

Jeannette native, Vietnam POW offers inspiration for fellow veterans

Dave Carey played a make-believe piano and recalled everything from Biblical passages to the early 20th-century poem “The Highwayman” to stay sane during more than five years as a prisoner of war held by North Vietnamese captors beginning in 1967.

More than 300 people, including many fellow veterans, came to the Ramada by Wyndham Greensburg Hotel and Conference Center in Hempfield on Friday to hear the 77-year-old Jeannette native’s story of how he and fellow captured service members endured conditions including interrogations that sometimes led to beatings.

“We did what we had to do. We did our best, and we did it day after day,” said the [retired Navy captain and former pilot who now is an inspirational speaker and author](#) living in Georgetown, Texas. “We kept our sense of humor and kept faith in ourselves, each other, our country and in God.”

Carey, whose Skyhawk attack plane was shot down on a mission over North Vietnam on Aug. 31, 1967, said he and fellow captives developed a coded series of taps to communicate among their cells. They also used American idioms like “What’s up, Doc?” that the prison guards didn’t comprehend.

“No matter what happens in our lives, we’ve been given the ability to choose how we’re going to deal with it,” he said. “That doesn’t mean it’s easy, and that doesn’t mean we can do it by ourselves.”

The dinner was meant to build awareness and support for the non-denominational Veteran Angels program that helps veterans who suffer from combat trauma seek healing through spirituality and small-group retreats. It was organized by the program's founder, Tom Abraham of Unity. The program puts an emphasis on veterans helping other veterans.

“We aim to do whatever we can by providing friendship, comradeship, somebody to talk to, somebody who's lived through it,” Abraham said.

He said he hopes to schedule additional dinners in an ongoing speaker series.

George Scott of Mt. Lebanon, a mental health counselor and Marine veteran, sits on the Veteran Angels board. Scott saw combat in Desert Storm and suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder himself.

“We're in our infancy, a little over a year and a half old,” Scott said of the organization. “We try to do good work with the veterans who suffer from PTSD, and we invite others to come out and experience that because, when a veteran suffers from PTSD, so does the family.”

Visit www.a-veteranangels.org for more information.

Tom

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