



2018



AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER

**VETERANS CONFERENCE & HONORS**  
AND NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

OCTOBER 25-27 ★ 21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL ★ WASHINGTON, DC



WORLD WAR II  
VETERANS COMMITTEE



*Saluting those  
who served.*

*We honor the men and women of the United States Armed Forces who have sacrificed so much to protect our freedom. Northrop Grumman salutes the 2018 American Valor Honorees.*

**THE VALUE OF PERFORMANCE.**

***NORTHROP GRUMMAN***

The Directors of the American Veterans Center express their gratitude to the following organizations and individuals for sponsoring the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference & *American Valor: A Salute to Our Heroes*. Their generous support has enabled the American Veterans Center to acknowledge the tremendous sacrifices of our military in defense of liberty throughout the three day event to Americans young and old, culminating in *American Valor: A Salute to Our Heroes*.

In addition, the generosity of our sponsors has allowed for the attendance and participation of distinguished veterans from World War II to the present day and members of their family, as well as students from each of the military service academies, ROTC and JROTC students, active duty personnel and young wounded warriors. Their support is greatly appreciated.

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*Sponsor of "Leading Military Women: Commanders and Trailblazers in the U.S. Military" & "The Medal of Honor" discussions*

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AND

Thank you to Harris Teeter and Subway for sponsoring the conference lunches

Republic National Distributing Company, Dogfish Head Alehouse and Breakthru Beverage for providing wine and spirits  
Giant Food, Harris Teeter, A La Carte Catering, Safeway, Starbucks, Trader Joe's, and Walgreens Pharmacy for their in-kind support

WATCH THE 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKER SESSIONS LIVE ONLINE AT MILITARY TIMES AND MILITARY.COM.  
AND A VERY SPECIAL "THANK YOU" TO THE STAFF OF THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES FOUNDATION FOR BEING SUCH GRACIOUS HOSTS.



## LOCATIONS OF EVENTS:

**The Wounded Warrior Experience  
& Special Opening Reception  
AVC Conference Speaker Sessions**

The National Archives  
William G. McGowan Theater  
700 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20408  
*Business Casual*

**“An Evening Reception  
Honoring Our Veterans”**

Friday Evening Reception - October 26  
The Royal Norwegian Embassy  
Ambassador’s Residence  
3401 Massachusetts Ave,  
Washington, DC 20007  
*Business Attire*

**AMERICAN VALOR: A Salute to Our Heroes**

The Omni Shoreham Hotel  
Regency Ballroom  
2500 Calvert St., NW  
Washington, DC 20008  
*Black Tie Attire*

Watch **AMERICAN VALOR:**  
**A Salute to Our Heroes**

on ABC/NBC/CBS/Fox Stations Nationwide  
*check local listings*

Watch the 21st Annual Conference  
panels **LIVE** on:

**MilitaryTimes**

**Military.com**



Watch **The Wounded Warrior  
Experience** on Veterans Day -  
Sunday, November 11 at 3 PM EST:



and worldwide American Forces Network



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:  
TIMES & TOPICS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

# THE WOUNDED WARRIOR EXPERIENCE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25

6:15 PM - "THE WOUNDED WARRIOR EXPERIENCE"

WILLIAM G. MCGOWAN THEATER - THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

BUS TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FROM THE OMNI SHOREHAM TO NATIONAL ARCHIVES

*Presented by Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation*

Featuring service members who have been wounded in the line of duty, sharing their inspiring stories of recovery and determination, along with resources available to service members transitioning from the military to the private sector.



*Featuring:*

**Staff Sergeant Robert Bartlett** - U.S. Army scout sniper, wounded by an Iranian-designed Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) while serving in Iraq, 2005.

**Specialist Dillon Cannon & Patti Cannon** - Serving with the 571st Military Police Company in Iraq, SPC Cannon was paralyzed by a sniper bullet; today, his mother Patti serves as his primary Caregiver.

**HM2 Joshua Chiarini** - U.S. Navy Corpsman awarded the Silver Star and wounded in action saving Marines on combat patrol in Iraq, 2006.

**Staff Sergeant Alex Jauregui & Isa Jauregui** - A combat Soldier with the 2-508th PIR in Afghanistan, SSG Jauregui was severely wounded by an IED; today, his wife Mrs. Isa Jauregui serves as primary Caregiver for Alex & their three children.

**Jim Martinson** - Veteran of Vietnam who lost both legs to a landmine, has since become an avid skier, snowboarder, and golfer; representing Military Order of the Purple Heart.

**Sergeant Juan Perez** - Wounded by an IED in Iraq in 2005, causing severe head trauma and TBI, has recovered to serve as Assistant Director and Senior Team Lead of The Coalition to Salute America's Heroes 'Heroes Thanking Heroes Program.'

**Captain Leslie Nicole Smith** - U.S. Army officer with 11 years of service and two tours in Bosnia, having been assigned to the Nuclear Biological Chemical Corps as a Public Affairs Officer, was diagnosed with a blood infection likely due to exposure to a chemical agent or toxin, resulting in the loss of her left leg and leaving her legally blind.

**Staff Sergeant J.D. Williams** - U.S. Army veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan, serving with 1-502nd Mohawk Infantry Scouts when wounded by an IED, severely damaging his left arm, and costing him his right arm and both legs. Now an ESPN radio host, and founder of Mohawk Outdoors, an organization supporting wounded warriors in outdoor pursuits.

Hosted by **Jennifer Griffin**, National Security Correspondent, Fox News Channel.



*This program will be filmed for television  
broadcast nationwide this Veterans Day -  
November 11 -  
at 3 PM Eastern on Fox Business Network.*

**EXCLUSIVE POST-EVENT RECEPTION - 8:00 PM  
THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES -  
ROTUNDA FOR THE CHARTERS OF FREEDOM**

Immediately following The Wounded Warrior Experience will be a special reception in the National Archives' Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom, featuring rare private access to our nation's founding documents, including the **Constitution**, the **Declaration of Independence**, and the **Bill of Rights**.



## FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26

SPEAKER SESSIONS AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES – SESSIONS BEGIN AT 8:30AM

BUS TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FROM THE OMNI SHOREHAM TO NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### 8:30 AM - LEADING MILITARY WOMEN: COMMANDERS AND TRAILBLAZERS IN THE U.S. MILITARY

Distinguished military women from across the services, sharing their lessons and experiences on leadership.

WITH SUPPORT FROM NORTHROP GRUMMAN CORPORATION

*Featuring:*

**Elinor Otto** - A 'Rosie the Riveter' building airplanes in World War II starting in 1942; after the war, she returned to work building planes until recently retiring at age 95.

**Major Heather Penney** - Among the first women to apply to become an Air Force fighter pilot, served two tours of duty in Iraq. Noted for her mission serving with the DC National Guard on September 11, 2001, where she and Marc H. Sasseville flew to intercept the hijacked United Flight 93 before it could reach the terrorists' target of Washington, DC.

**Amber Smith** - U.S. Army OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter pilot and air mission commander in the 101st Airborne Division, flew two tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Recently, Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Outreach in Public Affairs.

**Major Katelyn Van Dam** - Marine Corps attack helicopter pilot, currently a White House Fellow. A 2005 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and veteran of operations in Afghanistan and the Horn of Africa/Gulf of Aden.

### 9:15 AM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

*Featuring:*

**General Larry O. Spencer** - 37th Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force.

### 9:55 AM - LEADERSHIP: FROM MILITARY SERVICE TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Perspectives on leadership, ethics and character from military officers who have transitioned to successful careers in the private sector.

*Featuring:*

**LTC Paul Cali** - Served for 23 years total in the Marine Corps and Reserves. Currently, a Captain with American Airlines. Also serves as a Professional Standard where he resolves conflicts between pilots.

**John Flynn** - USAFA graduate and former Director of Operations, Wing Executive Officer and Flight Commander with the 60th Air Mobility Wing. Currently, Vice President & Chief of Staff to the Chairman & CEO, MGM Resorts International.

**Dr. J. Phillip London** - USNA graduate and retired Navy captain, former President and CEO of CACI for 23 years and current Executive Chairman. Author of *Our Good Name* and *Character: The Ultimate Success Factor*.

**Heather Vanner** - Former Military Intelligence Officer with the United States Army, serving with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division. Currently Program Manager, Cyber & Intelligence Mission Solutions Division, Northrop Grumman Corporation. Moderated by **Barry Steelman**, USNA '70, Vietnam Veteran, retired trial attorney and AVC Advisory Board Member.

### 10:40 AM - BREAK

Screening of selections from **THE VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM** from the **Department of Veterans Affairs**

### 11:00 AM - AMERICAN ICONS: THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

The first African American combat pilots in U.S. Military history, marking the 75th anniversary of their first deployment into World War II  
WITH SUPPORT FROM AMERICAN AIRLINES

*Featuring:*

**Lt. Col. Harold Brown** – Combat pilot of 30 missions, shot down over enemy territory on March 14, 1945.

**Lt. Col. Robert Friend** – Veteran of 142 combat missions with the Tuskegee Airmen, and wingman to the unit's leader & the first African American general in the Air Force, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.

**Lt. Col. George Hardy** - Combat pilot of 21 missions over Germany with the Red Tails; later flew 45 combat missions in Korea, and 70 combat missions in Vietnam.

**Lt. Col. James H. Harvey III** – Pilot with the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, flew on the team that won the military's first 'Top Gun' contest in 1949. The first African American jet fighter pilot to fly in the Korean War.

**Lt. Col. Alexander Jefferson** – Combat pilot, downed over France on his 19th mission; held POW in the Stalag Luft III camp.

**Col. Charles McGee** – Recipient of three Distinguished Flying Crosses, would go on to set an Air Force record of 409 combat missions flown during WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

**Lt. Col. Harry Stewart** – Amassed one of the most distinguished records of any pilot with the 'Red Tails,' shooting down three German fighters in one day, and awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

### 12:00 PM - LUNCH

Screening of **THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS PAPER ROUTE**, the story of *Stars and Stripes*.

## 12:50 PM - THE LAST ACE

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE INDEPENDENCE FUND

**Brig. Gen. R. Steve Ritchie, USAF (Ret)** - The only Air Force "Ace" pilot from the Vietnam War, recipient of the Air Force Cross and the Silver Star (4 awards).

## 1:35 PM - ON THE FRONT LINES: SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN TODAY'S MILITARY

A rare appearance by active duty members of the United States military's elite Special Operations Forces who have served on the front lines of combat in Afghanistan and Iraq.

*Participants TBA.*

Moderated by **Lieutenant General John Mulholland, Jr., USA (Ret)**, former Associate Director of the CIA for Military Affairs, Deputy Commander of United States Special Operations Command, with commands of special operations task forces in Afghanistan and Iraq.

## 2:20 PM - DEFENSE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Issues and challenges facing America's military and security forces in the 21st Century, presented by The Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security.

**Professor Ronald Marks**, Chairman, Intelligence Program – Cyber Security

**Associate Professor Michael Sharnoff, Ph.D.**, Director, Strategic Regional Initiatives – The Middle East

**Associate Professor Preston McLaughlin, Colonel USMC (Retired)** – Indo-Pacific and South China Sea

**Associate Professor Yuval Weber, Ph.D.**, Kennan Institute Associate Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies – Russia

Moderated by **Thomas Cynkin, Ph.D.**, Vice President for External Affairs, The Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security

## **EXCLUSIVE EVENT - FRIDAY EVENING**

*HONORING OUR VETERANS: A SPECIAL RECEPTION AT THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY  
AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE - HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR KÅRE R. AAS - 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM*

BUSES FROM THE OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL DEPART AT 6:15 PM

## **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27**

**SPEAKER SESSIONS AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES – SESSIONS BEGIN AT 8:30AM**

BUS TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FROM THE OMNI SHOREHAM TO NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## 8:30 AM - THE GREATEST GENERATION: AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II

**Colonel Frank Cohn** - Born in Germany, escaped to the U.S. one week before Kristallnacht. Drafted into the U.S. Army in 1943, he returned to Europe serving in Army intelligence during WWII.

**Jack Holder** - U.S. Navy flight engineer at the attack on Pearl Harbor and Battle of Midway, flying 58 missions over Guadalcanal and the Solomons; later flying 56 missions of anti-submarine patrol over the English Channel.

**Donald Irwin** - U.S. Navy veteran, present at the attack on Pearl Harbor and serving in the Battle of Midway, the Marshall Islands, and the Solomon Islands, before his ship was sunk by a kamikaze off Okinawa, April 6, 1945.

**Colonel Arnald Gabriel** - Infantryman with the 29th Division, landing on Omaha Beach on D-Day - June 6, 1944. From 1964-1985, served as Commander and Conductor of the United States Air Force Band, United States Air Force Symphony Orchestra.

Moderated by **D. Craig Horn**, USAF officer, 1962-69, District 68 House of Representatives, North Carolina General Assembly.

## 9:15 AM - OPENING REMARKS

*Featuring:*

**The Honorable David S. Ferriero** - 10th Archivist of the United States, served as a Navy Corpsman during the Vietnam War.

## 9:30 AM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

*Featuring:*

**The Honorable Chuck Hagel** - 24th United States Secretary of Defense, former U.S. Senator, and decorated veteran of Vietnam.

## 10:10 AM - LEGENDS OF THE AIR

**Lt. Colonel Richard E. Cole** – Co-pilot alongside Jimmy Doolittle on the legendary Doolittle Raid of April 18, 1942. The last survivor of the 80 Doolittle Raiders.

**Commander Dean 'Diz' Laird** - The only U.S. Navy 'ace' pilot to have shot down German and Japanese planes in World War II.

**Felix Rodriguez** - A native of Cuba and Cuban exile recruited by the CIA for the Bay of Pigs Invasion; later served in Vietnam and in Central America.

Moderated by **Jeff Cathey**, Naval aviator with 29 years of service with commands including two fleet squadrons and a carrier wing in USS *Enterprise*; veteran of 100 combat missions in Operation Urgent Fury, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

10:55 AM - BREAK

Screening of selections from THE VETERANS LEGACY PROGRAM from the **Department of Veterans Affairs**

11:10 AM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

*Featuring:*

**General John M. 'Jack' Keane** - 29th U.S. Army Vice Chief of Staff, and veteran of Vietnam, serving as a paratrooper and receiving the Silver Star. Later served in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

11:50 AM - FROM D-DAY TO THE EAGLE'S NEST

*A conversation with:*

**Colonel Edward Shames** - Platoon commander and the last living officer from E Co., 2nd Bn. 506th PIR, 101st Airborne - the famed "Band of Brothers."

12:30 PM - LUNCH

Special screening of DOOLITTLE'S RAIDERS: A FINAL TOAST, the AVC's Emmy-winning Public Television documentary.

1:20 PM - WITNESS TO HISTORY

U.S. military veterans who played a role in iconic and monumental moments in American history.

WITH SUPPORT FROM VETERANS UNITED HOME LOANS

**Clint Hill** - U.S. Army veteran and Secret Service agent serving five U.S. Presidents, from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Gerald Ford. Best known for his act of bravery on November 22, 1963, rushing to shield Mrs. Kennedy and the already stricken President Kennedy with his body after the first shots rang out.

**James Leavelle** - U.S. Navy sailor aboard the USS *Whitney* during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Later, as a homicide detective in Dallas, TX, was the first to interrogate Lee Harvey Oswald following his arrest.

**Colonel Vern Pike** - The first officer in charge of 'Checkpoint Charlie' the night the Berlin Wall went up in 1961; participated in the exchange of Francis Gary Powers and Colonel Abel in 1962 in Berlin. In November, 1963, tasked with escorting the remains of President Kennedy from Andrews Air Force Base to Bethesda Naval Hospital, then to the funeral home and White House. Veteran of Vietnam.

Moderated by **Brent D. Glass**, Director Emeritus, Smithsonian National Museum of American History.

2:00 PM - THE MEDAL OF HONOR

Recipients of our nation's highest military award.

WITH SUPPORT FROM NORTHROP GRUMMAN CORPORATION

**SFC Ronald Rosser** - U.S. Army soldier awarded the Medal of Honor for leading an assault on a fortified hill near Ponggilli during the Korean War.

**Sgt. 1st Class Melvin Morris** - Recipient of the Medal of Honor for valor in Vietnam. Sgt. 1st Class Morris is one of the "Valor 24" - 24 men among more than 6500 who, following a lengthy review, were selected to be upgraded to the Medal of Honor on March 18, 2014.

Moderated by **Michael G. Caldwell**, Chief Operating Officer of the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation.

2:40 PM - VALOR ON THE FRONT LINES

Decorated and distinguished veterans from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Major Katie Higgins Cook** - U.S. Naval Academy graduate and Marine Corps pilot, veteran of missions in Afghanistan and Africa, and the first female pilot to fly with the famed Blue Angels.

**Staff Sergeant Shilo Harris** - Cavalry scout with the 10th Mountain Division in Iraq, survived an IED attack; after more than 75 surgeries, now a motivational speaker.

**Lieutenant Jason Redman** - U.S. Navy SEAL, wounded in a raid on a high value target in Iraq in 2007; author of the acclaimed memoir, *The Trident: The Forging and Reforging of a Navy SEAL Officer*.

## *Signature Event*

THE AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER'S

# AMERICAN VALOR

A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES



THE REGENCY BALLROOM - OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL

2500 CALVERT ST., NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20008  
RECEPTION: 5:30 PM

DINNER & TELEVISION BROADCAST FILMING: 7:00 PM

# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**Lieutenant Colonel Harold Brown** graduated from Tuskegee in May of 1944 and fought overseas as a combat pilot with the 332nd Fighter Group. On his 30<sup>th</sup> mission he was shot down and held as a POW until he was liberated by Patton in 1945. He served in U.S. Air Force for 23 years before going on to a successful career in the community college system in Ohio. He earned his PhD in 1973. In August of 2017 the University of Alabama Press released his autobiography: [Keep Your Airspeed Up: The Story of a Tuskegee Airman](#), co-authored by Harold H. Brown and Marsha S. Bordner.



**Master Chief Special Warfare Operator Edward C. Byers, Jr.** joined the Navy in September 1998, and spent four years as a Hospital Corpsman. In 2002, Byers attended Basic Underwater Demolition SEAL (BUD/S) training and graduated with Class 242. Byers was then assigned to an East Coast SEAL Team. Byers has 11 deployments with nine combat tours. His personal decorations include the Bronze Star with Valor (five awards), the Purple Heart (two awards), the Joint Service Commendation Medal with Valor, the Navy Commendation Medal (three awards, one with Valor), the Combat Action ribbon (two awards), and the Good Conduct Medal (five awards). Byers was awarded the Medal of Honor from President Obama for his efforts during a hostage rescue while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012.



**Colonel Frank Cohn** was born in Breslau, Germany and at age 13, fled the Nazi regime with his parents, in 1938, to New York. He was drafted into the US Army in September 1943. He fought in Europe as an enlisted Intelligence Agent during the Battle of the Bulge, the Rheinland campaigns and met the Soviets at the Elbe near the end of the war. During the Occupation, he served as Sergeant of the Guard at the Oberursel Intelligence Center, guarding the war criminals tried in the 2nd Nuremberg trial. He stayed in the Reserve while completing College at CCNY with a BSS Degree in Psychology and Education. He accepted a Regular Army Commission as a distinguished ROTC graduate, serving five overseas tours - three in Germany, one in Korea and a wartime tour in Vietnam, as a Military Police officer. He retired from the position of Chief of Staff, Military District of Washington in November 1978.



**Lieutenant Colonel Richard E. Cole** was born in Dayton and completed two years at Ohio University before enlisting as a flying cadet in November 1940. He completed training in July 1941 and was the co-pilot for Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle on the first plane off the carrier *Hornet*. He remained in the CBI until June 1943, flying cargo from India to China. He returned to the CBI in October 1943 and flew with the AAF's famed 1st Air Commandos in support of Allied operations behind Japanese lines. He had several operational assignments, including operations advisor to the Venezuelan Air Force, before retiring to Texas in 1967.



**Major Katie Cook** attended the United States Naval Academy, graduating in 2008, and received an MA in International Security from Georgetown in 2009. A Marine aviator assigned to VMGR-252, she deployed to Afghanistan in 2012, then Africa with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force Crisis Response (SPMAGTF-CR). Katie joined the U.S. Navy Blue Angels in September 2014 as the first female pilot in the history of the famed demonstration squadron. She served as the Aviation Safety Officer followed by the Officer in Charge of the C-130, affectionately known as "Fat Albert". During her time with the team, she was featured by several national-level media outlets including "Fox & Friends", "CBS This Morning", and "The Today Show". In February 2017, Katie reported for duty as the Airfield Operations Company Commander with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271 at Landing Field Bogue, NC.



**Lieutenant Colonel Robert Friend** joined the aviation training program at Tuskegee, Alabama in October 1942. Upon receiving his wings as a military pilot he was commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant and following several weeks of transition into tactical aircraft was assigned to the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group which was to be stationed in the European Theatre of Operations. He would become the primary wing-man to Col. Benjamin O. Davis – Commander of the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group. Bob also served as Operations Officer for the 301<sup>st</sup> squadron and was the last Operations Officer of 332<sup>nd</sup> fighter group. Bob continued his education by obtaining a degree in Astro Physics under the Air Force Institute of Technology, and many other specialized management courses completing the UCLA graduate Business School, and the US Air Force Program Management Course, Special Weapons School and Air War College.



**Lieutenant Colonel George Hardy** entered active duty in July of 1943. He began Aviation Cadet Training at Tuskegee Army Air Field in Alabama, and graduated as a pilot in September 1944. In March 1945 was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron of the 332nd Fighter Group in Italy. He flew 21 combat missions over Germany. In 1950, he flew 45 combat missions over Korea in B-29 aircraft. In 1970, Hardy was transferred to the 18th Special Operations Squadron in Vietnam as a pilot in AC-119K Gunships. He served as Operating Location Commander at Udorn Air Base in Thailand and also at Danang Air Base in Vietnam, and flew 70 combat missions. After returning from Vietnam, he retired from the Air Force with the rank of Lt. Colonel. Decorations include the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 11 Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Commendation Medal with one Oak Leaf Cluster.

# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**Staff Sergeant Shilo Harris** enlisted as a Cavalry Scout in the US Army shortly after September 11, 2001. On February 19, 2007, while serving in Iraq, Harris' armored vehicle was struck by an IED. The explosion injured the driver and ended the lives of three of his fellow soldiers. Shilo survived but with severe third degree burns on 35% of his body. The severity of the burns meant the loss of Shilo's ears, the tip of his nose and three fingers. The explosion fractured his left collarbone and C-7 vertebrae. The devastating injuries required that Shilo remain in a medically induced coma for 48 days; his recovery has involved more than 75 surgeries. Shilo also struggled from PTSD. He reflects on his time in the service and his injuries: "Everything in life is a gift. Sometimes it may not be the gift you want but you realize that your challenges are a new beginning."



**Lieutenant Colonel James H. Harvey III** was a member of the 332nd Fighter Group, the world famous "Tuskegee Airmen." He graduated from Flying School at Tuskegee Army Air Field as a second lieutenant on 16 October 1944. Following graduation, he was assigned to the 99th Fighter Squadron, Godman Field, Kentucky, where he flew the P-47. In 1949, the men of the 332nd Fighter Group selected three primary members to participate in the first ever USAF Weapons Meet at Nellis Air Force Base. The team from the 332nd placed first, winning the meet flying F-47Ns against other more advanced aircraft. Harvey gained combat experience in the Korean War. He was the military's first black jet fighter pilot to fly in Korean airspace. For his service in Korea he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross along with multiple Air Medals.



**Clint Hill** is a U.S. Army veteran and former United States Secret Service agent who served under five U.S. presidents; from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Gerald Ford. Hill is best known for his notable act of bravery while in the presidential motorcade on November 22, 1963 when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. During the assassination, Hill ran from the car immediately behind the presidential limousine, leaped onto the back of it and shielded Mrs. Kennedy and the already stricken president with his body as the car raced to Parkland Memorial Hospital. This action was documented in the Zapruder film. Hill is the last surviving person who was in the presidential limousine that arrived at Parkland Hospital.



**Jack Holder** joined the U.S. Navy in 1940 at the age of 18. After Aviation Machinist School, he transferred to PBV Squadron VP-26 at Pearl Harbor in December, 1940. One year later, he was on hand for the attack that plunged the U.S. into World War II. He would go on to serve at Coral Sea and Midway, and fly patrol missions over Guadalcanal. In 1943, he transferred to San Diego where he helped form a B-24 Squadron, VB-103. After service in Newfoundland and Argentina, he transferred again to Britain, flying missions over the English Channel and the coast of France. He was honorably discharged in 1948 as a First Class Aviation Machinist Mate, and awarded two Distinguished Flying Crosses and five Air Medals, along with several other decorations.



**Donald Irwin** joined the Navy in June, 1941 at the age of 17. He reported for duty on the USS Enterprise in Oct. 1941 in Pearl Harbor. They were conducting maneuvers in the Pacific but were held out to sea by a storm, arriving back to Pearl Harbor the day after the attack. Enterprise was involved in battles of the Marshall Islands, Wake Island, and rendezvoused with the USS Hornet to help with the Doolittle Raid. They were later involved in the battle of Midway, and supported the amphibious assault on the Solomon Islands and Guadalcanal. Aboard USS Calhoun, he helped support the invasion of Iwo Jima, and witnessed the raising of both flags from aboard ship. In March of 1945 they were one of the 22 picket ships to enter the battle for Okinawa. They were attacked by kamikaze and sunk, losing 32 of their shipmates.



**Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Jefferson** received orders to report to Tuskegee Army Air Field to begin flight training in 1943. Receiving his pilot's wings and officers commission, he was assigned to the 332rd "Red Tail" Fighter group near Foggia, Italy, flying the P-51 Mustang. Assigned to a fighter escort wing protecting bombing missions of the US 15th Air Force, his job was to attack key ground targets and guard the bombing mission against enemy Nazi Luftwaffe fighters. During his 19th mission over Toulon, southern France on August 12, 1944, while attacking a radar installation he was shot down. He was sent to prisoner of war camp Stalag Luft III in Poland. After the Russian Army entered Poland, the prisoners were marched to Munich by the Germans, where they were freed by Patton's US Third Army. Decades later, he was awarded the Purple Heart by President George W. Bush for being wounded while shot down.



**Commander Dean 'Diz' Laird** is the only Navy Ace who achieved air victories over both German and Japanese enemy planes during World War II. He's qualified in 99 different aircraft, served in three wars, and choreographed and led the second attack on Pearl Harbor in 1969 for 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox's movie Tora! Tora! Tora! He enlisted in the Navy just 12 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Once deployed, Diz flew 175 combat and training missions; served on 12 different carriers; flew in the Navy's first jet squadron in 1947; was the first person to land a jet powered aircraft aboard the USS Midway; and has the most arrested landings on a straight deck carrier. His total number of military flight time hours is 8,285, while performing 520 carrier landings. Diz is the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with 3 Gold Stars, and 2 Presidential Unit Citations.

# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**James Robert "Jim" Leavelle** served in the United States Navy during WWII, and was a sailor on board the USS *Whitney* during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Following his military service, he joined the Dallas Police Department in 1950. He would later become a homicide detective, and was the first to interrogate Lee Harvey Oswald following his arrest after the assassination of President Kennedy. Leavelle was escorting Oswald through the Dallas Police Headquarters basement when Oswald was shot by Jack Ruby. In a series of iconic photographs taken throughout the Oswald shooting, Leavelle is pictured next to Oswald wearing a light-colored suit and matching hat.



**Dr. J. Phillip London** graduated from the Naval Academy in 1959, and later the Naval Postgraduate School in 1967, earning a bachelor of science in naval engineering and a master of science in operations research. He spent 12 years on active duty during the Cold War, serving during the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962. Dr. London served several deployments throughout the Caribbean, the North Atlantic, and the Mediterranean, and left active duty in 1971 to join the U.S. Naval Reserve, retiring as a captain in 1987. He holds a doctorate in business administration from George Washington University. He held the position of President and CEO of CACI for 23 years, and is currently Executive Chairman. He is the author of *Our Good Name* and *Character: The Ultimate Success Factor*.



**Ronald A. Marks** serves as the Chair of the Intelligence program at the Daniel Morgan Graduate School. Ronald "Ron" Marks is a 33-year veteran of the U.S. national security community. A former CIA official, Ron was a clandestine service officer and a Senate Liaison for five DCIs. Since leaving government, Ron has been a successful senior defense contractor and a software executive. Ron is also a Senior Instructor with The Intelligence and Security Academy lecturing on the process of national security budgeting and intelligence community structure.



**Colonel Charles McGee** arrived at Tuskegee Army Airfield on November 24, 1942, earning his wings and commission as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant on June 30, 1943. By February 1944, McGee was stationed in Italy, where he conducted harbor and coastal patrols, strafed targets on the ground, protected bombers in the air, and performed fighter sweeps against German targets. On August 24, McGee and two other Tuskegee Airmen each shot down enemy aircraft. McGee remained on active duty 30 years, becoming a command pilot with over 6,000 total flight hours, 1,151 of those in combat. He flew fighter aircraft combat tours in three major conflicts, completing 405 missions. He is the only known fighter pilot who flew 100 or more combat missions in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.



**Colonel Preston McLaughlin** is an Associate Professor of National Security to the Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security. He also currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer for Aquilae Consulting Services, LLC. He previously served as the Deputy Program Manager for Operations and Support in the System High Corporation Support Team at DARPA's Security & Intelligence Directorate. Col. McLaughlin retired from active duty service following over 27 and a half years as a Marine Officer from 1983-2010. After retirement from the Marine Corps, Col. McLaughlin served on the Staff and as Adjunct Faculty of The Citadel and The Military College of SC.



**Sergeant First Class Melvin Morris** served during the Vietnam War as one of the very first soldiers to don the famous "Green Beret," authorized by President Kennedy to be worn by the Special Forces as a "symbol of excellence, a badge of courage, and a mark of distinction in the fight for freedom." In Chi Lang, he once took handfuls of grenades and went on a daring assault against enemy bunkers and fortified positions, destroying all on his way to recover a fallen soldier. "You don't leave soldier behind," he would recall thinking, Morris' actions that day would earn him the Distinguished Service Cross. His would become one of the 6,500 cases that were re-opened because of racial or ethnic discrimination, and one of 24 awarded the Medal of Honor in 2014.



**Elinor Otto** worked as a "Rosie the Riveter," riveting airplanes starting in 1942 during World War II - and kept right on at it until retiring 72 years later in 2014. The Rosie campaign started when the lack of young men volunteering for work because of the escalation of the war. All of the able-bodied men had starting to join the military in droves. Factories that once built cars and commercial planes were now building tanks and bombers. Otto started working in the Rohr Aircraft factory outside of San Diego, where she made 65 cents per hour assembling airplanes; 72 years later, she was still riveting C-17s at a plant in Long Beach, California.



**Major Heather Penney** served in the D.C. Air National Guard flying F-16s and G-100s; she has also served in the Air Force Reserve in the National Military Command Center. She has also lectured extensively on subjects such as Air Force capabilities and force structure; organizational command and control; reforming the defense personnel system; and other defense policy issues to a broad number of organizations, universities, and military institutions. On September 11, 2001, then-Lieutenant Penney and Marc H. Sasseville took off from Andrews Air Force Base to intercept the hijacked United Flight 93 before it could reach Washington, DC airspace. Due to the urgency, there was no time to arm their jets; thus, the pilots were prepared to ram the hijacked plane, if necessary, a decision spared by the passengers of Flight 93 who attempted to re-take control of the plane.

# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**Lieutenant Jason Redman** joined the Navy in 1992 and spent eight years as an enlisted SEAL. He was commissioned as a Naval SEAL Officer in 2004. Over the next four years, he completed combat deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2007, outside of Fallujah, Iraq, Lieutenant Redman's Assault Team came under heavy fire and he was severely wounded. Recovering at Bethesda Naval Medical Center, Redman authored and hung a bright orange sign on his door, which became a statement and symbol for wounded warriors everywhere. He is recipient of the Bronze Star Medal with Valor, the Purple Heart, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, two Combat Action Ribbons and the US Army Ranger tab, among other awards. He is author of *The Trident: The Forging and Reforging of a Navy SEAL Leader*.



**Brigadier General R. Steve Ritchie** is the only Air Force "ace" pilot of the air war in Vietnam. A veteran of more than 800 combat hours in the F-4 Phantom during 339 missions over Southeast Asia, Ritchie is the only American pilot to down five MiG-21s, the most sophisticated fighters in the North Vietnamese fleet. By the time he left active duty in 1974, Ritchie had been awarded the Air Force Cross, four Silver Stars, 10 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 25 Air Medals - making him the 30th most highly decorated individual in United States military history. He would rise to the rank of brigadier general in the Air Force Reserve and served in the Reagan administration.



**Felix Rodriguez** was recruited by the CIA following the Communist revolution in his native Cuba. Infiltrated into Cuba in advance of the Bay of Pigs Invasion, he would escape as a political exile following the invasion's failure. Returning to the U.S., he was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the U.S. Army by President Kennedy. In 1967-68, he served as an adviser in Bolivia, and part of the effort to capture the famed revolutionary Ernesto "Che" Guevara. From 1970-72, he served in Vietnam, as regional adviser for the Provisional Reconnaissance Unit in Region III. He has been awarded the Intelligence Star for Valor by the CIA, nine awards of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, and the Vietnamese Naval Medal of Honor.



**Sergeant First Class Ronald Rosser** joined the Army in 1946 at age 17 for a three-year term of service. After his brother was killed in the early stages of the Korean War, he re-enlisted. He requested to be sent into combat and was then deployed to Korea with the heavy mortar company of the 38th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division. On January 12, 1952, Rosser was acting as a forward observer with Company L's lead platoon during an assault on a heavily fortified hill. When the unit came under heavy fire, Rosser went forward three times and attacked alone, each time returning to friendly lines to gather more ammunition before charging the hill again. Though wounded, he helped carry injured soldiers to safety. For these actions, Rosser was awarded the Medal of Honor.



**Colonel Edward J. Shames** was born in Norfolk, Virginia and was in naval school when the United States entered World War II. He volunteered for the paratroopers in September 1942 and was assigned to I Company, 3rd Battalion of the 506th Parachute Infantry, 101st Airborne. Shames then transferred to HQ Company and, after receiving a battlefield commission at Carentan, joined Easy Company, now known as the Band of Brothers, as a second lieutenant after the Normandy invasion in July 1944.



**Dr. Michael Sharnoff** is an Associate Professor of Middle East Studies at the Daniel Morgan Graduate School and Director of the Regional Studies Program. Dr. Sharnoff is a senior analyst at Wikistrat, a geo-political risk consultancy firm, and his speaking engagements include appearances at the Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship Program and Wright Patterson Air Force Base.



**Amber Smith** is the president of Beacon Rock Strategies. She is the former Deputy Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (Outreach) in public affairs at the Pentagon to Defense Secretary Jim Mattis. Amber is the author of the best selling book, *Danger Close: My Epic Journey as a Combat Helicopter Pilot in Iraq and Afghanistan*. Amber is a former OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter pilot-in-command and air mission commander in the historic 101st Airborne Division. She is a combat veteran of both Iraq and Afghanistan. Amber frequently appears on national TV networks as a leading expert in defense, national security, and veterans affairs. She is a national speaker where she tells her story of perseverance and determination, lessons of leadership and communication, and achieving success under extreme pressure.



**Lieutenant Colonel Harry Stewart** enlisted in the US Army Air Corps as an Aviation Cadet at the outbreak of World War II. After completing his flight training at Tuskegee Army Air Field, Alabama, and while still in his teens, he was awarded pilot's wings and commissioned a Second Lieutenant. In November 1944, he was sent overseas to Italy, where he was assigned to the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group, sometimes referred to as the "Red Tails" and popularly known as the "Tuskegee Airmen". While in combat, he flew 43 long range bomber escort missions in the P-51 "Mustang" fighter plane. He was credited with destroying three enemy aircraft in aerial combat, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with six oak leaf clusters. In 1949, he distinguished himself as a member of the winning team of the first U.S. Air Force Fighter Gunnery Meet, better known as "Top Gun."

# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS



**Major Katelyn van Dam** is a Major in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. She served on active duty Marine for 10 years. In her last assignment, she served as a Staff Platoon Commander at The Basic School in Quantico, Virginia teaching new Marine officers basic tactics and leadership. Katelyn was an attack helicopter pilot who flew for Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 267, based out of Camp Pendleton, CA. During that time she deployed to conduct combat operations in Afghanistan and counter-piracy operations in the Horn of Africa/Gulf of Aden. Katelyn is a 2005 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. She is married to David van Dam, a decorated Marine combat veteran.



**Heather Vanner** commissioned as a US Army Officer after completing ROTC at Carnegie-Mellon University. She went on to serve as a Military Intelligence Officer with the 4th Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division for two years whereupon she received an honorable discharge. Heather is currently pursuing a MS in Analytics from Georgia Institute of Technology, building on her military and corporate experience. For the last 8 years, Heather has continued to serve her country through Northrop Grumman; managing a diverse portfolio of programs from Intelligence and Cyber, to software development and services, and training and development programs, while continuing to be an advocate for all veterans.



**Yuval Weber, Ph.D.**, is the Kennan Institute Associate Professor of Russian and Eurasian Studies and was the inaugural DMGS-Kennan Institute fellow. Prior to joining the faculty at DMGS, Dr. Weber taught at Harvard University, where he was a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department on Government and a Kathryn W. and Shelby Cullom Davis Research Fellow at the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies.



**A Special Thank You to the many volunteers, the AVC's Advisory Board, and the Team at the American Veterans Center for making possible the 21st Annual Conference & American Valor: A Salute to Our Heroes.**

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# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26 - KEYNOTE REMARKS

## General Larry O. Spencer, United States Air Force, Retired



General Larry O. Spencer served as the 37th Vice Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, the culmination of a 40-year career. In this capacity, Spencer was the second highest-ranking military member in the Air Force. He presided over the Air Staff and served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Requirements Oversight Council and Deputy Advisory Working Group. He assisted the Chief of Staff of the Air Force with organizing, training, and equipping of 690,000 active-duty, Guard, Reserve, and civilian forces serving in the United States and overseas.

Spencer began his career in the enlisted ranks and rose to become a four-star general. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in industrial engineering technology from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. Spencer was commissioned through Officer Training School in 1980 as a distinguished graduate. He has commanded a squadron, group and wing, and he was Vice Commander of the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center. He was also the first Air Force officer to serve as the Assistant Chief of Staff in the White House Military Office. He served as the Chief Financial Officer and then Director of Mission Support at a major command; and held positions within the Air Staff and Secretariat. Prior to his assignment as Vice Chief of Staff, the general was Director, Force Structure, Resources and Assessment, Joint Staff, the Pentagon, Washington, DC where he worked directly for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

General Spencer participated in contingency Operations Desert Shield/Storm, Desert Thunder, Desert Fox, Allied Force, and Iraqi Freedom. Spencer has a Master of Science degree in business management from Webster College, and a Master of Science degree in industrial resource strategy from the National Defense University. He also completed post-graduate courses at Harvard University, and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is currently President of the Air Force Association in Arlington, VA.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27 - OPENING REMARKS

## The Honorable David S. Ferriero, 10th Archivist of the United States



David S. Ferriero was confirmed as 10th Archivist of the United States on November 6, 2009. Early in 2010 he committed the National Archives and Records Administration to the principles of Open Government—transparency, participation, and collaboration. To better position NARA to fulfill these goals, Mr. Ferriero initiated an agency transformation in 2010. The transformation restructured the organization and set goals to further our mission, meet the needs of those who rely on us, and find new, creative ways to approach the agency's work.

Several new facilities, designed to protect the records and improve access to them, have been opened since 2010. The George W. Bush Presidential Library became the 13th Presidential Library under NARA's administration. The National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO, moved into a newly constructed building that is better equipped to preserve the millions of veterans records in its care. And the National Archives at New York and the National Archives at Denver moved to new locations. In Washington, DC, the National Archives Museum's visitors entrance was reconfigured, and the new David M. Rubenstein Gallery opened in December 2013.

Previously, Mr. Ferriero served as the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the New York Public Libraries (NYPL). Before joining the NYPL in 2004, Mr. Ferriero served in top positions at two of the nation's major academic libraries, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA, and Duke University in Durham, NC. In those positions, he led major initiatives including the expansion of facilities, the adoption of digital technologies, and a reengineering of printing and publications. Mr. Ferriero earned bachelor's and master's degrees in English literature from Northeastern University in Boston and a master's degree from the Simmons College of Library and Information Science, also in Boston. Mr. Ferriero served as a Navy hospital corpsman during the Vietnam War.

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# 21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27 - KEYNOTE REMARKS

## The Honorable Chuck Hagel, 24th Secretary of Defense



Chuck Hagel served as the 24th Secretary of Defense from February 2013 to February 2015. During his tenure, he directed significant steps to modernize America's partnerships and alliances, advance the rebalance in Asia-Pacific, bolster support for European allies, and enhance defense cooperation in the Middle East while overseeing the end of America's combat mission in Afghanistan. In addition, he led major initiatives for service members and their families, including increasing resources for suicide prevention, combating sexual assault, and accounting for missing personnel. Further, Secretary Hagel improved partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to include health record interoperability, service treatment record transferability, and continuity of mental health services and support. Secretary Hagel launched the Defense Innovation Initiative to better prepare the Pentagon for future threats, and enacted comprehensive reforms to the Nuclear Enterprise and Military Health system. He is the only Vietnam veteran and the first enlisted combat veteran to serve as Secretary of Defense.

Hagel served two terms in the United States Senate (1997-2009) representing the state of Nebraska. Hagel was a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Intelligence Committees. He Chaired the Foreign Relations International Economic Policy, Export and Trade Promotion Subcommittee; and the Banking Committee's International Trade and Finance, and Securities Subcommittees.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27 - KEYNOTE REMARKS

## General John M. Keane, United States Army, Retired



General Jack Keane is president, GSI Consulting. He serves as chairman of the Institute for the Study of War and the Knollwood Foundation, executive chairman of AM General and is a director of General Dynamics, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the Smith Richardson Foundation, a member of the Commission on National Defense Strategy selected by Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman, Senator John McCain, and a former and recent member, for 9 years, of the Secretary of Defense Policy Board. General Keane is also a Trustee Fellow of Fordham University, and an advisor to the George C. Marshall Foundation.

General Keane, a four-star general, completed over 37 years of public service in December 2003, culminating in his appointment as acting Chief of Staff and Vice Chief of Staff of the US Army. As the chief operating officer of the Army for over 4 years, he directed 1.5 million soldiers and civilians in 120 countries, with an annual operating budget of 110 billion dollars. General Keane was in the Pentagon on 9/11 and provided oversight and support for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Since 2004, General Keane spent a decade conducting frequent trips to Iraq and Afghanistan for senior defense officials with multiple visits during the surge period in both countries directly assisting General David Petraeus. General Keane appears before Congress regularly, offering testimony on matters of foreign policy and national security. He serves as the senior military analyst for Fox News and speaks throughout the country on leadership and national security.

General Keane is a career infantry paratrooper, a combat veteran of Vietnam, decorated for valor, who spent much of his military life in operational commands where he commanded the famed 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the legendary 18th Airborne Corps, the Army's largest war fighting organization. General Keane graduated from Fordham University with a Bachelor of Science degree and received a Master of Arts degree from Western Kentucky University. He is a graduate of the Army War College and the Command and General Staff College.

## WELCOMING TOMORROW'S MILITARY LEADERS

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ST JOSEPH'S UNIVERSITY AFROTC  
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A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

PRESENTED BY

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**SATURDAY OCTOBER 27, 2018**

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**5:30 PM  
RECEPTION & SILENT AUCTION**

**7:00PM  
DINNER & PROGRAM**

**BLACK TIE**



## 2018 HONOREES

### THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN

Represented by pilots of the famed Tuskegee Army Airfield in the landmark film marking the 75th anniversary of the event in 1949

### LT. COLONEL RICHARD E. COLE

Junior Colonel's story of the legendary "Coolidge" and his survivors of the 80 Coolidge Raiders

### COMMANDER DEAN 'DIZ' LAIRD

The only American to have shot down both German and Japanese aircraft during WWII

### SERGEANT FIRST CLASS

#### RONALD E. ROSSER

Recipient of the Medal of Honor for his actions in the Korean War

### MAJOR KATIE HIGGINS COOK

Marine Corps aviator and the first female pilot of the famed Blue Angels

### FELIX RODRIGUEZ

Cuban exile in CIA's office, flew more than 300 missions in Vietnam, awarded the South Vietnamese "Lava" Medal of Honor & nine awards of the Cross of Gallantry, and the CIA's Intelligence Star

### CLINTON J. HILL

Secret Service agent who on November 22, 1963, leaped onto the back of Mrs. Kennedy, saving her from the presidential assassin

### STAFF SERGEANT SHILO HARRIS

Staff sergeant of the 10th Mountain Division in Iraq survived an IED attack, after more than 75 surgeries, not allowing for one speaker

### SENIOR CHIEF SPECIAL WARFARE OPERATOR EDWARD C. BYERS, JR.

U.S. Army SEAL recipient of the Medal of Honor for his actions in Afghanistan, one of the SEAL recipients currently on active duty

## HOSTED BY ROB RIGGLE

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, co-writer of the film *12 Soldiers*, *The Daily Show*, *The Hangover*

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AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# WORLD WAR II

THE AUDIE MURPHY AWARD

## THE TUSKEGEE AIRMEN



July 2, 1943. American B-25 bombers approach their target along the coast of Sicily. As they open their bomb bays, two German fighters move in to attack, the American bombers easy targets and in their sights.

Suddenly a U.S. Army Air Forces P-40 speeds into position between the bombers and German fighters. Maneuvering inside the enemy, the pilot unleashes a long burst of fire, watching tracers smash into his target. The German fighter lurches left, then drops from the sky as his wingman flees the fight.

Neither the German fighters nor the American bombers realize that history has just been made. The pilot of the P-40 was

Lieutenant Charles B. Hall of the 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron – better known today as the Tuskegee Airmen, the first African American pilots in United States military history. This marked the first of more than 100 confirmed victories for the Airmen during World War II.

Their story had begun two years earlier, when thirteen recruits reported for training in Tuskegee, Alabama. To date, no black man had been allowed to serve as a pilot in the United States military – a policy they were determined to change. Training was intense, and the men welcomed it. They knew they were making history.

Promising recruits flocked to Tuskegee, and a new unit was formed – the 99<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron. By the spring of 1943, the squadron was ready for combat and ordered to North Africa to participate in the invasions of Sicily and Italy. They were later joined by three new squadrons, forming the 332<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Group and earning the nickname ‘Red Tails’ for the bright red paint on the fins of their P-51 fighters. Their skill in combat earned them a nickname from the Germans, as well: ‘The Red-Tailed Devils.’

As the Tuskegee Airmen’s reputation grew, so did its ranks of acclaimed pilots. Among the unit’s aviators was Charles McGee, who would go on to set an Air Force record of 409 combat missions during World War II, Korea, and Vietnam.

There was Harry Stewart, who shot down three German fighters in one day. And Alexander Jefferson and Harold Brown, two of the 32 Tuskegee Airmen pilots who were shot down and held as prisoners of war.

And there was Robert Friend, veteran of 142 combat missions who served as wingman to the unit’s leader, Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. Davis would go on to become the first African American general officer in Air Force history.

The pilots of the Tuskegee Airmen would fly missions over Central and Southern Europe, participating in the invasion of Southern France in 1944, then fly over Germany in 1945. By war’s end, American bomber crews were consistently requesting that the Red Tails escort them on missions. In just two years’ time, a unit that many had not wanted to exist had proven to be one of the military’s best. The Tuskegee Airmen had already become legendary.

In all, 992 pilots were trained at Tuskegee. 355 deployed overseas during World War II. 84 lost their lives.

In nearly 1,600 combat missions, they compiled an outstanding record, earning three Distinguished Unit Citations, a Silver Star, eight Purple Hearts, and 96 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

But just as importantly, the Tuskegee Airmen proved to their countrymen – and to themselves – that they belonged alongside the great heroes of American military history. Seventy-five years ago, they entered into World War II, and into history. And seventy-five years later, they continue to inspire Americans to affirm that self-evident truth, that *all* men are created equal.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# WORLD WAR II

THE AUDIE MURPHY AWARD

## COMMANDER DEAN 'DIZ' LAIRD



Off the coast of Nazi-occupied Norway, October 4, 1943.

A United States Navy task force led by the aircraft carrier, USS *Ranger*, sailed westward following a raid on German shipping in the Norwegian Sea.

Flying patrol above *Ranger* was 22-year-old Navy Lieutenant JG Dean Laird, known better by his nickname, 'Diz.' As he circled his F4F Wildcat through the rain, he spotted a shadow in the distance – a German bomber, the J-U 88. Immediately, Diz and his section leader, LTJG Boyd Mayhew, gave pursuit as the bomber banked south. The fighters let loose a volley of fire, leaving the bomber smoking. Circling back for a second run, Diz

set his guns on the bomber's fuel tanks, as the J-U 88 burst into a ball of fire. It was Diz Laird's first victory, and the first German plane to be downed by the U.S. Navy during the war.

En route back to *Ranger*, LTJG Laird downed a second German plane, sending it crashing into the sea. Circling around, Diz watched as three crewmen climbed from the wreckage, holding to the plane's fuselage. The defeated crew waved as Lieutenant Laird offered a salute, then turned for home.

Growing up in rural California, Diz Laird planned on joining his older brother as a pilot in the Army Air Corps. One day, while watching a newsreel, he saw the story of a battleship at sea with a makeshift flight deck, planes launching into the sky. Certain there could be nothing more fun, he determined to join the Navy. By the time he'd earned his wings in August, 1942, the aircraft carrier had replaced the battleship as the dominant force in Naval warfare.

November 25, 1944. Now aboard the carrier *USS Bunker Hill* in the Pacific Theater, Lieutenant Laird joined a flight of F-6-F Hellcats on a fighter sweep over the Philippines. Passing over a dirt air strip north of Manila, Diz looked down to find seven Japanese fighters preparing to take off. The Hellcats were met with anti-aircraft fire as they circled back to take on the Japanese fighters, Diz catching several holes in his plane. Diving from 8,000 feet, Diz fired his cannon into an enemy fighter as it burst into flames, then set his sights on another. The two pilots angled for position, each pressing for the advantage. Soon, with the fighter in his sights, Diz lowered his nose and let loose a burst as the plane flipped into a spin and smashed into the ground.

Diz Laird continued flying missions across the Pacific Theater, and was later awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He shot down several more planes during his tour, earning himself the coveted title of 'Ace pilot.' In a career that spanned 30 years, Diz Laird would fly 175 missions, serve on 12 aircraft carriers, and fly in the Navy's first jet squadron, becoming the first pilot to land a jet on the deck of the *USS Midway*. In July of 2016, at the age of 95, retired-Commander Diz Laird strapped into the rear seat of a T-34-C (thirty-four) and took to the skies, marking the 100th different aircraft type he'd flown in his career.

More than 200 American naval aviators earned the title of 'Ace pilot' during the Second World War. One – Diz Laird – achieved victories over both German and Japanese planes.

Called "The quintessential fighter pilot," Diz Laird embodied the trademark swagger of the American fighter ace, recalling of his service, "It never entered my mind that I would get shot down. I thought I was too good." Indeed, he was.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# THE KOREAN WAR

THE RAYMOND G. DAVIS AWARD

## SERGEANT FIRST CLASS RONALD E. ROSSER



On January 12, 1952, Corporal Ronald E. Rosser huddled with the battered remnants of his company on a snow-covered hillside in Korea. The badly outnumbered Americans had been ordered to take a hill, heavily fortified by Chinese soldiers. Now, 100 yards from the summit, only 35 of 170 men remained in the fight.

Taking machine-gun fire at nearly point blank range, Rosser radioed his regimental commander, who demanded to speak to an officer. Rosser dragged the radio to his wounded company commander, who was ordered to make one final attempt to reach their objective.

Seeing the hopeless expression on his commanding officer's face as he gazed toward the summit, Rosser offered to lead the assault.

Rallying the remaining men, Corporal Rosser told them to stay close, then took off, charging the enemy position. Nearing the enemy lines, Rosser looked back to find himself alone: men were laying scattered on the hillside where they had been hit; others had run straight for cover.

For a moment, his thoughts drifted to his younger brother, Richard, who had been killed fighting in Korea eleven months before. Ron took the news hard, and left his job in the coal mines of eastern Ohio to re-join the Army, where he'd served just after World War II. He wanted to finish his brother's tour. He was also motivated by a more basic instinct: he wanted revenge. His condition for enlistment was that he be given duty on the front lines of combat.

Under heavy fire, Corporal Rosser took out an enemy bunker before racing to the top of the hill and clearing a trench. Out of ammunition, he returned down the hill, resupplying himself from his fallen comrades. Three times, he attacked the enemy position – alone.

By now, he had been shot twice, once in the shoulder and once in the hand. Still, he led the withdrawal from the hillside, carrying several of his wounded comrades to safety.

Almost immediately, the surviving men began telling stories among themselves of the extraordinary valor they had witnessed on that hillside. Corporal Rosser's commanding officers insisted that he be considered for the Medal of Honor. At the time, the recognition meant little to Rosser, still holding on to the anger over the loss of his brother, still bent on exacting revenge. Despite his consideration for the Medal of Honor, he demanded he remain on the front lines with his men.

Three months later, Rosser's regiment was ordered off the front lines. Now in reserve, he saw up close the people of Korea, the people they were fighting for. For two years, the people of Korea had suffered through war, their children starved for food. The anger that had fueled him began to fade; he began to see he was fighting for much more than personal revenge.

That June, at a ceremony at the White House, President Truman awarded Ronald Rosser the Medal of Honor for his valor on a Korean hillside six months earlier.

On September 20, 1966 – Marine PFC Gary E. Rosser, brother of Ron and Richard Rosser, was killed in Vietnam. Still on duty, Sergeant First Class Ronald Rosser requested combat duty on the front lines, ready to finish his brother's tour. The Army denied his request, unwilling to risk a Medal of Honor recipient, unwilling to risk a third brother. Shortly after, he retired from the Army, the culmination of a career that witnessed the greatest acclaim a soldier can receive, and the greatest sacrifice a family can suffer.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# THE VIETNAM WAR

## THE JOE RONNIE HOOPER AWARD

### COLONEL FELIX RODRIGUEZ



On February 24, 1969, Felix Rodriguez raised his right hand and swore an oath to defend the Constitution of the United States. He was now an American citizen.

Within the year he was in Saigon, South Vietnam. He did not have to go; he volunteered, wanting to give back to his new country, his new home. An agent with the CIA working with the U.S. Army, his job was to advise South Vietnamese forces as they fought to save their country. It was a job he relished, having been forced to flee the country of his birth.

---

Felix Rodriguez was born in Havana, Cuba, May 31, 1941. His earliest memories were of news from the front lines of World War II, and the Allies' fight against Hitler. Growing up with stories of American valor instilled a special respect for the United States. In his teens he was given the choice to attend high school in the U.S. - a decision that would change his life.

On New Year's Day, 1959, communist revolution in Cuba swept the dictator out, and Fidel Castro in. On vacation in Mexico, Felix's parents had their home in Cuba appropriated. They would never see Cuba again.

However, Felix Rodriguez would return. At school in the U.S., the refugee would soon be recruited by the CIA, training with fellow Cuban exiles in a secret unit known as Brigade 2506 (twenty-five oh-six). In early 1961, he was smuggled back into Cuba to coordinate with the resistance. Soon after, President Kennedy approved the operation that would be known as the Bay of Pigs Invasion.

The invasion failed, cementing Castro's power, and leaving Felix a man without a home. He evacuated to the U.S., and embarked on a CIA career that would take him around the world.

In 1967, the 26-year-old agent was ordered to Bolivia, to advise and assist in its search for the famed Marxist revolutionary, Che Guevara. Che had trained the men who fought Brigade 2506 at the Bay of Pigs, and was now seeking to bring revolution to Bolivia. Felix's orders were to find and capture his old adversary, then bring him out alive.

After Che was captured, Felix was brought to an old schoolhouse, where he found him bound and tied, and refusing to speak with his mocking captors. Alone with Che, Felix had him untied, and asked if they might speak – man to man, soldier to soldier. They spoke of philosophy. Of life. Of death.

Soon, Felix received word that, despite his pleas, the Bolivian government had ordered Che executed. Felix delivered the news, which Che accepted with courage. He then gave Felix his pipe, a gesture of respect for a soldier who had shown him respect. It was a lesson Felix would carry throughout his career – be it friend or foe, trust is earned through respect.

---

Now in Saigon, the new American devoted himself to the Vietnamese he advised. He demanded they receive the same equipment and medical care as the Americans. He fought at their side, and flew nearly 300 helicopter missions, being shot down five times. Only injuries sustained in battle could pull him away from the men he had grown to admire after two years of serving side by side.

Felix Rodriguez would be awarded the South Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry nine times: one gold, two silver and six bronze. He was also awarded their Naval Medal of Honor. He is among the most decorated agents in CIA history, receiving the agency's rarely awarded "Intelligence Star for Valor".

Once a man without a home, Felix Rodriguez became an American by choice. Yet it was a choice made easy. For all its flaws, in no country on earth will a man find respect as in the country Felix Rodriguez chose to call home.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

THE PAUL RAY SMITH AWARD

## STAFF SERGEANT SHILO HARRIS



From his youngest days, Shilo Harris was bred to serve. His father, a veteran of Vietnam, taught him the value of discipline, hard work, and self-sacrifice.

And from his youngest days, Shilo Harris knew the cost of war. Along with shrapnel received on the battlefields of Vietnam, his father brought home unseen wounds. At the time, the wounds had no name, and no treatment. And so the demons of post-traumatic stress came out in fits of rage and the self-medication of alcohol and drugs that would tear their family apart.

But Shilo Harris was bred to serve. Early one morning in September, 2001, he watched television in silence as the towers burned, and realized he had something to give. Soon, he became Private Shilo Harris, United States Army. Shilo proved a natural soldier, twice deploying to Iraq as a Cavalry Scout with the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division as he was promoted to Staff Sergeant.

February 19, 2007. South of Baghdad. On reconnaissance patrol, Staff Sergeant Harris commanded a five-man Humvee as it inched forward, navigating craters left from exploded roadside bombs.

Rounding a crater, Shilo's driver carefully followed the tracks of the convoy's lead Humvee. Suddenly, Shilo heard a piercing shriek as a wall of flames rose from the floor. It was a direct hit, the I-E-D exploding directly beneath the gas tank.

Bloodied and engulfed in flames, Sergeant Harris struggled to break free from the wreckage, while his driver was pulled from the humvee. 'Where are my soldiers?' is all he could speak as the fire was doused. He received no answer, as he was loaded into a medevac before descending into blackness.

Evacuated to Germany then home to the States, Shilo Harris was given a two percent chance of survival. For 48 days, he lingered in a coma as doctors tended to his wounds. He'd suffered third degree burns across his body, losing his ears, nose, and three of his fingers. The entire 48 days, he was oddly aware of his experience, an experience he could only describe as hell.

Through surgeries and setbacks, Shilo's condition slowly improved. Despite life changing wounds, he felt hope. He was soon visited by the driver of his Humvee, Specialist Adam Devine, recovering from his own injuries. The men hugged as tears were shed. Living and fighting together had made the five-man team more than a crew - they were family. Shilo promised that once he recovered, the five of them would get together, just like old times.

Silence descended on the room. Shilo had yet to be told: His remaining crewmen – 20 year-old Adare (*A-dare*) Cleveland, 25 year-old Shawn Dunkin, and 19 year-old Michael Bowe (*rhymes with 'row'*) had all been killed in the blast. For days, Shilo cried, crushed at the loss of his soldiers, and his friends.

Ten steps. The ten steps Shilo was asked to take on his first day of rehab felt like ten miles. But every day, in every exercise, he found the courage to go on, to live for his lost friends.

He also found courage to face another fear – to look in the mirror. In his mind, he was still Shilo. But the face was a stranger's – no ears or nose, swollen lips, scarred skin. Yet the eyes were the same hazel eyes he knew. He had changed, but maybe he was still Shilo.

After five months, Shilo Harris was discharged from the hospital. Yet as he recovered from his physical wounds, the unseen wounds remained. The same demons his father brought home from Vietnam, Shilo brought home from Iraq. Rage, depression, and guilt still lived inside him. Suicide became a real option, a route he nearly took. But he'd made a promise – to live for his lost friends. Once again, Shilo found the courage to face his fear, and asked for help in fighting his own demons.

In healing, Shilo Harris found hope, a hope he spread at every opportunity. From conversations with fellow wounded warriors to speeches to audiences in the hundreds, he shared his story and that lesson of hope. The boy who was bred to serve was now the soldier who kept serving, long after he hung up his uniform. His journey, full of pain and fear, led him to gratitude, and to become the man he was meant to be.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

THE LT MICHAEL P. MURPHY AWARD

## MASTER CHIEF SPECIAL WARFARE OPERATOR EDWARD C. BYERS, JR.



'Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection.' Before each mission on each of his nine combat tours, U.S. Navy SEAL Senior Chief Edward C. Byers Jr. offered the same prayer. The night of December 5, 2012 was no different, as Chief Petty Officer Byers and a team of SEALs sat quietly in their helicopter, preparing for a mission in eastern Afghanistan.

Earlier that day, Dilip Joseph, an American civilian doctor on a humanitarian mission, and his Afghan interpreter were kidnapped by Taliban fighters. Intelligence reports placed them in a single-room building at the base of a mountain. Reports indicated that the doctor would soon be moved, and possibly killed. Wasting no time, the commander of international forces in Afghanistan ordered a rescue mission, to be conducted by the elite Naval Special Warfare operators from Naval Special Warfare Development Group.

A native of Ohio, Byers had served four years as a Navy Corpsman before training as a SEAL in 2002, then deploying to Iraq, Afghanistan and a variety of other countries. As he offered a prayer for his comrades and the mission, he thought of his wife and young daughter back home. His family, his faith, and the brotherhood among his fellow SEALs sustained him throughout the grueling deployments over the years.

Success of the mission depended on surprise, speed, and violence of action. To ensure surprise, the SEAL team was inserted miles from their objective, patrolling several hours through the dark over arduous mountain terrain. Reaching the target, the SEALs regrouped and slowly advanced on the building.

Suddenly shouts rang out. A Taliban guard spotted the approaching SEALs and ran inside the house. Surprise gone, the rescue team was now left with speed and aggression. Leading the assault was Chief Petty Officer Nicolas Checque, who raced after the guard, Byers immediately behind.

The front door to the house consisted of several thick blankets fastened to the ceiling and walls, which Byers attempted to rip down. Chief Petty Officer Checque burst through, and was immediately felled by enemy gunfire.

Without hesitation, Byers followed. He killed one terrorist, then tackled another who was scrambling for a stack of rifles. Gunfire erupted as the remaining Taliban guards engaged the SEALs racing in after Byers, calling for the hostage to identify himself.

Hearing the voice of Dr. Joseph off to his right, Byers raced across the room and jumped on the hostage, using his body to shield the doctor from the crossfire. Incredibly, at the same time he used his free hand to pin a nearby enemy combatant against the wall by his throat until his teammates could subdue him.

The room secure, Byers asked the doctor if he could move, then assured him he was now safe in the hands of American forces.

The mission complete, the rescue team and Dr. Joseph were evacuated to Bagram Airfield via helicopter. Throughout the 40 minute flight, Chief Petty Officer Byers performed CPR on his wounded comrade, Nic Checque. And throughout the flight, he offered a prayer for his friend. 'Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our protection.'

Chief Petty Officer Nicolas Checque was pronounced dead upon arriving at base. He was 28-years-old.

Nic Checque was posthumously awarded the Navy's second highest award for valor – the Navy Cross – for giving his life to save that of another. And on February 29, 2016, President Obama awarded the Medal of Honor to Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Edward C. Byers Jr. for his actions in that same mission.

Now the most highly-decorated living Navy SEAL, Byers accepted the award in memory of his friend. Speaking shortly after being presented the Medal, he would say:

'My thoughts of Nic and my brothers will carry with me in the future, as I bear the weight of this honor...My only desire is that my representation is something my brothers who I have served with would be proud of. Because the deed is all, not the glory. Long Live the Brotherhood.'

Master Chief Byers is the only enlisted active duty recipient in the military.

AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

# THE DOOLITTLE TOKYO RAIDERS WINGS OF VALOR AWARD

PRESENTED BY

LT. COLONEL RICHARD E. COLE

CO-PILOT OF JIMMY DOOLITTLE ON THE LEGENDARY  
DOOLITTLE RAID, APRIL 18, 1942



2018 HONOREE

## MAJOR KATIE COOK



Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Spring, 2013. On patrol, a rifle squad of United States Marines comes under attack from a Taliban machine gun, stationed atop a nearby building. Pinned down, the Marines are sitting ducks.

Flying nearby, a Marine KC-130, call sign 'FILTH 02', receives a report that troops are in contact, the situation urgent. Immediately, the pilot – 26-year-old Marine Captain Katie Higgins – turns toward the battle. A relatively junior pilot, this is her first direct action with the enemy. Sounds of gunfire and explosions fill her radio as she descends through heavy cloud cover.

Every second counts as Captain Higgins and her crew identifies the enemy position and prepares to make the run in, her heart pounding. This was why she had become a Marine aviator – to support the guys fighting on the ground – and she could not fail. Lining up her target, the KC-130 fires two Hellfire missiles, landing a direct hit and eliminating the enemy position, saving the Marines.

---

The following spring, now stationed in Spain, Captain Higgins was approached by an enlisted Marine, asking if she had flown 'FILTH 02' in Afghanistan. He was among the squad of Marines under attack that day, and had recognized her voice from the radio. He told Captain Higgins that she had saved his life, and the lives of his fellow Marines. It was the proudest moment of her Marine Corps career.

---

A third-generation military aviator, Katie was born to fly. Both grandfathers flew for the Army in World War II, while her father was an F-18 fighter pilot in the Navy. A 2008 graduate of the Naval Academy, Katie decided on the Marine Corps, becoming one of the few Marine aviators to fly combat missions in Afghanistan.

After deployments to Afghanistan and Africa, and with more than 400 combat hours, Major Katie Higgins was selected to fly with the famed Blue Angels in 2015. Created in 1946 to help with recruitment, the Navy's elite aerial demonstration team had seen 250 pilots perform throughout its history – all of them men. On March 14, 2015, at the controls of the Blue Angels' C-130 Hercules, nicknamed 'Fat Albert', Captain Katie Higgins became the first female pilot to perform with the Blue Angels. For two years, she wore the famous blue flight suit, performing at air shows across the country, before accepting command of an airfield operations company.

Now married to fellow Blue Angel pilot Major Dusty Cook, Major Katie Higgins Cook never sought to break any barriers, only to be a pilot in the Marines. But in taking to the skies to fly in front of thousands of men, women, boys, *and* girls, Major Cook still shattered a glass ceiling, then kept flying higher.

# AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

## CLINTON J. HILL

### UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE



Dallas, Texas. November 22, 1963. Tens of thousands line the downtown streets, packed ten and twenty deep, to catch sight of the American president, John F. Kennedy, and First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy. The usually shy Mrs. Kennedy has embraced the crowds during this trip to Texas, leaving the president in a buoyant mood.

Aboard the Secret Service car trailing the Presidential limousine is Special Agent in Charge of Mrs. Kennedy's detail, Clinton J. Hill. Since becoming an agent for President Eisenhower, the former Army counterintelligence officer has seen parades like these around the world, and they are always tense moments for the Secret Service.

On this trip, President Kennedy has requested that agents stay away from the Presidential limousine unless absolutely necessary – he wants no barrier between him and the citizens of Dallas. Agent Hill tries to oblige, only riding on the limousine when crowds are thick. From his car he sees the president grin and speak to his wife, who responds with a smile and a nod.

---

Over the last three years, Clint Hill had grown fond of President and Mrs. Kennedy, and they of him. After working on Eisenhower's detail, he first saw his post with Mrs. Kennedy as a demotion. But immediately, he was won over by her grace and the president's charm. He was pulled into the famed Kennedy family football games, and was on board the presidential yacht Sequoia for the President's 46<sup>th</sup> birthday party in May, 1963, where the champagne flowed and nobody wanted the night to end.

The trip to Texas marked the first time Mrs. Kennedy accompanied her husband on a political trip during his presidency. Young John Junior had ridden on the helicopter from the White House to Andrews Air Force Base, but as his parents boarded Air Force One to depart, he burst into tears. Heartbroken, Agent Hill told him goodbye, and promised they would be home in a few days—just in time for his third birthday.

---

Standing firm on the running board of the Secret Service car, Agent Hill's eyes scan a small crowd of people in a grassy area as the motorcade turns left. It passes a seven-story red-brick building on the right, its name carved in stone above the door: Texas School-book Depository.

At the sound of the first shot, Agent Hill turns to see the president grab his throat. Without a moment's delay, he leaps from his vehicle and races toward the president. He doesn't hear the second shot fired from above, and has nearly reached the limousine when a third rings out, striking the president directly. A terrified Mrs. Kennedy begins to climb out of the car, as Agent Hill pulls himself aboard. He pushes her back into her seat, covering her and the president, shielding them from the fourth shot that never came.

Racing at more than 80 miles an hour, President Kennedy is rushed to the hospital. Shortly after arriving, Agent Hill briefs the White House when the Attorney General – the President's brother, Robert F. Kennedy – joins the line. "How bad is it?" he asks. "It's as bad as it can get," is all Agent Hill can summon, as the line goes silent.

John F. Kennedy died at one pm local time, November 22, 1963.

---

Hours later, the President's body now aboard Air Force One, Agent Hill receives a message that Mrs. Kennedy would like to see him. He finds her in the rear of the plane, near the casket, her face streaked with tears and still covered in her husband's blood. In the worst moments of her life, she takes his hands and asks, "What's going to happen to you now, Mr. Hill?" He is overwhelmed by her grace. Shortly after, Lyndon Baines Johnson is sworn in as the 36<sup>th</sup> President of the United States.

---

In the ensuing days, America mourned its fallen president, and the Kennedy family mourned their fallen brother, father, and husband. And, on duty at their side, Clint Hill silently mourned with them. Near midnight, November 25, 1963, after the president had been

buried and the eternal flame had been lit, Agent Hill escorted Jackie and Bobby back to the president's gravesite, where they would offer a quiet, final farewell.

Clint Hill would remain on duty leading Mrs. Kennedy's detail, before being called back to the White House to serve President Johnson in 1964. On June 8, 1968, he was on hand as the train carrying the Kennedy family arrived in Washington for the funeral of Robert F. Kennedy. Emerging from the train, Jacqueline Kennedy, her eyes filled with grief after another family tragedy, walked straight to Clint Hill. "Hello, Mr. Hill. How have you been?" she asked. They would never see each other again.

All the while, Clint Hill rose through the ranks of the Secret Service, and in 1973 was asked to interview to become Director. It was an honor he had to decline – the pain of November 22, 1963 had taken its toll. At the time, Post-Traumatic Stress had no name, and so the guilt was buried, the pain numbed by an evening scotch. For nearly fifty years, Clint Hill was haunted by the memories of that day, unable to admit to himself what history already knew: that in one of the worst moments in American history, one man had the courage to act, to give everything he had, including his life, to protect the lives of the President and First Lady.

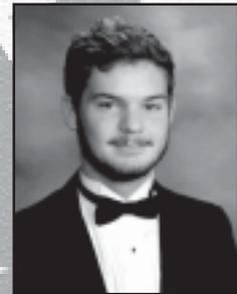
In the weeks following the assassination of President Kennedy, Agent Hill was given a handwritten note on White House stationery. It read:

For Clint Hill –  
Who did more than anyone to make my life with the President happy – and who guarded and protected him until the very end. How can I thank you.  
- Jacqueline Kennedy'

## THE STEFANO AGOSTINELLI MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP



Stefano Agostinelli was a promising patriotic American student, studying in Europe when he was tragically killed in a hiking accident in 2008. He had a tremendous admiration for the United States military, especially our Special Operations Forces, with a desire upon graduation to serve as a spec-ops officer. The award is offered to the son or daughter of a special operations warrior who has rendered exceptional service to our country. The recipient must also exhibit leadership qualities and an outstanding academic record and a passion to continue the family and the nation's tradition of devotion to our values and the duty for which all our armed forces are known.



**Thomas Crawford Debenport**  
*North Carolina State University, son of SFC Terence Debenport (Ret.), 3rd Special Forces Group, Afghanistan & Iraq*

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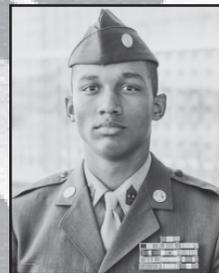


**James Trimble III**  
*USMC  
1926-1945*

James Trimble III was among the top baseball prospects in the nation, who had signed a contract with the Washington Senators in 1943. He put his promising career on hold to join the Marine Corps in 1944. On March 1, 1945, during the battle for Iwo Jima, Trimble was killed when his position was overrun by a massive Japanese attack. Of his fallen Marine, Trimble's division commander Maj. Gen. Graves Erskine said, "His name will not be forgotten and his brave spirit will continue to inspire us in the tough battles that lie ahead."

Partnering with two of Trimble's surviving platoon mates, Donald Mates and James White, the American Veterans Center & WWII Veterans Committee created the Trimble Scholarship in his memory, presented annually to outstanding seniors participating in the Young Marines program.

### 2018 RECIPIENTS



**Young Marines MGSgt  
Tyson Henry**  
*East Valley Young Marines  
Mesa, Arizona*



**Young Marines MGSgt  
William Daniels**  
*Quartz Hill Young Marines  
Lancaster, California*

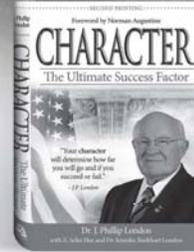
# CACI Salutes the 2018 American Veterans Center Honorees

Thank you for your valor and contribution  
to the good character of our nation:

- The Tuskegee Airmen
- Lt. Colonel Richard E. Cole
- Commander Dean 'Diz' Laird
- Sergeant First Class Ronald E. Rosser
- Major Katie Higgins Cook
- Colonel Felix Rodriguez
- Clinton J. Hill
- Staff Sergeant Shilo Harris
- Senior Chief Special Warfare Operator Edward C. Byers, Jr.

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In his book *Character: The Ultimate Success Factor*, CACI Executive Chairman and Chairman of the Board Dr. J. Phillip "Jack" London addresses the importance of good character and leadership. Using examples from history and his experiences as a Naval Academy graduate, naval officer and aviator, and a national business leader, Dr. London identifies the key role of good character in personal and professional success.



**Dr. J. Phillip London**  
Captain, USN (Ret.)  
Executive Chairman and Chairman  
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*All royalties from the sale of this book will benefit disabled veterans.*

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