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We would like to Thank, Honor and Remember All of our Past, Present and Future Service Men and Women for all they give to this Great Nation

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Althought when one thinks of veterans on Veterans Day, someone who was overseas in the 1940s, 1950s or 1960s is likely what comes to mind first, veterans are still made today.

For example, at the age of 35, Ridgecrest native William Stukes has seven years of service in the United States Army and, after a few years away from military life, is now three years into enlistment with the National Guard.

“I remember the first time somebody pointed out the fact that I’m a veteran,” Stukes said. “It didn’t feel right and didn’t sound right, just because veteran in my mind was my grandpa, veteran in my mind was those men with hats from World War II. The word takes on a whole new meaning when you start to realize veterans are people that have served, bar none.”

And that experience has definitely altered his perception of Veterans Day.

“Veterans Day for me takes on a whole new meaning,” he said. “If people actually do what Veterans Day is intended for — it’s to stop and consider what’s going on and what people are doing so they can live the life they’re living. Until I became a veteran, I never really considered the idea that it’s anything more than a day I get off. Now that I’ve experienced it, when I see someone walking around with one of those World War II hats or anything like that, I pause and consider...
what they must have gone through, what their experience must have been, and not only that, but what they lost in the process. Paying homage to the fact that something is lost is something that should never be overlooked or forgotten.

“The burden not only falls on the veterans themselves, but their families of veterans. Just respecting the fact that your husband was over there serving, and that means you were raising the kids yourself, or your dad was over there serving, so you were having to figure out how to tie your shoes or throw a ball yourself. There’s costs across the board. So it puts a whole fresh new perspective on it, and makes me more appreciative of the people I run into.”

During Stukes’ seven years in active duty with the Army, he did a tour in Honduras in collaboration with the Honduran air force fighting Colombian drug lords. He also did a tour in Iraq.

“It was a huge transition for me coming back from Iraq to the United States,” he said. “It was a bigger transition coming from there here than it was vice versa, going over there, for some reason. To be in the midst of this, and seeing people’s houses made of mud, and they’re clawing and fighting for any food they can get, and rolling into villages where there are crippled children everywhere, and coming back and just walking into a grocery store. It was an experience that was hard to explain. It was hard to adapt back to what’s considered normal here.”

Stukes said he was able to adjust in big part due to a good support system, and that he is able to keep in contact with many of the guys he deployed with. Even so, the gravity of the decisions made on a daily basis in Iraq vs. Ridgecrest looms large.

“There’s that whole element of where a lot of the decisions that you make [in Iraq] will decide if people live or die, whether or not you’re coming home,” Stukes said. “They’re big, heavy decisions. Then you come back and all of that’s gone.”

❖
HSUMD honors service and sacrifice
USO Building, free breakfast, stress support group and more

The Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert honors the service and sacrifices of our venerated veterans and their families!
Please consider these ways we offer our deepest appreciation to our veterans:

Veterans Memorial Building
In 2015, the HSUMD completed the repair and restoration of an historic building (112-year-old one-room schoolhouse) and dedicated it as our area’s Veterans Memorial Building.
This new Veterans Memorial Building is a unique and dedicated display of the past and present service and sacrifices by our local veterans. Instead of being a general military museum, this Veterans Memorial Building is focused on displaying the photos and stories of service that are shared by our veterans or their families.

Simeon Johnston
U.S. Army - Deceased
Sept 5, 1862 - May 28, 1865
Captured at Berry’s Ford, near Millwood Virginia, December 17, 1864. Confined as a prisoner of war at Richmond Virginia, December 21, 1864. Exchanged at Cox’s Wharf, Virginia, February 5, 1865.

John J. Lee
U.S. Army

Grace Evangeline Reinke
U.S. Marine Corps
Women’s Reserve - Deceased
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Veteran's Day 2016

Julie Montoya  
U.S. Air Force

Luther “Luke” Webb  
U.S. Army - Deceased
Sept 20, 1917 - March 10, 1919  
Private, 3rd Ordnance Guard Company 121st Infantry, World War I Victory Medal

Robert “Bud” G. S. Sewell  
U.S. Air Force - Retired
40 Years Service

Bobby Leach  
U.S. Navy
1951 - 1955  
Naval Reserve 1955 - 1957

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Monthly Free Breakfast for Veterans

HSUMD hosts a monthly free breakfast for veterans and their spouses. Veterans are invited to join others on the third Thursday of each month, from 8 to 10 a.m., at the Historic USO Building located at 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.

The Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert hosts the monthly free breakfast for our venerated veterans, but the Society has lots of help from others who also honor our veterans:

Chuck and Ronda Griffin and their family donate time and talent and love to preparing, cooking and leading volunteers in serving the breakfast. The American Legion Post #684 and its Legion Riders and the Honor Flight Kern County with Gary and Karen Zuber always help. Mather Brothers, Inc. and its dairy operation donate drinks, ice, and other items. Rod Stiefvater and Mojave Pistachios pitch in and donate. Active-duty veterans from the Army and Navy are often there to help and to chat with other vets.

It is truly the community and its generous volunteers coming together and honoring our veterans at this monthly breakfast.

Combat Stress Support Group

HSUMD hosts a regular gathering of a Combat Stress Support Group. Every other Wednesday evening, starting at 1800 hours at the Veterans Memorial Building located at 230 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., the Combat Stress Support Group meets under the leadership of Dr. Jiselle Esparza.

Exposure to traumatic combat and operational experiences affects service members and veterans spiritually, psychologically, biologically, and socially. A veteran with a good job, good social supports, and a healthy leisure routine may...
have an easier readjustment to civilian life.
If you or a loved one thinks that they
could benefit from coming to a meeting of
this Support Group, please call John Abbott
at 619-808-2223.

Activities for Vets and Families

HSUMD hosts a wide variety of activities
and events that veterans and their families
can enjoy.
The Society’s Historic USO Building
opened in October 1945 as a USO Club, and
immediately became the center of activity
for Ridgecrest, the nearby Navy base, and
the surrounding area. The Historical Socie-
ty of the Upper Mojave Desert has not only
restored the venerable building to its for-
er glory, but it has restored the building’s
stature as a center of community activity!

Classic Movie Nights for the whole family
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in years past. Open Mic Nights – with a
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ments and listen to live local musicians
share their acoustic talents with the rest of
us. Regular presentations of historic or en-
tertaining or educational subjects, musical
concerts, special shows or dinners or dances
– are all activities that veterans and their
families can enjoy at the Historic USO
Building.

And for those active-duty veterans and
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er this wonderful opportunity being offered
by your new community!

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Daughter of missing Navy Pilot reflects during POW/MIA ceremony

BY RUSTY BAKER
Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base Public Affairs

FORT WORTH, Texas (NNS) — Shannon Spake has very few memories of her father. She recalls of melodies he sang to her and the smell of Old Spice cologne throughout their home at Naval Air Station Lemoore, California.

Spake was not much older than two when her family received the news he was considered missing in action after the Navy lost contact with his aircraft in Northern Laos.

It was the spring of 1972 and the Navy’s Attack Squadron (VA) 192, known as the Golden Dragons, had just deployed for its sixth combat cruise to Vietnam aboard aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk (CV-63). The squadron flew its battle-worn A-7E Corsair II attack aircraft in over 3,600 combat strikes in a period of 192 days in support of Operation Linebacker, as well as the mining of North Vietnamese harbors and concentrated air strikes against targets in North Vietnam.

Spake’s father, then Lt. Dennis Pike, had just completed a successful bombing run on the Ho Chi Minh trail when his aircraft began trailing smoke. Loss of oil pressure and altitude forced Pike to ditch his Corsair and hold out hope he would evade detection from the enemy long enough to be rescued.

“I’m going to have to leave it; see you guys later,” were Lt. Pike’s last words over
the radio before he ejected, according to Spake.

After two days of search and rescue missions over his last known position in enemy hostile territory, all searches for Pike were called off.

Over 44 years later, the Pike family continues to wait earnestly for answers. Spake, who spoke to service members and local veterans during a POW/MIA Recognition Day observance ceremony held at Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas, Sept. 13, described her mother's strength in raising three children as the family lived a life on hold.

“Mom would take me to the commissary with her to grocery shop while the older two were at school,” said Spake. “Repeatedly, I would run up and lift my arms to any man in those pristine dress whites screaming, ‘Daddy, Daddy.’ As time went on, that uniform was just about all I could remember of my father.”

Being among the Sailors and Marines in uniform and observing the local Navy chief petty officer selectees carry out the symbolic ceremony of the Fallen Comrade Table, Spake said she was reminded of the service and sacrifice each service member was willing to make by taking the oath.

Of those currently serving in the armed forces, Spake said, “Their sacrifice is paid in full, no matter their circumstances. Because of the military families who have gone before them, they be will not be forsaken. As a nation, we will fight to have them returned to the soil they fought to protect.”

Spake said her family has endured a life of uncertainty, complete with alleged reports of her father spotted later in Russia, hoax dog tags, to news crews entering her home so often to cover Thanksgivings and Christmases without her father that it became routine.

Most recently in 2015, her family was approached by scientists from the De-
and cope is to talk with those who knew her father. Naval aviators are often known as a tight-knit community, and those who flew with him have shared her father's stories, which has helped her piece his life experiences together to answer questions.

Directly after the ceremony, Spake was introduced to a gentleman who once flew with her father. Retired Navy Rear Adm. Jim Lair was the senior landing signal officer of Carrier Air Wing 11, responsible for the carrier landing work-ups for Pike's squadron at NAS Lemoore between 1970 and 1971. They flew together in joint training mission packages at NAS Fallon, Nevada, before the squadron's departure to Southeast Asia.

"I ran into 'Denny' probably four or five times a week," said Lair. "He was still a nugget on his first cruise in '70 and '71, but he was a very good aviator."

Both Spake and Lair said they were glad for the opportunity to share a few moments to talk about her father.

"Hearing about the man he was and the friend he was makes me proud," said Spake. "It helps me connect the dots and begin to color in some details that I would never have otherwise."

Bridger explained that the POW experience is a story of the power of traditional American values. It was those deeply held beliefs that the service members brought with them into the camps that allowed them to survive.

That’s what 2,232 days as a prisoner in the infamous Hanoi Hilton taught him.

“America’s prisoners of war in Vietnam quickly learned that the desperate, crushing environment of a POW camp can destroy the mind and the body, but it cannot touch the values of a good heart and spirit,” Bridger said.

Bridger explained how their captors continuously attempted to exploit POWs to sway public opinion and discredit the United States. He said that despite being brutally tortured for weeks on end to comply with anti-war propaganda — to include signing amnesty agreements — the prisoners did not yield.

“No military information of any significance was given, and 100 percent of the American prisoners walked into the torture chambers rather than sign on the dotted line,” he said.

Bridger spoke about the period of “re-education” that was designed to break the prisoners’ will to resist.

“Re-education consisted of bombarding us with anti-war broadcasts, showering us with anti-war literature and showing anti-war movies and reading anti-war letters,” Bridger said.

He explained that the physical abuse occurred primarily in the first two years of captivity. That was followed by several years of psychological pressures — threats of more torture, isolation, abandonment and removal. Camp authority figures also read letters of divorce from prisoners’ wives, Bridger said, in an attempt to destroy their sense of self-esteem.

“Not all of us were able to handle the trials and tribulations of POW life precisely the same. Some of us were walking on the thin edge of sanity.”
He spoke of one service member, who was tortured so badly that he was lost touch with reality. His captors called him "faker" and refused to provide any treatment. "We had to hold this young man down on the concrete bed twice a day. We cut off the air flow to his nose, forcing him to breathe through his mouth so we can cram food down his throat to keep him alive," Bridger said. "We were not about to let this young man perish while we could care for his life."

He spoke of Navy Capt. Jeremiah Denton, who was beaten into reading a confession on a North Vietnamese broadcast. Using POW code, he repeatedly blinked the word "torture," which Bridger said was understood by the American intelligence community. Bridger said this was just one of many examples of how American POWs thwarted propaganda efforts through stubborn refusal to cooperate.

"Would you believe we had some absolutely terrific resisters because they were obstinate people? In other words, these individuals did not want to be told what to do, whether by a legitimate senior officer or NCO," he said. "They darn sure didn’t want to be told by the camp authority."

While Bridger was being interrogated, he was asked how fast his fighter jet could fly. At first, he merely said "very fast." He was asked a second time and then said "200 miles an hour."

"He turns to me and says, 'You lie. I'm not allowed to fly that fast,'" he said.

While the POWs shared no information with the North Vietnamese government, to each other they were like open books. Bridger said to stave off boredom they would talk about everything — from home construction to thermodynamics. He said that they spent years with their ears pressed against three-foot-thick concrete walls, listening to the lessons from fellow subject-matter experts through tap code. Bridger said that when they returned home and attended college, many of these former prisoners were able to excel in academia.

"Never underestimate the power of the human spirit and never underestimate the power of knowledge," he said.

Bridger remained on stage after his speech to field a few questions from the
Bridger, who was released from captivity in March 1973, was asked if he ever returned to Vietnam. He said that 55 of them would make a trip to Vietnam again, and he told a story about one of his friends who took a tour of the prison camp. The guide was providing some misinformation about how the POWs were fed three meals a day and allowed to play sports. Bridger said his friend set them straight on the facts.

“The guide asked, ‘Who are you and how can you say that?’ and my friend said, ‘Because that was my room right there.’ And he took over the tour,” Bridger said. “The tour guide said, ‘I didn’t know.’”

This professional development session was hosted by the U.S. Army Garrison - Fort Drum command team of Col. Bryan Laske and Command Sgt. Maj. Kristopher Cook.

Laske said that presentation served as a way for Fort Drum Soldiers and Civilians to learn from Bridger’s experience so that they would never have to say “I didn’t know.”

“It is an absolute privilege to have him here today,” Laske told the audience. “We talk about resiliency in the Army today, but in his day they talked about surviving. He has a lot of great lessons for us to learn and a wealth of knowledge to pass on.”

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PHOTO BY MIKE STRASSER


Saluting all of our Military on Veterans Day

Peggy Breeden

Swap Sheet

We are grateful to those who have served our country so courageously and continue to serve. Thank You!
Raleigh, N.C. (NNS) -- On October 13th, the Navy celebrated its 241st birthday.

This year’s theme, “America’s Sailor. For 241 Years: Tough, Bold, and Ready” echoes the legacy of honor, courage, and commitment Sailors have kept and passed down since 1775. In the Campbell family, this legacy has been passed down for three generations, from father to son to grandson.

The Navy tradition in the Campbell family began with Ronald Campbell. He served as a machinist’s mate during World War II, 1942-1948.

World War II was a period of tremendous advancement for the Navy. Marked by technological innovation and the unyielding patriotism of the tough, young Sailors who had been drafted to serve during the war, this era saw America’s Navy become the greatest the world had ever known.

Ronald Campbell’s son, David Campbell, watched and admired his father’s toughness and loyalty to his country and family.

“Everybody has a hero,” said David. “Mine was my father. He grew up in poverty; they didn’t have much, but they had a moral code. They didn’t rob and steal, and he was taught to protect the weak. This is the moral code my dad lived by as a man and a Sailor, and they’re the principles that I was raised on.”

David admired his father so much he decided to follow in his footsteps.

“My Dad served; it was an honorable profession, so I wanted to serve,” he said.

December 1964, during the Vietnam War, David enlisted in the Navy. He proudly served as a machinist’s mate, just as his father had done 16 years before.

The Vietnam War was not like any war America had ever fought and it brought with it new adversity. Many Americans opposed the war, people questioned whether the draft and the war itself was ethical. Pictures and video footage depicting the horrors of war could be seen on every news outlet in the country. Still, David Campbell boldly served his country during the war and continued to serve after it ended for a total of 29 years, achieving the rank of commander.

“Family and duty to your country is what it’s about,” David said.

Though he followed in his father’s footsteps, he didn’t necessarily push his own son, Jonathan Campbell, to do the same.
“I wanted him to go to college and continue his education after high school,” said David. “I didn’t want him doing everything the hard way like me. If he did join (the military), I told him not to do it just because it’s something to do; do it because you want to serve.”

Not only did his son want to serve, but he wanted to serve in the Navy as a machinist’s mate. So just as his father had done 44 years before and as his grandfather had done 22 years before that, in December of 2008, Jonathan enlisted in the Navy as a machinist’s mate.

“I joined the Navy because it’s something that I felt I needed to do,” said Jonathan. “I watched the service members come back home from Iraq and Afghanistan, and I decided that I should serve and give back to my country. It’s a family tradition.”

Jonathan said he doesn’t plan on separating from the Navy until he reaches maximum retirement age. Having watched his father serve and having heard stories about his grandfather’s service in the Navy, he learned the meaning of commitment. His loyalty and readiness to serve is part of the Navy legacy and his family legacy. In essence, Navy heritage is Campbell family heritage.

“Traits that the Navy probably put in my father, like good work ethic, I see those in myself now,” Jonathan said. “My dad instilled those traits in me. If my kids want to serve, I will fully support them. Service to others is more important than anything else, and that’s what I want to make sure my kids understand. This is a family tradition for us.”

Through World War II, the Vietnam War, and the modern wars in the Middle East, each Campbell has boldly carried with him an unwavering commitment to service.

Tough, bold, and ready -- these are traits that helped build generations of Campbell boys into the men their fathers raised them to be, and they are the characteristics which have defined America’s Sailors for 241 years.

As we celebrate the Navy’s 241st birthday, the Campbell family reminds us that the strength of Navy families is part of the foundation on which the toughness, boldness, and readiness of America’s Sailors is built.

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On Veterans Day nationwide, Baskin Robbins is donating 11 cents USO for every scoop sold. Stop by!
My sincere gratitude to those brave patriots who defended our country.

My heartfelt appreciation to those heroes who are currently fighting to protect our freedoms.

Congressman Kevin McCarthy

PAID FOR BY KEVIN MCCARTHY FOR CONGRESS.