

THE MESSENGER BAG



Mission Driven. Family Focused.

QUARTER 1 NEWSLETTER

JANUARY—MARCH 2024



Letter from the President

Greetings from the Mission: POW-MIA leadership. We hope you all had a wonderful end to 2023 and the best of starts to 2024.

This edition of the Messenger Bag covers another three months of news and stories that highlight the completion of Mission: POW-MIA's first year as an organization. The news highlights the impact we collectively are having, and the stories remind us all why this mission is so important to us and to America as a whole. Thank you for your support helping our Mission Driven, Family Focused organization have a phenomenally successful first year!

Mission: POW-MIA leadership just held a two-day planning virtual offsite where we mapped out a path that will build significantly on our first year, leading to more programs and activities that support our members and the mission. Preliminary details of a few of these initiatives are in this edition, with much more to come over the coming months. Your Mission: POW-MIA leadership team finished this planning event re-energized and excited about all that we collectively will accomplish this year and beyond.

As in previous editions, you will see articles written by our leadership team and by some of our members. A hearty thank you to those who contributed. All of you are encouraged to contribute your family stories and news of POW/MIA recognition activities in your area. Please keep them coming!

Thank you, again, for your support making Mission: POW-MIA's first year a resounding success. You have our pledge to continue increasing our efforts on your behalf, as together we seek the fullest possible accounting of American's missing from past conflicts. Our growing unified voice is making a real difference in the SEARCH for answers. Thank you.



Sincerely,

Jon C. Kreitz

Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

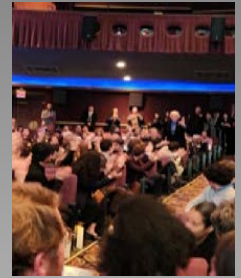
President, Mission: POW-MIA

CONTENTS

Mission: POW-MIA Goes to Hollywood	1-2
Air & Space Forces Celebration	3-4
Association of Naval Aviation	5-6
Mission: POW-MIA/Nine Line Apparel	7-8
Marine Corps League	9
A Visit to a Middle School	10
Recent Vietnam War Identifications	11-12
Vietnam War Veterans Day	13-14
MIA Case Spotlight	15-17
Gun Barrel Coffee	18
United States Institute for Peace/Mission: POW-MIA Vietnam Trip	19-20
US-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs	21
News from DPAA	21
Annual Government Briefing Info	22
Newsletter Deadlines	22
Hawaii Rosette Event	23-24
Important Dates	25
Membership Information	26
Annual Meeting Announcement	27
Thank You	Back Cover

JANUARY

Mission: POW-MIA goes to Hollywood!



In January 2024, Mission: POW-MIA was invited to Hollywood by Apple TV + for the premiere of Masters of the Air. In attendance were Tom Hanks and Steven Spielberg along with the author of the book, Donald Miller and members of the 100th Bomb Group. Mission: POW-MIA families from WW II, Cold War and Vietnam met in California for the event. The jacket seen in the bottom right photo, worn by Alex Joseph, nephew of Executive Director Dave Huffman belonged to Lt Col Harry Crosby, the lead navigator for the 100th Bomb Group. Mr. Huffman obtained the jacket about 10 years ago. We took it with us to the premiere and had the honor of meeting Lt Col Crosby's family at the event who were amazed that their Dad's jacket had travelled from Massachusetts to Virginia to Hollywood! Mission: POW-MIA pinned the Vietnam War Commemoration Unaccounted-For family members in attendance and held a POW-MIA Flag signing. Special thanks to Maleri from Apple TV + for making all of the arrangements for Mission: POW-MIA to be part of this event!



Pinning Signatures



JANUARY

Washington, DC



Mission: POW-MIA was invited to set up a POW-MIA display at the Air & Space Forces VVC 50th Celebration of Character & Courage in Washington, DC. Following the event at the National Cathedral, guests arrived at the reception where we set up a large display including a Missing Man Table. We held a POW-MIA Flag signing and pinned POW-MIA family member Raymond Echevarria seen holding a photo of his Dad, SGM Raymond Echevarria, US Army 5th Special Forces Group. SGM Echevarria is still missing and unaccounted-for in Laos.



*Air & Space Forces Association
Celebration of Character & Courage*



JANUARY

Association of Naval Aviation



Mission: POW-MIA talks to naval aviators

Mission: POW-MIA was invited to speak with the Association of Naval Aviation at NAS Oceana in Virginia Beach, VA. Present were members of Naval Aviation from the Vietnam era through active duty US Navy personnel to include NAS Oceana Commanding Officer Captain Steve Djunaedi. Mission: POW-MIA brought a display of a 1967 USN Aviator and the Vietnam War Missing poster. Executive Director Dave Huffman provided a briefing for the aviators about the search for the missing crew of Quizshow 09, CDR Jacobs, LTJG Zavocky and ADJ2 BoisClaire, MIA 25 August 1967 in the waters over North Vietnam. Following the briefing we held a Q&A session and conducted a VWC pinning and "Welcome Home" for the Vietnam Veterans at the meeting.





Mission: POW-MIA pins the VWC lapel pin to multiple US Navy Vietnam War aviators. A POW-MIA Flag signing also took place. Thank you to NAS Oceana and the Oceana Officer's Club for hosting the event.



NINE LINE APPAREL

Get Your Official Mission: POW-MIA Gear!



Get your official Mission: POW-MIA t-shirt, long sleeve shirt or sweatshirt and show your support for our organization and our Mission! Visit our website for additional photos. A portion of the proceeds go directly to Mission: POW-MIA.

We have a goal of 200 products. This NEW limited design from Nine Line Apparel ends on June 17th, 2024.





**NEW LIMITED
DESIGN**



NINELINEAPPAREL.COM

JANUARY

Marine Corp League



Mission: POW-MIA visited the January meeting of the Marine Corps League, John A. Lejeune Detachment #332 in Virginia Beach, VA. Executive Director Dave Huffman spoke about missing US Marines from the Vietnam War and the efforts underway to locate and repatriate their remains. He spoke about Mission: POW-MIA's awareness campaign to continue to highlight the importance of the mission. At the end of the talk, Dave & Jeanie Huffman were sworn in as auxiliary members of the Marine Corps League.



Mission: POW-MIA set up a display spanning WW I through modern times for the 8th grade classes of Great Bridge Middle School in Chesapeake, VA. The students, approximately 400, rotated through the exhibit in the school library throughout the day. The learned about the Missing Man Table, the POW-MIA Flag, heard stories of our POW-MIAs and had the chance to ask questions. Each class was broken in to B-17 crews and they were talked through a "mission" over Germany. They learned how some men never came home and their comrades never knew what happened to them. Special thank you to the outstanding history teachers at Great Bridge Middle School! Go Wildcats!!!



FEBRUARY

Great Bridge Middle School



RECENT VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFICATIONS

CAPT RALPH JIM CHIPMAN **"WELCOME HOME"**

Accounted for from the Vietnam War



MIA 27 DEC 1972
Acct For 02 AUG 2023

JJ Hoffman



"WELCOME HOME"

CAPT RONALD WAYNE FORRESTER
Accounted for from the Vietnam War



RECENT VIETNAM WAR IDENTIFICATIONS

MISSION: POW-MIA VIETNAM WAR

MAJ JOHN C G KERR



Pilot Accounted For From Vietnam War

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced today that U.S. Air Force Maj. John C.G. Kerr, 35, reported missing during the Vietnam War, was accounted for April 24, 2024.

On Aug. 22, 1967, Kerr was piloting an A-26A Invader attack aircraft on a solo nighttime armed reconnaissance mission over the Plain of Jars, Lao People's Democratic Republic. After Kerr failed to check in via radio and didn't return from the mission, U.S. forces undertook an extensive electronic and visual search of the estimated area, in which extensive enemy defenses were present, but could not find Kerr or the aircraft. Likely related to this incident, a New China News Agency broadcast reported the Aug. 22 shootdown of an American aircraft near Ban Ban and the deaths of its crewmembers. Kerr was declared Killed in Action on June 4, 1971.



J. J. Hoffman

MARCH

On March 29, 2024, Mission: POW-MIA sponsored a trip to Washington DC for members of the Old Dominion University Army ROTC Black & Gold Society. The cadets from ODU were the only ROTC Unit present for the 7th Anniversary of Vietnam War Veterans Day and Mission: POW-MIA was proud to represent the families of our missing service members. The cadets met MG Edward Chrystal, the Director of the Vietnam War Commemoration. The cadets were each presented with a VWC Challenge Coin. By MG Chrystal. Next they met Mr. Kelly McKeague, Director of the Defense POW-MIA Accounting Agency and learned about DPAA's mission to locate, repatriate and identify our missing and unaccounted-for from past conflicts. The cadets engaged with Mission: POW-MIA President, RADM Jon Kreitz, USN (Ret) and Board Member CAPT Edward Lundquist USN (Ret) at the Wall. They heard from POW-MIA family members Jeanie Huffman, Mission: POW-MIA Board Member and Social Media Director and Lifetime & Founding Member Rick Holland. Rick had been selected by Mission: POW-MIA to represent the POW-MIAs and their families by presenting a wreath at the Wall this year. The cadets learned about multiple MIA cases from Executive Director Dave Huffman and each cadet was charged with locating an MIA on the Wall and completing a charcoal rubbing. These rubbings are being sent to the families. The cadets signed the POW-MIA Flag and Rick Holland was able to receive his rubbing in person from a future Army 2nd Lieutenant. Mission: POW-MIA was honored to make this trip possible for these future military leaders and we thank the Old Dominion University ROTC program and Black& Gold Society.



Vietnam War Veterans Day, DC 2024



Vietnam War Veterans Day, DC 2024



MIA CASE SPOTLIGHT

KARONI FORRESTER

When Answers Come

The text from my casualty officer read, “Please call back when you can. I have positive news to report.” I immediately knew. I was perplexed beyond reason, but I knew. That Tuesday morning, December 5, 2023, my family happened to be home. I called them to come join me so we could make the call together. Together, we heard our Marine Corps SCO tell us that Daddy’s remains had been identified. After the call, we all exchanged looks and time stood still for a moment. WOW. I suppose, even after active involvement in this mission for 39 years, I never truly believed I would be on the receiving end of such a call, and just three weeks before the 51st anniversary of his loss.

My father, Capt Ron Forrester, grew up in Odessa, TX always knowing he wanted to fly. Pictures of a young toddler holding his toy plane high above his head with purpose are prophetic. When he was five years old, he decided it was time to make his first jump. His plan was to get on the roof of the house and use his bed sheet as a parachute. His brothers went screaming inside that “Ronnie’s gone crazy!” and Papaw quickly ran outside to intervene.

When Dad’s plans for the Air Force Academy did not materialize, he found another way to realize his dream. He joined the Corps of Cadets at Texas A&M University where he graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering before being commissioned as an officer in the United States Marine Corps. He was first sent to Pensacola, FL for flight training before being stationed at MCAS Cherry Point, NC. In August of 1972, Dad deployed to Nam Phong, Thailand where he would fly the esteemed A-6A Intruder into the enemy territories of North Vietnam. Dad was shot down on December 27, 1972 as part of Operation Linebacker II – the highly successful US bombing campaign that crippled the North Vietnamese all the way to the negotiating table. The peace treaty was signed a month to the day after he was listed MIA.

It's hard to sum up a lifetime of searching for my dad. I remember being young and asking “Where’s Daddy?” I kept asking until December 5, 2023. Know that the journey does not stop with the phone call that remains are ID’ed. A new chapter of the journey begins.

There are some key learnings, even for someone like me that has actively worked this mission since 1985. I’d like to share these lessons with other families, along with some long-held beliefs proven true. I think a righteous tribute to my father is to share with families and POW/MIA advocates what I know is truth to propel the mission forward for the fullest possible accounting. Families – like it or not, making sure your case doesn’t get put on a shelf is up to you.

Here's what I know:

POW/MIA families NEED other POW/MIA families

Working this mission alone leads to isolation, frustration and dead ends. Together, we have a keen working knowledge to navigate government organizations and systems, gain access to independent resources, to share both tears and sighs of frustration and to share in celebrating answers. We're in a club no one wants to be in, but we're here – and we need each other. Answers do come. They just come much very slowly.

DNA Family Reference Samples

I strongly encourage every family to make sure they have DNA reference samples on file. Don't stop there – encourage other families to do the same. If you're a POW/MIA advocate reading this, please always mention in your community outreach that the importance of DNA reference samples cannot be overstated.

Request a scientist at your ID briefing

Who knew that you can request your SCO to bring a scientist for the formal ID meeting at your home? I didn't. Luckily a friend with DPAA made me aware when I got the news of Dad's ID. He summed it up bluntly, "Your casualty officer can't explain DNA. Get a professional." Families – this is your only time to get it right. You do not come this far on this journey to get to the end, just nod and say, "OK. Thanks." Get your forensic explanation from the horse's mouth. Be it a dental ID, isotopes or DNA – utilize resources afforded to you. If you're like me and did not know, now you know.

Do not rush the process

If you aren't comfortable that all of your "boxes have been checked" in closing your loved one's case, ask the questions and politely demand the answers until you are confident you've covered the bases. This is your only chance.

Celebrate every answer

I often said, "I celebrate every answer. It's just not my family's turn yet." Until it was. I've been told "Shared sorrow is half sorrow and shared joy is double joy." It is true. POW/MIA families need to be a collective family sharing in the joy as well as the sorrow. If you plan to have a funeral at Arlington, scheduling can take a while due to a significant backlog, especially if you want to use a chapel instead of graveside only. We held a Celebration of Life in Texas two months after the ID and we are grateful that we did. It was a really, really good day. We will have a funeral at Arlington, yet still do not have a date. Having the timely celebration up front meant the world to our family, Dad's hometown friends, his Aggie buddies, his Marine Corps comrades and our friends.

MIA CASE SPOTLIGHT

KARONI FORRESTER

After 51 years of the torment associated with Daddy being Missing in Action, I am grateful for the answer as to what happened that fateful December night in the skies over North Vietnam. I am also doubly committed to the POW/MIA issue and stand with all who wait. I will be with you until it is your turn too.

For me, I can finally say “Daddy’s home.”

I’ll emphatically add, “We ain’t done yet!”




Mission: POW-MIA would like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU! to Member Karoni Forrester for sharing this touching tribute to her Dad as well as the lessons learned during her lifetime pursuit for answers.

THANK YOU!




Mission: POW-MIA wishes to express our sincere appreciation to Gun Barrel Coffee for the generous donation following our coffee campaign. Board Member Traci Wood and Founding Member Bill Wood are seen above with Sal and Brian from GBC. Traci presented this Certificate of Appreciation and Sal and Brian presented a giant check!

In observance of National POW/MIA Recognition Day on September 15th, 2023
Mission: POW-MIA and Gun Barrel Coffee have teamed up for a fundraiser for the month of September.



A portion of the proceeds from coffee sales when you use the code **MISSION** at checkout will go to support Mission: POW-MIA.

To order go to gunbarrelcoffee.com or use the QR code.



GUN BARREL COFFEE
VETERAN OWNED COMPANY

Certificate of Appreciation

Proudly presented to

Gun Barrel Coffee

In recognition as a proud supporter of

MISSION: POW-MIA.

This certificate is authorized and presented on behalf of the Board of Directors on this 17th day of February 2024.



David B. Huffman, Executive Director
Mission Driven. Family Focused.

GUN BARREL COFFEE

VETERAN OWNED COMPANY



UNITED STATES
INSTITUTE OF PEACE
Making Peace Possible



VIETNAM
June 17- July 1
2024

Mission: POW-MIA is proud to partner with the United States Institute of Peace on our first trip to Vietnam. Mission will be sending three representatives with the USIP team and a group of Vietnam Veterans on this people to people exchange. Our group will depart the US on 17 June and arrive in Hanoi 25 hours later to begin this fantastic engagement opportunity.

The teams will meet officials in Hanoi and then begin travels throughout the provinces of Vietnam. The Mission team will travel south by vehicle and the Veteran team will travel by plane to Ho Chi Minh City and then begin a northward travel stopping at various battle locations.

The Mission team will be comprised of Executive Director Dave Huffman, Board Member and Social Media Director Jeanie Huffman and Board Member Edward Lundquist.

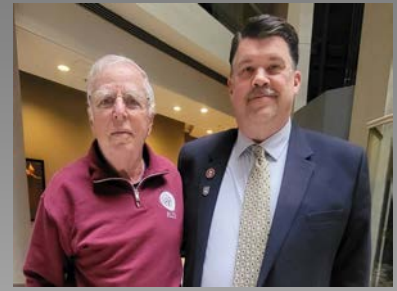
The team will be traveling with our USIP partners meeting Vietnamese families along the route. The Mission team will be visiting provinces where US service members were reported as MIA during the Vietnam War. They will also be visiting museums and reviewing artifacts that may be related to active MIA cases.

The Vietnam Veteran team will be working with the Vietnamese people to identify potential locations of mass graves of Vietnamese soldiers killed during the war. Several of the veterans on this trip have already made significant contributions in helping to locate mass burial sites.

View the documentary entitled “Fragments of Memory” to view the efforts of the Vietnamese and US Veterans in seeking out wartime remains of former enemies. It is available on YouTube.

Follow the Mission: POW-MIA Facebook page for updates as the teams make their way across Vietnam. Our team will arrive back in the US on 01 July.

U.S.- Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIA Affairs



Mission: POW-MIA met with the US Chairman of the Joint US/Russia Commission on POW-MIA Affairs in March 2024. The purpose of the meeting was to assure our family organization that despite the current situation in the world today, the Commission's work continues. Thank you to General Robert "Doc" Foglesong, USAF (Ret) for reaching out to us and for signing our POW-MIA Flag.

NEWS FROM DPAA

Laos Update

In the April 29, 2024 call with DPAA, they advised that the protections and immunities for the military and civilian members permanently assigned to the detachment (DET) in Laos is still unresolved. In total, DPAA was forced to cancel 3 Joint Field Activities (JFAs), which comprised 9 Recovery Teams (RTs) and 3 Investigation Teams (ITs). DPAA will conduct the annual consultations in May, and protections will be one of the central issues to be raised. The DPAA did restore stipends to Lao officials to both conduct these talks and to prepare for the 5th JFA this summer, which will consist of 3 partner RTs, which will be a first in Laos and involves minimal movement of DET personnel.

ANNUAL GOVERNMENT BRIEFINGS

The DPAA hosted Vietnam War Annual Government Briefings will take place at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington DC from June 27—June 28, 2024. If you haven't registered and plan on attending go to the DPAA website to complete your registration. Mission: POW-MIA Board Member and Treasurer Michael McPherson will be on hand to assist any Mission family that would like assistance during their case review. You can contact Michael in advance at:

michael.mcpherson@missionpowmia.org

DPAA website:

www.dpaa.mil

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

Our next newsletter (2nd Quarter 2024) will publish the week of July 22. If you have an idea, article or photographs of events that you would like to see in the newsletter please send them to Dave Huffman at the following email:

dave.huffman@missionpowmia.org

Deadlines for submission is July 8, 2024.

Our (3rd Quarter 2024) newsletter is scheduled to be published the week of September 23. Deadline for submissions will be September 9, 2024.

HAWAII ROSETTE CEREMONY



Save the Date

Friday, 20 September 2024

2024 NATIONAL POW/MIA RECOGNITION DAY CEREMONY
HOSTED BY THE DEFENSE POW/MIA ACCOUNTING AGENCY

National Memorial
Cemetery of the Pacific
Honolulu, Hawaii



ROSETTE CEREMONY HOSTED BY THE
AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION



WHAT: 2024 National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony

WHEN: Friday, September 20, 2024 (Starts at 10 a.m. HST)

WHERE: National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific
2177 Puowaina Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

WHY: The National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony, hosted by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is a tradition that affords local veterans organizations, community members, U.S. military personnel, and family members of missing personnel an opportunity to recognize and honor unaccounted for personnel from past conflicts. As part of the event this year, the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) will host a rosette ceremony for more than 940 U.S. service members who were declared missing during the Vietnam War and have since been recovered and accounted for. Family members are welcome to attend and place the bronze rosette beside their loved one's name on the Courts of the Missing, a symbol of their family member's recovery and identification.

WHO: Open to the Public

POC: Ms. Yasmine Muhammad
Community Relations Officer, DPAA
yasmine.t.muhammad.civ@mail.mil

For questions regarding the event you may reach out to Lifetime & Founding Member Natalie Rauch:
rosetteceremony2024@gmail.com

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

June 6th—80th Anniversary of D-Day

June 14th—249th Birthday of the US Army

June 14th —Flag Day

June 27-28th —Vietnam War DPAA Annual Government Briefings

July 4th—Happy Birthday USA!

July 27th—Korean War Armistice Day

August 4th—234th birthday US Coast Guard

August 7th—Purple Heart Day

August 15-16th— Korea/Cold War DPAA Annual Government Briefings

September 2—Victory over Japan Day

September 18th—77th Birthday US Air Force

September 20th—National POW-MIA Recognition Day

September 29th—Gold Star Mother & Family Day

MEMBERSHIP INFO

It is MEMBERSHIP Renewal Time!

If you joined as a Founding Member or 1 Year Senior Member your membership expires one year from the date of joining.

Please visit our website to renew today!

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR LIFETIME MEMBERS!!!



Haven't become a member yet?

What are you waiting for?

Join Today!!!

www.missionpowmia.org/membership

Reach out to Mission: POW-MIA

Do you know of an upcoming POW/MIA event?

Have you spoken or written about the POW/MIA issue and would you like to share the story?

Do you have photos or a family story you would like others to know about?

Contact us at info@missionpowmia.org

MISSION:POW-MIA ANNUAL MEETING

Mission: POW-MIA is proud to announce that planning is now underway for our inaugural Annual Meeting this October in Virginia Beach, Virginia!



More information will be COMING SOON!

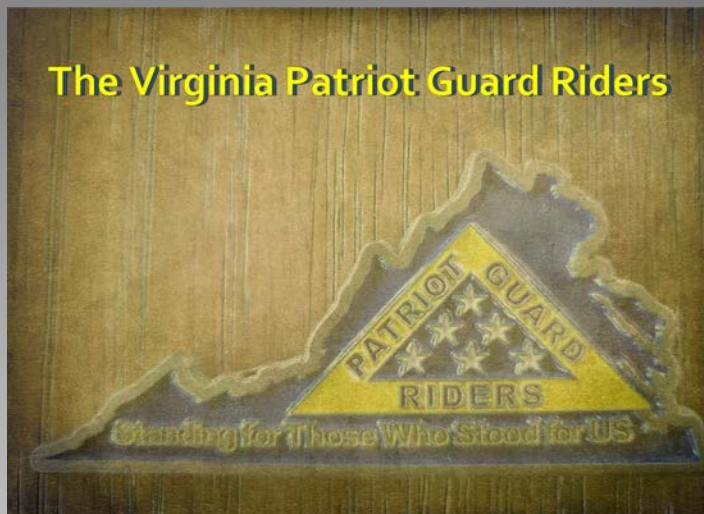
We are looking forward to seeing all our family members & supporters this Fall in beautiful Virginia Beach!

THANK YOU!

to our Organizational Partners!



National Sponsor



State Sponsor

Virginia—District 5



Local Sponsor

John A. Lejeune Detachment #332



Local Sponsor

VFW Post 4809

Would your organization like to become a partner?

Contact us today! info@missionpowmia.org