder®, Inc., recommends that the new administration consider the following key points:

- Ensure VA providers can coordinate care.
- Ensure case management, continuity and consistency in providers, especially for those with critical needs.
- Significantly increase access to mental health care, making it the highest priority.
- Communicate to veterans about VA Choice program, VA capacity, and preserve VA's role as coordinator of care.
- Hire more veterans, and increase access to patient advocates and peer mentors.
- Move toward veteran-focused and veteran-centric care.
- Rolling Thunder®, Inc., strongly urges the new administration to keep our nation's commitment to our veterans.

Legislation

Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s national leadership supports two pieces of legislation.

Since 2007, we have lobbied Congress to establish a Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, as spelled out in House Resolution 111.

This committee would conduct a full investigation of all unresolved matters relating to any U.S. POW/MIA who are unaccounted for from the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Gulf States, Vietnam, Korea, the battlegrounds in WWII, and the Cold War.

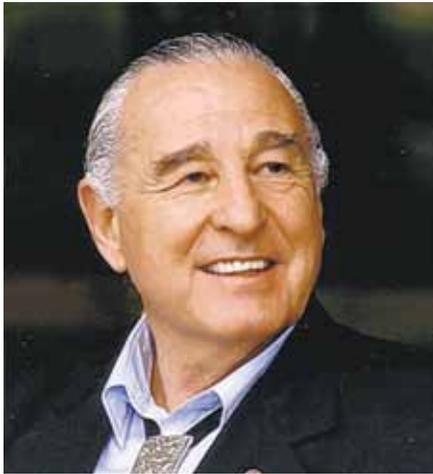
In the 111th, 112th and 113th Congresses, we had more than enough co-sponsors to bring this legislation to the floor for a vote by the Rules Committee. But despite our meetings with their policy advisers, neither former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi nor former House Speaker John Boehner did anything to move this resolution forward.

Also, Rolling Thunder®, Inc. was highly instrumental in passing legislation requiring that federal buildings and all U.S. Post Offices and military facilities fly the POW/MIA flag on all six national holidays.

Fast-forward to 2017: New legislation was introduced in the 115th Congress by Rep. Leonard Lance, New Jersey Republican, to fly the POW/MIA flag on all days that the American flag is displayed, over all federal buildings and military facilities, and especially over the White House and the U.S. Capitol building.

.....
Rolling Thunder®, Inc., is a nonprofit incorporated in 1995 for the sole purpose to advocate for veterans and veterans' rights. It is a nationwide organization of 8,000-plus volunteers in over 90 chapters. Rolling Thunder members volunteer in VA facilities, raise money to support veterans, and lobby state and federal government agencies on the behalf of veterans and their families.

‘We owe it to families, American history to do best by them’



By Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell

The following is a conversation between former Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Colorado Republican, and Cheryl Wetzstein, manager of special sections at The Washington Times, about Rolling Thunder®, Inc. XXX Ride for Freedom. It has been edited for length and clarity.

Q: You often rode with Rolling Thunder when you were in Congress?

A: Yes. I think I rode with them about a dozen times. ... Back then, I wouldn't ride clear across the country, but I would usually meet one of the groups outside D.C. somewhere and ride in with them. And then join some of the events around D.C. — the Harley-Davidson dealers have barbecues and events for them the day before.

Q: For this 30th anniversary, if you were to share a message with the crowd, what would it be?

A: Well, I think the simple message would be: “Don't give up. What you started out to do and what you've been doing for the last 30 years is working.” Mainly, Rolling Thunder was trying to create a pressure group to inspire Congress to locate prisoners of war and missing in action from any war in the past ... They are concerned about all of them, making sure every American is accounted for. So the message is, don't give up, keep going.

Q: During your time in Congress, you worked on several laws regarding the POW/MIA issue, yes?

A: You know the POW/MIA black flag that you see flying? That was drawn on a cocktail napkin ... by a veteran years and years ago. And for some reason, that image sort of caught on with the motorcyclists, and they began to use it as their symbol and it became sort of a national symbol for POW/MIAs. And I introduced a bill several years ago that would make that a national flag that must be

flown over all national buildings and national monuments five times a year.

Q: An important step to keep the symbol visible and in front of people. Any thoughts on what else Congress can do today?

A: Try to work with China.

Years ago, I [and other members of Congress] went to Korea to get remains after the Korean War. When North Korea wanted better relations with the United States in trade, they offered to give back some of the thousands that were missing in Korea. ... So we went back to Korea ... and we helicoptered up to Panmunjom and received four caskets from North Korea. Which we inspected and signed for. (There were skeletons and dog tags and paperwork.) We took those remains back to Hickam Field and had DNA tests done on them to find out just who those four soldiers were. And it turned out, they were not four soldiers — they were a whole bunch of soldiers. What they had done was kill some Americans and just stuck them in a hole, and years later, when they wanted better relations with America, they dug up those bones ... No [respect] for human life.

I hope to heck that [President] Trump has enough influence on the president of China, that China recognizes that it's in their best interest to get some peaceful solution too. Because they will be in a world of hurt if [a

conflict] starts over there.

Q: That leads to my last question: What can this White House do that you think would be good for the POW/MIA issue?

A: I think they need to work on better relations with China. I think China really holds the key because China is like the patron saint of North Korea — something like 80 percent of North Korea's exports go into China. And [China] has already cut off [North Korea's] coal as part of their first step towards reining them in a little bit. But I don't know if that's going to work or not ... That Kim Jung Un ... I don't know of anybody who can actually try to reason with him. But I think China has a better chance of exerting pressure on him than any other nation, and China has an interest in this because if a war started over there, there's going to be a mass exodus into China by scared-to-death North Koreans. ... So it's in China's best interest to find some solution.

Q: Does China have influence over Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam?

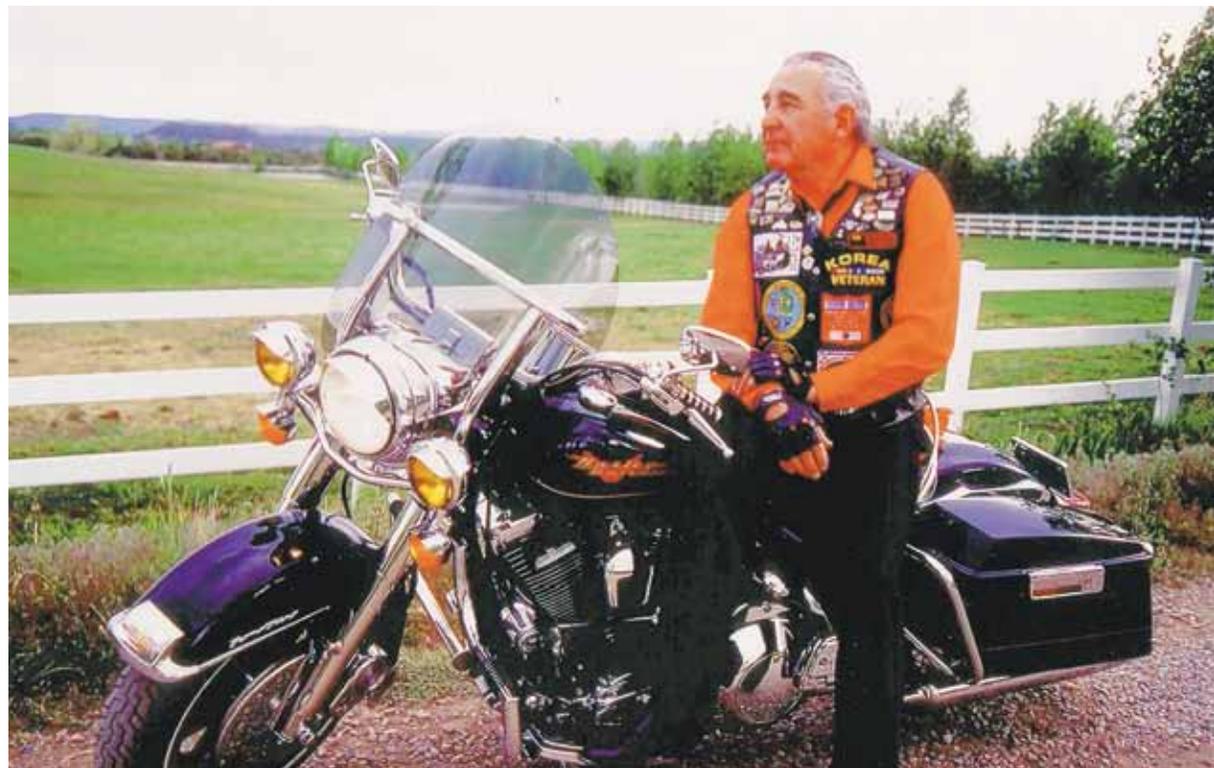
A: I think they do, though trade. Many of the weapons in those three countries come from China (and Russia). But I think there's a direct connection with all the smaller countries around China. ... And the flip side of that coin is that China is reliant on the United States for a good portion of their economy ... and if something went wrong in the

trade relations between the United States and China, there would be a hell of a bunch of Chinese factories closing ... China doesn't want that.

Q: Final thoughts?

A: People in Washington need to care about [the POW/MIA issue] and we need to care about it because it could be your son. Or my brother. Or your dad. We need to personalize it and recognize that all those missing in action and all the POWS had a family, and a future and a dream for their life as a free American — and they're gone. And I think we owe it to the families and American history to do our best for them.

Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, Colorado Republican, served in the U.S. House and Senate between 1987 and 2005, and became chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee. Now on the Council of Chiefs for the Northern Cheyenne Tribe, Mr. Campbell, 84, is an Air Force veteran who was stationed in Korea during the war and is assisting the effort to establish a National Native American Veterans Memorial. An avid motorcyclist, Mr. Campbell was inducted into the American Motorcyclist Association's Motorcycle Hall of Fame in 2001. He has a jewelry business, a consulting business, and he and wife Linda raise quarter horses on their Colorado ranch.



Air Force veteran and avid motorcyclist, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell rode many times with Rolling Thunder® during his years in Congress. Photo courtesy of Ben Nighthorse Campbell.

Wounded Warrior Project remembers the fallen, honors the missing

Collaboration critical to empower veterans now

By John Roberts

You may have heard the sound of riders revving thousands of motorcycle engines as they descended on Washington, D.C., this weekend. The sounds serve to remind a nation about prisoners of war (POW) and servicemembers missing in action (MIA). This weekend marks the 30th annual Rolling Thunder motorcycle demonstration in our nation's capital. While the freedom ride calls for a full accounting of POW/MIAs, its organizers also advocate better care for all veterans.

That is a mission similar to the advocacy efforts of Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP). WWP takes concerns of all veterans to Capitol Hill to push for better health care access; an extension of reproductive services for warriors who lost the ability to have children; and greater collaboration between the government, nonprofits and private organizations. Many of these efforts not only help today's generation of wounded warriors, but all veterans who rely on care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

WWP connects warriors with one another and their communities and serves them through life-saving programs targeting mental health, physical health and wellness, career and benefits counseling, and long-term support for the nation's most seriously injured veterans.

"Wounded Warrior Project knows the sacrifice all servicemembers make when they answer the call for their nation," said Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Mike Linnington, WWP chief executive officer. "It is why we remember the fallen and honor the missing on Memorial Day. By working with other organizations, we empower today's veterans to live their fullest lives."

WWP supports and partners with several nonprofits and veterans service organizations that are passionately caring for our nation's military, families, veterans and caregivers. By working together, WWP is able to bring veterans and their families the best in programs and services to address current needs and any that may emerge. It is vital to work together to reach the millions of veterans in need.

One of the needs of veterans is greater access to mental health care. By connecting with other veterans through profoundly impactful WWP programs and services, warriors get out of their



Wounded Warrior Project hosted Team Rubicon disaster training at its Jacksonville, Florida, headquarters. Veterans and volunteers learned to respond to disasters. Photo courtesy of Wounded Warrior Project.



Wounded Warrior Project CEO Lt. Gen. Mike Linnington at the VA Brain Trust recently in Boston. Photo courtesy of Wounded Warrior Project.

homes and see they are not alone. One program, a mental health support line, connects warriors and family members with a WWP staff member through weekly phone calls. Veterans get a chance to talk about nearly anything they want. These non-clinical calls provide mental support and lend an ear, often when it is most needed.

"When we reach out for help,

sometimes we don't even know what that means — or what we need," said Army veteran Terrie Rigby. "I just knew I needed help. As a veteran, I felt lost. As a wife and daughter of soldiers, I watched the men in my life — whom I love and know so well — become strangers to one another and me. The WWP phone support line gives me a safe, nonjudgmental forum to find my

footing. After six years, I know the future is bright."

Multi-day mental health rehabilitative workshops challenge veterans to face their post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) head-on. By setting and reaching goals along with other warriors, veterans can reduce the symptoms of PTSD and find new coping skills.

Warrior Care Network® is an innovative collaboration between WWP and four top academic medical centers. It provides a year's worth of therapy compressed into intensive outpatient clinics over a two- to three-week span, along with additional follow-up care. One veteran who went through Warrior Care Network called it the hardest thing emotionally he has ever done.

"It was like a rebuilding," Marine Corps veteran Joe Merritt said. "Prolonged exposure therapy drew out raw, primal emotions. I remembered things I had not recalled in a long time."

WWP takes a comprehensive approach to mental health care, meeting warriors where they are in their recoveries. This may mean a more clinical approach, like Warrior Care Network to help treat symptoms of PTSD, or it could take a more social approach, like inviting a warrior to join other veterans at a service event or group outing.

Getting warriors back on track career-wise is another method of helping them. WWP career counseling bridges the gap from the military to the civilian workforce. By providing resume assistance, WWP helps translate experiences from military service, so recruiters understand a veteran's immense value. WWP coaches warriors on the interview process, providing sample questions and feedback on answers. WWP also links veterans with networking opportunities to ensure they meet the right employers, while also educating companies about the benefits of wounded veterans.

WWP cannot accomplish the mission alone. Whether revving up the career search or shifting focus to mental health care, all veterans service organizations must work together to ensure the most successful future for veterans, while always honoring and remembering the fallen and missing servicemembers.

John Roberts is the national service director of Wounded Warrior Project. Follow WWP at woundedwarriorproject.org, on Facebook, and on Twitter @WWP.



Remembering Our Fallen Heroes This Memorial Day



“We can’t say ‘thank you’ or take the pain away from those they left behind. But I try to remind myself every day to honor their sacrifice. They should never be forgotten.”

— WOUNDED WARRIOR **NICKY NORWOOD**

Memorial Day marks a time to remember and show gratitude to the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom. It’s why The Memorial Day Foundation first formed, and it’s why Wounded Warrior Project® (WWP) partners with the organization every year to ensure the nation knows the true meaning of the holiday.



WWP veterans will join the foundation to visit and lay bouquets of red flowers at war memorials around the country. The red represents the blood of fallen service members. Visit MemorialDayFoundation.org.

LEARN MORE  woundedwarriorproject.org

American Gold Star Mothers love the ‘thunder’— and the mission



By Candy Martin

American Gold Star Mothers (AGSM) love the sound of thunder as hundreds of thousands of motorcycles leave the Pentagon parking lot in a peaceful and solemn Ride For Freedom each Sunday before Memorial Day.

AGSM and Rolling Thunder®, Inc., have had a long relationship of respect, admiration, and genuine love for each other's organizations. As Gold Star Mothers, we respect the mission of Rolling Thunder®, Inc. — accountability of the missing and prisoners of war from all U.S. conflicts.

AGSM was founded in 1928 as an organization of mothers who lost a son or daughter in active service to our country — who died as a result of such service or became missing in action. The Rolling Thunder®, Inc., mission represents part of our eligibility criteria.

Many Rolling Thunder®, Inc., members knew and served with our fallen sons and daughters. It is always comforting to listen them reflect on service and sacrifice of their brothers and sisters in arms ... their comrades ... their battle buddies.

Congratulations Rolling Thunder®, Inc., on 30 years of peaceful demonstration to remember those who did not come home — 30 years of trying to make a difference for a family waiting for answers. Nothing is more comforting to hear a greeting from a Rolling Thunder®, Inc., member, quietly welcoming us with, “Hi Mom!”

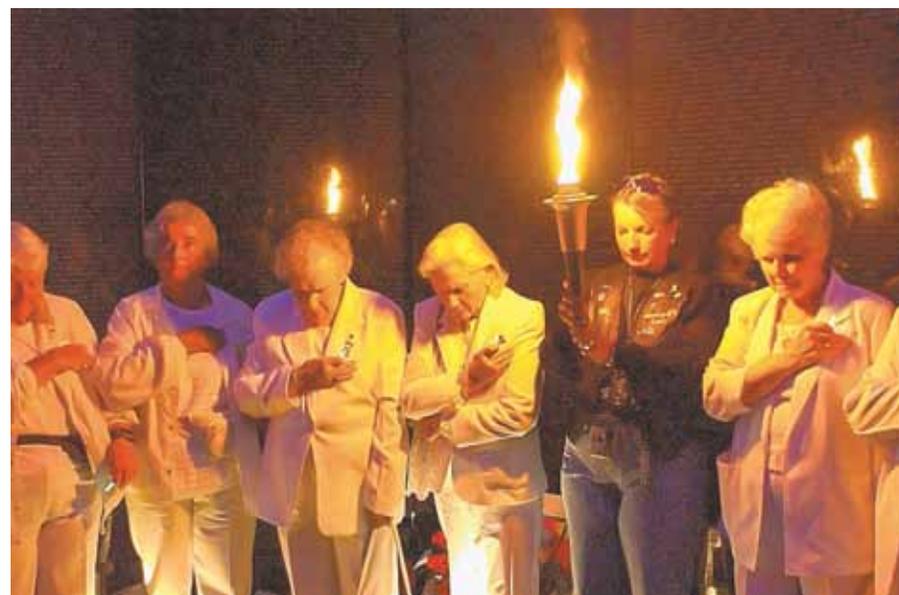
Candy Martin is the national president of American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. She is a combat veteran, having served in Iraq from 2005-2006. She retired in 2013 from the U.S. Army as a Chief Warrant Officer Five.



Terry Davis, past national president of American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., rode in a Rolling Thunder®, Inc., demonstration in a side car with special forces emblem. Her son, Army SP4 Richard S. Davis, Jr., was killed in Vietnam in 1969. Photo courtesy of Candy Martin.



Georgie Carter-Krell, past national president of American Gold Star Mothers, Inc., stands with an unidentified veteran at a Rolling Thunder®, Inc., demonstration. Her son, U.S. Marine Corps PFC Bruce W. Carter, a Medal of Honor recipient, was killed in Vietnam in 1969. Photo courtesy of Candy Martin.



Vietnam Gold Star Mothers, including (left to right, in white) Bette Freeman, Terry Davis, Emogene Cupp and Ann Sherman Wolcott, reflect at the candlelight vigil organized by Rolling Thunder®, Inc., at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, remembering their sons who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Photo by Patrick J. Hughes, Rolling Thunder®, Inc. National Photographer. www.patrickjhughes.com

A sincere salute: Respect, appreciation, gratitude

By Staff Sgt. Tim Chambers

For me, this annual POW/MIA demonstration is all about doing what is right for the men and women who were sent to war and never came home and the families left behind. We owe nothing less than accountability and closure.

I stumbled upon this amazing gathering of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., by accident while stationed at the Pentagon.

In 2001, I was a partner with the Korean War Commemoration Committee, and spent three days near the Korean War Veterans Memorial giving long-overdue appreciation and educating the public about it. Some call it the “forgotten war,” but I call it the “forgotten victory.”

The following year, on the Sunday of Memorial Day weekend, I returned to the memorial sites in full dress and aimlessly walked around, thanking veterans for their service, families for their sacrifice, and thinking about how their heroic actions will fade as our veterans pass away.

That is what inspired me to do more, and as I got closer to the sea of bikes that were passing by, I wondered how could

I thank them now — especially some might not be with us next year.

I remembered from years of serving on military funeral details, we had rendered a final salute to each service member, regardless of rank. So why not do it now? We salute our president, I thought, so why can't I salute a patriot?

I marched into the middle of the street and popped up the salute. The riders passed by me on both sides, and soon I could see tears running down some of their cheeks. I was reaching them.

Fatigue started to set in, but there was a sacred connection made with each biker. At the end of my first salute in 2002, hundreds of veterans thanked me for giving them a “welcome home” they never received. Instantly, this became my moral post.

The first few years, no one knew my name, and I liked that. Then they started to learn my name, and it was a pleasant thing to hear them holler as they rode by, but all of a sudden I felt the weight of what was expected of me year after year.

I have since had the Missing Man Table in front of me, and veterans have come to stand with me — I put them in front of me in uniform, to make it even more special for the veterans and riders.



Marine Staff Sgt. Tim Chambers from San Diego, California, stands at attention for hours to salute the tens of thousands of motorcyclists who participate in the annual Rolling Thunder® Ride for Freedom in Washington. Photo by The Washington Times.

Last year, I got married in the middle of the street, and my wife Lorraine stood with me for hours in her wedding dress.

Later, a widow got off her bike and hugged Lorraine and told her she was standing for her and all military wives!

The crazier our society gets, with people only caring about themselves, I feel we are losing something that made our nation great, and that is respect and compassion for each other. My salute emulates those things, and I hope to inspire people to come back to the center of the road and unite. I also hope my salute resonates with our older veterans as more of an apology from a once-ungrateful nation than a welcome home and a “job well done”!

I feel my existence as the “Saluting Marine” is no more or less important than everyone else that dedicates their time in communities all over the country and makes the ride to Washington, D.C., to participate. We are all in this together, and with all of us standing tall we are the voice that our elected officials and the world must listen to on behalf of the Cause.

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Marine Staff Sgt. Tim Chambers, who this year marks his 16th time saluting participants for hours at Rolling Thunder®, Inc.'s Ride for Freedom, shares his stories at www.thesalutingmarine.com.

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HOW WE HELP:

- ★ **EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID:** Prevents evictions, car repossessions, utility cutoffs and other financial disasters
- ★ **ROAD TO RECOVERY CONFERENCES:** Education, motivation, counseling, career transition, personal development
- ★ **HEROES THANKING HEROES:** Internal employment that hires only combat-wounded or their spouse/caregiver
- ★ **VETERAN CIRCLE MEMBERSHIP:** Advocacy and benefits for disabled veterans and their families
- ★ **EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING:** Online education training, career assessment and transition assistance

WHO WE HELP:
AMERICA'S COMBAT-WOUNDED VETERANS

The Trump administration: A new opportunity?



By Ann Mills-Griffiths
and Richard T. Childress

Understanding where POW/MIA accounting stands today and the way ahead requires knowing where we have been. Objectivity, reason and logic in pursuing answers on missing U.S. personnel from the Vietnam War — military and civilian — have always been critical. Too often, however, facts have been ignored, omitted or distorted, to the detriment of mission credibility.

Since 1970, the National League of POW/MIA Families has based expectations squarely on official U.S. data. Then and now, our quest is the “fullest possible accounting.” Ignoring evidence or engaging in wishful thinking undercuts well-founded expectations. At the same time, accounting for all missing personnel from past wars is unrealistic and will never be possible.

Politically driven attempts to dismiss the issue as somehow impeding normal economic and political relations were proven wrongheaded as well. Objective analysis demonstrates that POW/MIA accounting efforts formed the basis for constructive, sustainable relations between the U.S. government and counterparts in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Support for humanitarian accounting efforts has fluctuated depending on commitment by successive administrations and perceived national interests. Support expands when uncertainty and concern rise in times of war, resulting in increased patriotic support for those now serving. POW/MIA accounting's impact on our Armed Forces and veterans is a legacy in which we all invested and take great pride.

The need for innovative policy materialized when President Ronald Reagan came into office and raised the accounting effort from near oblivion to “a matter of highest national priority.”

The inherent strategy adopted was the product of his personal interest, honed by interagency consensus, and implemented government-wide. Largely comprised of seasoned military and civilian Asian specialists, the POW/MIA Interagency Group was unusual; the League was included throughout as a full partner, engaging in high-level negotiations with foreign officials.

Thus began what productively evolved into the bilateral relationships now evident between the U.S. and countries from which answers began to come, jointly and unilaterally. From that origin came the “roadmap to normalization of relations” with Vietnam, and cooperation began to improve throughout Southeast Asia.

As of now, 1,611 U.S. personnel are still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. Since the Jan. 27, 1973, Paris Peace Accords ended active American involvement, 1,035 Americans have been accounted for — recovered, returned and identified. Most importantly, bilateral negotiations with Laos and Vietnam, initiated seriously in 1982, followed by unilateral and multilateral efforts (including with Cambodia after the 1991 U.N.-sponsored agreement in 1991) resulted in accounting for 972 of that number.

The initial strategy and prioritization succeeded in getting us this far, but further progress is in jeopardy. The League's consistent engagement in the process was and is, despite current challenges, a partnership that outlasted and survived numerous political and policy fluctuations.

Governments from which cooperation was key to success could rely on responsible League leadership and continuity; they have done so. Despite successive changes in administrations, foreign nations continue to look to the League for accurate historical perspective, ability to discern and confirm their level of responsiveness, and as a reliable channel of communication.

The League continues to monitor efforts of all, including Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Russia, the People's Republic of China, and our own government. The most difficult and frustrating situations historically came from foreign counterparts, but no longer. Opportunities have been and are now being squandered, ironically precisely when Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians desire to expand responsiveness.

In December 2013, formation of a greatly expanded capability was directed by then-Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, a Vietnam veteran and former senator from Nebraska, long committed to this humanitarian mission. Following congressional hearings based more on unproven allegations and assertions than facts, several internal investigations, and serious disruption to the accounting effort, the League provided a reorganization plan to Secretary Hagel.

Prepared with significant assistance from informed, capable partners, this plan called for consolidation of three issue-related organizations into one civilian-led agency. Soon thereafter, Secretary Hagel directed formation of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) as a new civilian-led viable organization to restore checks and balances to the accounting process and remedy internal dysfunction.



The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (dpaa.mil) was established on Jan. 1, 2015 with the mission of reorganizing the Department of Defense's past-conflict accounting organizations into a single, unified agency. More than 200 servicemembers and civilians have been accounted for since 2015, including more than 40 servicemembers in 2017.

His directive also mandated building on existing strengths and complete transparency; however, transparency remains elusive as seasoned veterans have resigned in disgust and transparency has shrunk.

Officially established on Jan. 1, 2015, DPAA initially suffered from

uninformed, misguided outside leadership, creating tremendous uncertainty. This dysfunctional environment was ongoing when the originally selected civilian director abruptly resigned. After nearly a full year, a permanent director has not been named, and our promising new organization has been rudderless, without viable policy direction.

Can DPAA and this important mission be saved? Absolutely, especially with appointment of a new DPAA director who is informed, committed, dedicated and experienced, someone respected and trusted by the families, veterans and foreign officials as having honor, integrity and knowledge. Experience must include comprehensive understanding of past policy, operations and resulting historical impact. Such a person was long ago recommended by the League, Special Forces Association, Special Operations Association and Vietnam Veterans of America.

Future POW/MIA accounting success depends on President Trump signaling to all — foreign and domestic — that success in achieving shared accounting objectives is once again a matter of highest national priority. Hopefully, he will! Had President Reagan failed to define his commitment and support in 1982, hundreds of American families would still be dealing with uncertainty and seeking answers. Time is running out! This opportunity won't come around again! It is time to reestablish the priority!

Ann Mills-Griffiths is chairman and CEO of the National League of POW/MIA Families, and sister of Navy Reserve Cmdr. James B. Mills, who was listed MIA over North Vietnam on Sept. 21, 1966. She has been a leader of the League since 1978, and participated in the numerous official U.S. and League delegations to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia between 1982 and 2015. Richard T. Childress is a Vietnam veteran and senior policy adviser for the National League of POW/MIA Families. He served in the Reagan administration's National Security Council for eight years as director of Asian Affairs, and led or participated in all policy level negotiations with Vietnam and Laos between 1983 and 1989, and all League delegations since 1999.

'United in the cause' for POW/MIA



By Nancy Sinatra

It's almost the summer of 2017, do you know where your children are? Do you know where your husband is, your brother, your friend?

Believe it or not, there are thousands of servicemen and women who served in various wars still unaccounted for. Their families still don't know what happened to them.

Imagine how you would feel if one of your family members were missing — missing for years, and while in harm's way! How could you go on with your normal life?

The Rolling Thunder organization

has been trying to alert people to this dreadful problem for decades, and bring families back together. Not only by holding demonstrations each year on Memorial Day in Washington, D.C., but their more than 90 chartered chapters spend thousand of hours visiting VA hospitals, offering moral support to the patients and staff. Their work is endless.

All are united in the cause 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 organization regularly donates POW/MIA flags to local area schools, youth groups, nonprofit organizations, special interest groups, and organizes flag-raising ceremonies.
- Veterans speak to youth groups about the honor of serving their country and educating them about the POW/MIA issue.
- Rolling Thunder®, Inc. sponsors search missions into Southeast Asia for POW/MIAs and the remains of those killed in action.
- Thousands of hours are logged in by Rolling Thunder®, Inc. members at local VA hospitals nationwide. Members visit and provide moral support to nursing home veterans and patients



Nancy Sinatra with Artie Muller at a Rolling Thunder® demonstration. Image courtesy of Nancy Sinatra.

suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

- Rolling Thunder®, Inc. helped facilitate the publishing of a POW/MIA U.S. postage stamp through the U.S. Postal Service that displayed dog tags with the declaration, "POW & MIA — NEVER FORGOTTEN!"
- Rolling Thunder®, Inc. participated in the dedication of the World War II Memorial in 2004 and assisted with organizing the World War II parade that took place on that historic date.

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Fashion and pop culture icon, recording artist, author and activist, Nancy Sinatra has sold millions of records. Among her well-known songs are "These Boots Are Made For Walkin' ", the James Bond theme song, "You Only Live Twice," "Somethin' Stupid," and "Bang Bang." Ms. Sinatra is author of two books, "Frank Sinatra, My Father" and "Frank Sinatra: An American Legend," and oversees two popular websites, sinatrafamily.com and nancysinatra.com. Follow her @NancySinatra.

'Thank you' to vets — and 'no more soldiers left behind'



PHOTO BY PATRICK J. HUGHES.

By Gordon Painter

I was asked why do I go to Washington, D.C., and sing for Rolling Thunder/POW-MIA. Well, I didn't serve in the military, but my father served in the Korean War and my son serves in the Navy. I feel like I missed out serving my country, so I do what I can. I sing my heart out.

My first year at Rolling Thunder was right after 9-11; I was nervous going out there from Washington State for the first time. I wasn't sure what I'd come across. I thought it was going to be a good opportunity for me to show what I could

do, and maybe someone would hear me sing and like what they heard.

But I soon found out it wasn't about Gordon Painter. It was about showing my humble respect to those that suffered through unspeakable things for their country. Not only did they suffer while they were away, but they were completely disrespected when they came home; you know what I'm talking about.

I think it was my second or third year at Rolling Thunder that they brought the Wounded Warriors down to the stage on Sunday before Memorial Day for the speeches and entertainment. Crystal was sitting next to me. She was 21 years old and recently came home from across the pond. Walter Reed Hospital patched her up, as she had a cage around her left leg holding the bones in place. Her other leg didn't do as well. It was missing just below the knee. I thanked her for her service. She answered, "I was just doing my job." I had to fight back the tears and the lump in my throat. What hell did she endure.

I thank every veteran I see and, boy, have I heard some stories. For any veteran out there reading this, "Thank you for keeping us all safe and thank you from the bottom of my heart for

your sacrifices and for your families' sacrifices."

To the Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action, you know what's in my heart. God bless you and your

families. No more soldiers left behind.

.....
Gordon Painter, born in Kelso, Washington, and raised on a farm, enjoys singing, especially at local VFWs and VA hospitals.



Cleaning the national memorials every month is a "privilege and honor to keep our memorials a shining remembrance," says Navy veteran John Einbinder of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., Virginia Chapter 3. Those who came out on May 14 to clean the Korean War Veterans Memorial included (left to right) U.S. National Park Service Ranger Mark Morse; Rolling Thunder®, Inc., Maryland Chapter 1 public affairs officer and Navy veteran Dave Harrelson; Mr. Einbinder; and Melynda Benjamin and Army veterans Dennis Moore and Bill DeBlander, all of Rolling Thunder®, Inc., Virginia Chapter 3. Image courtesy of Dolores Chandler, Rolling Thunder®, Inc., Virginia Chapter 3.

Doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do



By Rockie Lynne

A lifelong Harley-Davidson rider and U.S. Army veteran, singer-songwriter Rockie Lynne is a proud member of Rolling Thunder® Inc., and shared these thoughts for this Washington Times special section.

Q: What motivated you to join Rolling Thunder?

I've been riding motorcycles since I was a kid. The first vehicle I ever owned had two wheels ... it was a 1971 Ironhead Sportster.

In 2011, I was asked to participate in a documentary by a filmmaker who was

These veterans waited all month for us to come to visit them. It was one of the most beautiful things that I had ever witnessed. These guys were doing the right thing just because it is the right thing to do. I knew then that I had to get involved. I am now the vice president of that chapter, Rolling Thunder® Chapter 2, North Carolina.

Q: What do you like best about the work that Rolling Thunder® is currently doing?

One of the things that I love most about Rolling Thunder® is how "hometown-centric" each individual chapter is. I love the work that the organization is doing on a local level with our veterans. My chapter goes to the VA twice a month play bingo, among other things. We recently got together to build a porch for a wheelchair-bound veteran who could not easily access his front door. We had the materials donated and got out there with hammers and nails and built it for him. We do little things that mean a lot for people who have in some way been forgotten or overlooked by their fellow citizens.

On the national front, when I attended my first leadership conference, I was completely floored with how organized

It's really cool that Rolling Thunder®, Inc., can be doing smaller acts of kindness for our veterans locally and at the same time have a broader impact on the issues impacting our veterans across the nation.

Q: Tell us about the first time you rode in the "Ride For Freedom"?

Like many people, I had heard about Rolling Thunder® demonstration for years. I knew to expect a lot of motorcycles and I was looking forward to riding past all the national landmarks ... but I was completely taken aback by the support of the citizens lining the streets as we rode by. I had heard about "The Saluting Marine" (Tim Chambers), but actually seeing him standing there brought tears to my eyes. I could not have been more proud of my country and of our nation, knowing that a million motorcycles were there to demonstrate a grievance with their government, and that we live in a country where that right is not only protected but thousands of people were cheering for that freedom. It's a remarkable place that we live. And I will never take that freedom for granted.

Q: What are your thoughts on the future of Rolling Thunder?

There are so many young men and women who have recently returned from multiple-tour combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and I know that they can count on Rolling Thunder® to be there across this great land to assist them.

Q: Why have you chosen to invest your time and talent into lifting up Rolling Thunder's mission?

As I mature, I am coming to realize that the most important commodity in my life is time. There is so precious little of it. So I choose to invest myself fully and completely into causes that I believe in absolutely. Rarely does something come along where people get together to do something just because it's the right thing to do. It's Americans and veterans helping veterans. There are 1,620 Vietnam-era POWs/MIAs still unaccounted for. Someone needs to stand up for them and for all veterans who put their lives on the line in service of our country.

My gift is to write, record and perform songs about what I see and what I know ... and what I believe in. And every great cause deserves a theme song. So I wrote one for Rolling Thunder®.

The album packaging has detailed information about Rolling Thunder® Charities, Inc., and what they do, along with the organization's mission statement. Music can say things that words alone cannot say. It can touch people on a different level. It's a different way to spread the word about some of the kindest and most giving people that I have ever met. And of course to shine a spotlight on the POW/MIA mission.

It can be found on my website at www.rockielynne.com or on Rolling Thunder



Rockie Lynne and band have often performed on the main stage on the National Mall following the Rolling Thunder® Ride For Freedom. Photo courtesy of Susan Rash.

doing a project for an overseas television network. It was his idea to film me as I rode up to D.C. with the local Rolling Thunder® chapter from my hometown of Statesville, North Carolina.

I made the decision to join the organization after being invited by that same chapter to visit some of their elder members. We got on our bikes and went to the homes of two of their senior members who had become bedridden.

and focused the national leadership was on the "big picture" issues impacting our veterans nationally. They mobilize their base to impact legislation, and that is democracy in action. I have a tremendous amount of respect for founder Artie Muller, current National President Joe Bean and all of the National Board Members. They are all volunteers and they work their tails off to make a difference for those who serve all of us.

Where to see Rockie Lynne perform this Memorial Day weekend

Saturday, May 27

Fort Washington, Maryland
Fort Washington Harley-Davidson
Rolling Thunder®, Inc.,
Weekend Festival
9407 Livingston Rd,
Fort Washington, Maryland 20744
Performance time
: 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Admission is free

Sunday, May 28

Washington, D.C.
Rolling Thunder® Inc.,
30th Anniversary "Ride For Freedom"
Program / Concert begins
at 1:30 p.m.
Stage located in front of
Lincoln Memorial at
Reflecting Pool on the National Mall
Admission is free

Monday, May 29

Washington, D.C.
National World War II Memorial
Memorial Day at the
National WWII Memorial
Ceremony begins at 9:00 a.m.
<http://www.wwiimemorialfriends.org/>

Korean War Veterans
Memorial Memorial Day
Wreath Laying Ceremony
5:00 p.m.
National Mall, Washington, DC

National's website at www.rollingthunder1.com.

Q: You perform every year at the main stage on Sunday afternoon, immediately following the "Ride for Freedom." Tell us about that.

The stage is located on the National Mall at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial.

If you want to get the full experience of Rolling Thunder®, you must come to the stage after the ride. It's a chance to see the leadership of Rolling Thunder® and learn about the organization's mission. There are special guest speakers — everyone from decorated generals to Hollywood celebrities have been on that stage. Last year, it was President Donald Trump, who

» see **ROCKIE** | C23

Rolling Thunder, ‘Missing Man’ tables and the Bible



By Lt. Gen. William G. “Jerry” Boykin

Memorial Day is a time for Americans to remember the sacrifices made for the freedoms we enjoy. Those sacrifices include the lives of many young men and women who paid the ultimate price for our continued liberty.

Today, these fallen warriors rest in cemeteries around the nation where patriotic Americans come on Memorial Day to place flowers or flags on graves, and hear distinguished speakers remind solemn audiences of the cost of freedom.

No celebration on Memorial Day is more impressive than the Rolling Thunder event in the nation’s capital. In this annual event, thousands of motorcycle riders cruise in formation through the streets of Washington, arriving together at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial where they pay tribute to not only those who have died, but to those who are unaccounted for, POWs and MIAs.

The Rolling Thunder is a registered 501(c)(4), incorporated in 1998 with over 90 chapters across the country. It conducts and/or participates in a myriad of activities throughout the year to honor fallen warriors and highlight the issue of POWs and MIAs, including passing out flags, feeding homeless veterans, aiding veterans’ families and conducting the “Missing Man Ceremony” at events throughout the nation.

Designed to honor those American warriors from all conflicts who have never been accounted for, the display of “The Fallen Comrade Table,” as it is frequently known, consists of multiple components, each with its own symbolic significance.

The display includes a table with a tablecloth, a single red rose, a red ribbon, a slice of lemon, sprinkled salt, an inverted glass, a Bible, a lit candle, and an empty chair. It is essential that the



Select D.C.-area Chick-fil-A restaurants set up Missing Man Tables, like this one at the Bristow Chick-fil-A in Manassas, Virginia, for its market-wide Military Appreciation Day to honor those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Image courtesy of Chick-fil-A.

symbolism of each item is explained to those who view it, either in writing or verbally. The explanation alone makes these displays moving and poignant reminders of those who have not returned from war.

The families of those who are still missing have been emotionally touched by these displays for years. Rolling Thunder will be conducting these solemn ceremonies around the country on Memorial Day.

But this year, they will meet some resistance: Because the Bibles have been removed at certain U.S. military installations and Veterans Administration facilities, these particular displays will differ from those around the country. Wright-Patterson and Eglin U.S. Air Force bases both removed Bibles from their POW/MIA displays due to complaints by atheist groups claiming that the Bible was a violation of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Likewise, the VA hospital facilities

in Akron and Youngstown, Ohio did the same for identical reasons. Worse still, Patrick AFB removed the entire display due to similar motives in 2014.

America has been at war since 2001 fighting a determined enemy across the globe. Yet there are those in this nation who view Bibles as the enemy: something to be kept at arm’s length for fear of the damage to our warriors that might result from exposure to it. That’s ridiculous — if our military men and women cannot deal with a Bible in a public place, it is highly unlikely they will ever prevail over a serious foe. The critics should spend a little time studying U.S. history to see how the Bible has been consistently important to military men and women — and how commanders have routinely quoted the Bible during battle.

The VA and the military should be ashamed for kowtowing to the foolish demands of groups who are far less concerned with national security than they are with pushing their nefarious agendas. Leaders without courage or a fundamental understanding of the U.S. Constitution have made the decision to remove Bibles from these POW/MIA displays, and they need to be held accountable for their behavior. Until then, we can all take comfort in knowing that there are many patriots who will be out paying their respects to the fallen just because it is the honorable thing to do.

In Washington, D.C., Rolling Thunder will once again put aside all differences in politics, race, gender and socioeconomic status in order to show their respect for the fallen and the missing. Bibles don’t scare these old warriors because most of them have met real enemies in the course of their service. The Bible wasn’t one of them.

Lt. Gen. (Ret.) William G. “Jerry” Boykin serves as Family Research Council’s executive vice president. He spent 36 years in the Army, serving his last four years as deputy undersecretary for intelligence in the Department of Defense.

ROCKIE

From page C22

came as a Republican presidential candidate. This year I will be performing with my band for the sixth year in a row. Actor Robert Patrick from “Scorpion” is there every year. He rides in from L.A. with his club to be part of the event.

I want to invite everyone participating in the “Ride For Freedom” to turn left and park your bike in the grass at the end of the ride instead of leaving. Come and hear more about this great organization. It’s the right thing to do.

Rockie Lynne has appeared nationally on “Good Morning America,” “Fox & Friends” and ABC News, and has appeared many times on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. A veteran of the U.S. Army (82nd Airborne), Rockie has tirelessly toured military bases around the world. He is the founder of the national charitable organization, Tribute To The Troops, which brings comfort to our Gold Star Families. To date, it has raised over \$600,000 for a college fund benefitting children who have lost a parent in active duty.

Chapters serving vets, remembering POW/MIA every day

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

From coast to coast, members of Rolling Thunder® chapters do more than ride for freedom — they step up for veterans and the POW/MIA issue throughout the year.

A roundup of media reports from the last year finds Rolling Thunder® chapters giving winter clothes to homeless shelters in Michigan, buying meals for vets in Vermont, and finding homes for homeless veterans in Kentucky.

Rolling Thunder® chapters assist with placing Chairs of Honor in public places — like Spartan Stadium in Lima, Ohio, and Brooks Stadium at Coastal Carolina University in Conway, S.C. — and dedicating memorials and parks to veterans, and participating in Missing Man Table ceremonies.

“They are commonly called POW/MIAs. But we call them brothers,” Paul Berenotto, president of Rolling Thunder® New Jersey, Chapter 4, said as he presided over a ceremony at Veterans Memorial Park in Galloway Township, New Jersey, according a

ShoreNewsToday.com publication.

Rolling Thunder® members also fundraise as they ride: In Missouri, members of Rolling Thunder® Chapter 1 raised \$1,200 for local veterans through a “Zombie Poker Run” fundraiser, while in Pennsylvania, Rolling Thunder® Chapter 3 leaders presented a check for \$6,500 to the Gino J. Merli Veterans Center that was raised in the annual Salute to Veterans Motorcycle Ride.

Most of all, Rolling Thunder® members remind young and old that prisoners of war and missing in action cannot be forgotten.

“It’s our job to bring awareness to the POW/MIA issue — to let people know and educate the youth of America that there are still in excess of 82,000 servicemembers still listed to this day as unaccounted for. That is unacceptable, on any level, anywhere,” J.B. Reynolds, vice president of Rolling Thunder® Kentucky Chapter 5, said on Veterans Day 2016 at the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial, according to The State Journal.



Vice President Mike Pence has long supported Rolling Thunder®, Inc. Last May, as Indiana’s governor, Mr. Pence joined with chapter members of Indiana’s Rolling Thunder® and tweeted, “Honored to lead the first leg of Rolling Thunder’s ‘Ride for Freedom’ from Indy to DC in support of our POWs & MIAs.”



As the sun rose on April 9, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke (top) worked with members of Rolling Thunder chapters in Maryland and Virginia to scrub down the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Photo by Tami A. Heilemann, Department of the Interior.

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National POW/MIA Recognition Day 2016



By President Barack Obama

For centuries, courageous members of our Armed Forces have embodied the best of America with devotion and patriotism. On National POW/MIA Recognition Day, we pause to remember our servicemen and women who never

returned home. The hardship experienced by prisoners of war and by the family members of those who have gone missing in action is unimaginable to most Americans; it is our country's solemn obligation to bring these heroes back to the land they served to defend, and to support the families who, each day, carry on without knowing the peace of being reunited with their loved ones.

The United States does not leave anyone behind, and we do not forget those who remain missing. We will never stop working to bring home those who gave everything for their country, nor cease in our pursuit of the fullest possible accounting for all who are missing. We are working to fulfill this promise by strengthening communication with the families of those service members missing or taken prisoner. And as Commander in Chief, I am committed to living up to this

responsibility.

The men and women of our Armed Forces face unthinkable conditions and bear the painful cost of war. There is a debt we can never fully repay, though we will continue striving to remain worthy of their sacrifice. In honor of those who have not yet come home, and the families who struggle with the fear of unknown fate, we renew our fierce commitment to our patriots in uniform and pledge to do everything we can to bring those missing or held prisoner home.

On September 16, 2016, 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, BARACK OBAMA, 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 16, 2016, as National POW/MIA Recognition Day. I urge all Americans to observe this day of honor and remembrance with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

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



At left, Paul Kocic, who served in the U.S. Army from 1973-1998, bows his head during a moment of silence for fallen troops at the Rolling Thunder® program near the National Mall during the Memorial Day weekend, in Washington, D.C., Sunday, May 29, 2011. The Rolling Thunder® organization's mission is to bring awareness to the POW-MIA issue and to educate the public about how many American prisoners of war were left behind after all past wars. (Drew Angerer/The Washington Times)

They too are not forgotten: POW/MIA wives

By THE WASHINGTON TIMES ADVOCACY DEPARTMENT

This May, an exhibit dedicated to the stories of the wives and families of prisoners of war and missing in action during the Vietnam War was opened with a panel discussion with two of the women who lived — and are living — through it.

“Our idyllic life ended on April 24, 1967 — which is 50 years ago,” Helene Knapp told an audience who gathered May 7 to learn more about “The League of Wives: Vietnam’s POW/MIA Allies and Advocates” exhibit at the Robert J. Dole Institute for Politics at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas.

Mrs. Knapp’s Air Force pilot husband, Col. Herman Knapp, “was bombing a MIG base in North Vietnam and he was shot down,” she said. No further word came about him, and although the crash site has now been excavated at least six times, no human remains have been found.

So “we’re still waiting,” said Mrs. Knapp. “I am called a Missing in Action wife from the Vietnam War. And I have two grown children who were referred to as Missing in Action children.”

Jenny Connell Robertson told the audience that the last time she saw her husband, Navy Lt. Cmdr. James Connell, was in 1965, when he left for Vietnam.

In July 1966, he was shot down but captured alive, she said. However, unbeknownst to her for several years, he was subjected to severe torture and deprivation, and died in captivity in 1969.

Initially, when military wives received word that their husbands were POW/MIA, they were strongly advised not to talk about their spouses, and they obeyed, despite their loneliness and despair. But as time passed, a few of them — including Sybil Stockdale, wife of Navy Cmdr. James Stockdale, a POW for more than seven years — began planning how to bring their husbands’ plights to light.

The wives’ persistence and lobbying eventually paid off — their National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia (now known as the National League of POW/MIA Families), members of Congress and the Nixon administration achieved the safe return of hundreds of POWs from the North Vietnamese in 1973.

Today, the mission of accounting for all POW/MIA personnel, including those from other wars, continues.

The new exhibit, which will travel to Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum and the Virginia Historical Society, is curated by historian Heath Hardage Lee, author of the upcoming book, “The Reluctant Sorority: A True Story of Survival and Rescue from the Homefront.”



Jenny Connell Robertson (far right) whose Navy pilot husband died in captivity, and Helene Knapp (second from right), whose Air Force pilot husband is still missing in action, spoke at a May 7 event to open the exhibit, “The League of Wives: Vietnam’s POW/MIA Allies and Advocates,” at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics in Lawrence, Kansas. Heath Hardage Lee (center), curator of the exhibit, and Audrey Coleman (left), assistant director and senior archivist at the Dole Institute, joined the panel. Image courtesy of Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics.

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The underwriters of the exhibit are Harlan and Alice Ann Ochs of Colorado Springs, in honor of their late brother, Larry Ochs, former mayor of Colorado Springs and a strong advocate for POW/MIA issues.



Sen. Robert J. Dole, Kansas Republican (right) worked with Sybil Stockdale (center) to publicize the plight of missing and imprisoned U.S. military personnel in the Vietnam War. Mrs. Stockdale’s husband, Navy Cmdr. James Stockdale, spent more than seven years in a North Vietnamese torture camp. With the assistance of U.S. military intelligence, they and others were able to send secret messages through letters to the prisoners. Image courtesy of Dole Archives at the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics.



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**SUNDAY, MAY 28th
WASHINGTON, D.C.**



Our Rolling Thunder Memorial Truck
will be riding again in this year's parade!
Join us at the Lincoln Memorial as we present our
\$5,000 donation to the Rolling Thunder organization.