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WHAT IS A VETERAN?



Hot Springs Village Vietnam veterans march in a parade for Woodlands Auditorium. (Jeff Meek photo)

I remember a few years ago I attended a veteran gathering and the speaker uttered these words: "What is a veteran? A veteran is someone who, at one point, wrote a blank check made payable to the United States of America for an amount up to and including their life." I think about that often as I continue to interview Hot Spring Village veterans, now totaling nearly 400.

As I would listen to their stories, many shared for the first time, I came to realize what a solemn commitment it is to enter the service. You don't know where you're going, you're not sure what's ahead and for those sent to a combat zone, you're not guaranteed you'll survive.

In Stephen Ambrose's book, "D-Day, June 6, 1944," he mentions an observation by Paul Fussell, a World War II combat veteran, author, and professor. Fussell said that those "in combat go through 2 stages of rationalization followed by 1 of perception. Considering the possibility of a severe wound or death, the soldier's first rationalization is: 'It can't happen to me. I am too clever/agile/well trained/good looking/beloved/ tightly laced, etc.' The second rationalization is: 'It can happen to me, and I'd better be more careful. I can avoid the danger by watching more prudently the way I take cover/dig in/expose my position by



de from Community of Joy Church to the

firing my weapon/keep extra alert at all times, etc.’ Finally, the realization is, ‘It’s going to happen to me, and only my not being there is going to prevent it.’”

I remember reading Fussell’s observations many years ago and would read those sentences to many combat veterans during our interview. They agreed with Fussell. Some told me they were sure they would not survive the war and get back home. Think about that. At any moment their life could be over.

As I wrote in the opening paragraph, that’s what a veteran is. A man or woman who, despite the danger, follows through with a commitment. Most combat veterans will admit they were scared, filled with fear, but they had the courage to carry on despite the fear, to persevere and withstand the danger.

Such courage demands our remembering our veterans for their service, for their courage, for their commitment to country. God bless them all.

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

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ON THE COVER: A Washington, D.C. memorial to those who served in Vietnam. (Jeff Meek photo)

ALL AROUND ARKANSAS

Wild, Wonderful Lake Chicot

Darrell W. Brown

In previous columns, I've written about some of Arkansas' beautiful mountains, rivers and lakes. We are blessed with an abundance of natural beauty and wonders. There's many reasons why Arkansas was once known as "The Wonder State" and now "The Natural State."

One of those natural wonders is a body of water in southeastern Arkansas — Lake Chicot, which lies on the east side of Lake Village (Chicot County).

If you've driven from Arkansas to the Gulf Coast for a beach vacation then chances are you've seen Lake Chicot. The Arkansas Tourism welcome center on the lake features a pier that provides an amazing view of Lake Chicot. It also has some of the friendliest staff and the cleanest restrooms you'll ever use.

Lake Chicot is not only the largest natural lake in the state, but it's also the largest oxbow lake in North America. About 300 years ago, the lake was part of the channel of the Mississippi River. Its name comes from the French word "chicot," which in English means "full of cypress stumps." If you've ever boated on or walked along the shores of Lake Chicot, then you've seen the many cypress stumps and trees that line its banks. The C-shaped lake is about 0.75 miles wide and 22 miles long.

In the 1820s, land around Lake Chicot became



Lake Chicot

populated with settlers who came to farm the fertile land of the Arkansas Delta. Several plantations sprung up in the area, the largest being Sunnyside Plantation. The cotton plantation was built around 1830 and was farmed with slave labor. After the Civil War ended in 1865, freed slaves farmed it into the 1890s. The plantation changed hands numerous times over the years and was eventually shut down and broken up in the 1940s. Today, a historical marker exists at its former site.

On June 6, 1864, a Civil War battle known as the battle of Old River Lake was fought on the south shore of Lake Chicot. Union troops won the battle and forced the Confederates out of the Mississippi River area. The battle of Old River Lake is considered to be one of the final Civil War actions in Arkansas.

Another interesting bit of history about Lake



Lake Chicot State Park Welcome Center, left.



Pier at the Welcome Center, right.

Chicot is that pilot Charles Lindbergh (most famous for his solo transatlantic flight in 1927) made his first nighttime flight in April 1923 over the lake. The Chicot Delphian Society put a concrete monument at Lindbergh's landing site in 1934.

In 1957, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism built a 211 acre-state park at Lake Chicot. The park features 122 campsites, 14 cabins, a swimming pool, boat launch ramp and a playground. The park also operates a marina that sells snacks, fuel and bait. Boats, motors and personal water craft are available to rent as well.

If you're looking to have a staycation in Arkansas or just want to spend some quality time in Mother Nature, Lake Chicot is the perfect place to go. And if you do find yourself in the area and love authentic soul food, be sure and check out Rhoda's Famous Hot Tamales in Lake Village. While Mrs. Rhoda is famous for her tamales, everything she serves is as beautiful to the tastebuds as Lake Chicot is to the eye.

A proud sixth-generation Arkansan, Darrell W. Brown is a lover of all things Arkansas. He lives on beautiful Lake Norrell in Saline County with his wife, Amy, and their two beloved Boston Terriers. Find him on Facebook and Instagram at AllAroundArkansas.



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Valuable Resource

Two professional librarians keep Coronado Center Library running smoothly

Mary Eliades
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

Modern libraries today are facing an identity crisis in terms of budget constraints, changes in technology, and needs of the communities they serve. With the growing popularity of e-books and the change from hush-hush temples to literature to gathering places where people can interact and exchange ideas, the



Glenda Ford in the popular New Books section. (Submitted photo)



Veronica Curioni with a recent craft project. (Mary Eliades photo)

very character of libraries has changed.

The Coronado Center Library has been changing with the times, and currently offers many resources and services to residents – books, of course, but also access to computers and the internet, interesting programs, and much more. The most important resources on tap, though, are the library’s two part-time, professional librarians – Veronica Curioni and Glenda Ford.

Veronica Curioni moved to the Village from Plano, Texas, in September 2021. She had worked at the Plano Public Library, but then Covid-19 struck, the library closed, and after working for the city in various positions she decided to take early retirement.

Curioni has a degree in library science from Texas Woman’s University in Denton, Texas, and has worked as a librarian most of her adult life.

She and her husband, Ray Foley, came to the Village on a golfing trip, and “next thing you know, we’d bought a house!” she said.

She started volunteering at the library and when

an opening came up for a librarian, “everything fell in place and seemed right.”

Curioni said she is really enjoying the work and the opportunity to be part of a “unique library.”

In addition to the latest bestsellers, audio books, magazines and jigsaw puzzles, the library also offers programs, some through its affiliation with the Garland and Saline County libraries. A library-sponsored book club meets monthly, and Curioni would like to see more groups meeting at the library.

She said the recent voter registration efforts at the library have brought more people – and new members – in.

In addition to working part-time at the library, Curioni enjoys kayaking, pickleball, painting, cooking, and her book club. Her book club – a group she’s been with for 30 years – recently came to the Village from Dallas for the weekend.

Her husband is an avid golfer, and the couple has two daughters – one in Rogers, Arkansas, and the other studying sustainability in Costa Rica.

Glenda Ford has been at the Coronado Center Library since 2015. Coming from the New Orleans area, “tired of running from and cleaning up after hurricanes,” Glenda and her husband, Dennis, discovered the “beauty of HSV – including four seasons and proximity to family,” and decided to buy a house here.

Ford grew up in El Dorado, Arkansas, went to high school in Smackover, and attended college at Ouachita Baptist University, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Science in education. She moved to Memphis and worked at the Mid-America Seminary Library, and that’s where she met her husband.

After several moves and two children, they ended up in the New Orleans area, where she was a school librarian in the St. Tammany Parish School system for 28 years – ranging from kindergarten to high school. Ford said her “favorite and longest tenure” was at Fontainebleau High School in Mandeville, Louisiana. In 2010 she went back to school and earned a master’s degree in library and information science from the University of Southern Mississippi.

In addition to her work at the library, Ford loves spending time with family and singing – primarily gospel music. She sings with the choir at Balboa Baptist Church and with the Mastersingers – a large choir affiliated with the Arkansas Baptist Convention.

When discussing challenges with funding for the

library, Ford said, “I realize that libraries have and are undergoing tremendous changes. My greatest professional challenge is providing services to our varied population.

“For many library users, coming to the library is so much more than coming to check out a book – it is a chance to meet neighbors and possibly new residents, as well as read the local newspaper or check out a New York Times bestseller. Many residents also come in to use our free computers or free wi-fi with printing capabilities.

“Our library needs to increase membership in order to underwrite our budget. For that reason, we are always looking for programming ideas to encourage residents to come and use the library.”

Volunteers are a very important part of the library, and Ford said volunteers assist with everything – library services, programs, even decorating. Anyone interested in sharing special talents with the library should stop by for a visit – and while there, maybe read a newspaper, pick up a puzzle, share book suggestions, and sign up for a program.



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Neighbors helping Neighbors

Faith Fellowship Church Food Pantry helping the food insecure since 2009

Sandy Johansen
STAFF WRITER



Filling a family car trunk with fresh, canned, frozen and packaged food are Rick Gautier (L) and Dan Botjer,

“Greetings to everyone associated with the Faith Fellowship Church Food Pantry. From our large group of volunteers, to all the individuals, businesses, and local churches who support this food ministry, we say “thank you”. We have one initiative, and that is that hopefully we can continue giving food to all the food-insecure families in Garland County and a portion of Saline County,” said Jim Perry, Program Director.

Faith Fellowship Food Pantry has distributed millions of pounds of food to needy families in Garland and Saline counties since 2009. Generous donations are received from Walmart Hot Springs Village, Walmart Hot Springs Central Avenue, Walmart Albert Pike Road, Brookshire’s and many individual food operations. The pantry is also partnered with the Arkansas Food Bank and Project Hope and together they feed thousands of hungry families in areas surrounding Hot Springs and Hot Springs Village.

The pantry’s warehouse is 4,000 square feet and houses large freezers and plenty of space for donations and packing. Fresh produce is delivered by donors shortly before each distribution. If anyone driving through tells volunteers someone in their family is having a birthday, cakes are also ready for donation and celebration.

Nearly 100 volunteers assist in sorting, packing and

distribution. They also check for expiration dates and should those dates be nearing an end date, they are given to organizations who will use them quickly, such as Adult Teen Challenge. Organizers are careful to distribute food products quickly.

Jim Perry, Director of FFFP, expressed his love for the organization. He noted, “Faith Fellowship Church Food Pantry operates under the Faith Fellowship Church’s 501C-3 non-profit status granted by the federal government to the Church back in 2009.”

The only qualifier necessary to obtain food from the pantry is the individual or families must live in specific zip codes in Garland County and a portion of Saline County bordering Hot Springs Village.

“The first and foremost is the pantry is “faith-based” and that we do our best every month,” said Perry. The pantry serves over 1,000 families representing nearly 3,000 individuals. Nearly 20,000 families have been served to date to ZIP codes 71901 and 71949 (second Wednesdays each month) including 71909, 71910, 71913, 71933, 71956, 71964, 71968, and 72087 (fourth Wednesday each month). Currently on Wednesdays they provide food for nearly 300 families.

Sadly with food costs rising and more and more people needing extra food in order to make it month to month, the pantry had no other option but to cut down

on the volume of food given to each family. Typically a family leaves the food pantry with a dry-good box, cereal, bread and pastry, assorted frozen meats, milk, and fresh produce.

They also give sodas until they run out at each Wednesday's give-away. They stopped giving away milk because it is too cost-prohibitive unless a provider supplies them with frozen milk to be given within a day.

Faith Fellowship Pantry is located at 3213 North Highway 7 directly behind the church. For more information go to: <https://ffc-ar.com/faith-fellowship-food-pantry/>

"Thankfully we are a member of the Feeding America Program by way of our membership with



the Arkansas Food Bank. Together with this organization along with our community supporting us financially, we will continue to do our best to serve any family needing food assistance.

Thank you again for your financial support and for the untold number

of volunteers who make this pantry's operation successful each month," said Perry.

If you would care to make a donation or volunteer feel free to call Director Jim Perry at 501-282-6559 or jphsvar@gmail.com

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HSV VETERANS

JIM GIFFORD SERVED AS NAVAL AVIATOR

Flew the F-8 Crusader at
1,225 MPH

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

Hot Springs Village resident Jim Gifford grew up in Tennessee, graduated from high school in 1963 and was looking for scholarship help to attend Dartmouth College. In doing so he came across the Navy ROTC program which would pay the bills. In return Gifford would give the Navy his summers while in college and four years of duty after graduation. “That seemed like a pretty good deal to me to get a good education,” said Gifford of his decision to begin a naval career.

He began his active duty in 1967 as an Ensign and was sent to flight training in Pensacola, Fla. where he would learn on the T-34 trainer which had a maximum speed of just over 300 miles per hour. Fifteen months later he was off to basic training in Meridian, Miss. where future pilots flew the T-2 Buckeye jet up to speeds of 520 miles per hour.

Next on his training agenda came aircraft carrier qualification. “That’s kind of scary for anyone,” said Gifford of learning to set a plane down on a moving, pitching flight deck. The qualification involved learning landing signals, what to expect when touching down and how to take off.

“The first time you go to the boat there’s a pucker factor. We would go out as a flight of four, one flight instructor and four students. When we get to the ship we did about four landings without the hook, just



Jim Gifford served in the Navy from 1967 to 1975. (Jeff Meek photo)

touch and go. Then they say I think you’ve got it, drop your hook on your next pass,” said Gifford.

On landing, Gifford told me the pilot is to give the plane full throttle in case the arresting wires are missed. Throttling up gets the plane back in the air quickly as compared to touching down, realizing you haven’t grabbed a wire and then powering up, which would likely end up putting the plane and pilot in the ocean because the engines could not respond quickly enough. After four successful landings Gifford became carrier qualified. His final phase of training was in Texas in the swept wing F-9J Cougar.

Then Gifford was ordered to Training Command in Meridian in Sept. 1968 as a flight instructor, which was a big disappointment to him because he wanted to fly in combat.

But after all is said and done Gifford said he’s glad things worked out that way. The tour was rewarding in that it helped make him a better pilot and also gave him a chance to fly cross country with students and thus see many parts of the country.

Then in March 1970 Gifford was put with Fighter Squadron 124 at Naval Air Station Miramar in San Diego, Calif. as a replacement pilot flying the F-8 Crusader. This beauty could fly at up to 1,225 miles an hour and had a max ceiling of 58,000 feet.

He still remembers his first supersonic flight when he noticed a speck above him fly quickly by. Gifford was flying at MACH 1.5 at 45,000 feet, yet this speck, which had to be a plane of some kind, easily outflew the Crusader.

“He had to be up at 70,000 feet going MACH 3,” said Gifford. Five years later he learned that speck was the secret SR-71 Blackbird. “Nobody knew about the SR-71, not even those of us who were flying. It was a top secret program,” Gifford said.

At Miramar he was assigned to a replacement air group, but while with there the Navy retired the F-8 so the group was shut down and Gifford was ordered to the USS New Orleans (LPH-11), an amphibious assault ship. In Oct. 1970 he became the Aircraft Handling Officer on the ship.

Their role was to put troops ashore aboard choppers during an operation as needed.

The New Orleans made two cruises to the South China Sea where they were within sight of the Vietnam coastline. There they cruised with a battalion of U.S. Marines ready to board helicopters and head for shore.

During the cruises the Marines were not deployed but training continued to keep them sharp.

Off the demilitarized zone one night, about three miles off shore, Gifford witnessed a four hour B-52 bomber strike. “You could feel the concussion. It was one of those images I’ll never forget. It’s as close to the combat as I got,” he added.

Once a peace was announced the ship was ordered to clear the mines in Haiphong Harbor which had been placed there by the U.S. in spring 1972 in response to a North Vietnamese offensive.

It was dangerous work as the ship entered the harbor each day, dropped anchor, and began the task of sweeping the mines using helicopters. Just before dark the ship would raise the anchor, sail out of the harbor and patrol until the next morning when they would again re-enter the harbor. The job took nearly 60 days to complete.

During the operation Gifford ran the busy flight deck as the helicopters took off, landed and refueled.

In June 1973 he returned to Miramar as a Maintenance Control Officer in the Air Station Staff. In fact, when the ship came in, Gifford was doing the steering. His department did maintenance on parts such as radios, hydraulics, engines, pumps, actuators, and more. Gifford said this assignment taught him valuable management skills that later served him well as a civilian.

In early 1975 he decided it was time for a change. “Just about that time, life gave me another little twist. All of a sudden, at 29 years old, I had a grand mal seizure in my sleep one night and two weeks later it happened again.”

“Needless to say the Navy wasn’t enamored with this so they didn’t even let me resign my commission. They determined I was unfit for active duty, which so offended me I was about to fight them on it, but they placed me on what’s called a temporary disability retirement list. They retired me rather than discharge me,” said Gifford of the situation. He was reassessed five years later and then discharged in 1980.

Those five years also were a big help to Gifford’s future. It enabled him to make many contacts that would relate to life as a civilian. And that’s what happened as Gifford worked the next 20 years in the aerospace industry, mostly with new aircraft development. He later retired in 2000.

As our interview neared its end Gifford said several of his naval assignments were unexpected, but all turned out for the better and were a tremendous learning experience.

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GARROT SERVED IN KOREA WITH 417TH ENGINEERS

He was Company Commander for the 417th

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

During the Korean War U.S. Army engineers served in many capacities with many units. Some were put in U.S. Air Force aviation groups. When the war began in June 1950, the Fifth Air Force had only the 930th Engineer Aviation Group, but by 1952 they added the 417th Engineer Aviation Brigade to supervise airfield construction. With the 417th in Taegu, Korea was former Hot Springs Village resident Floyd Garrot who served with their headquarters unit.

After graduating high school he attended LSU year round, graduating in just three years, earning a degree as a mechanical engineer. He went to work for Humble Oil Company in Aug. 1949 in Texas. Later in Jan. 1951 he got a draft notice. Uncle Sam had called him to service in the U.S. Army.

At Baton Rouge, La. he boarded a train for Fort Sam Houston, Texas for induction. Basic training was at Fort Bragg where members of the 82nd Airborne Division conducted the training. "The idea was to influence a lot of people to go into the airborne," said Garrot who was really impressed with the training.

He considered becoming a paratrooper until he watched an airborne drop go bad when parachutes attached to equipment exiting the plane did not open. "That discouraged me a little bit," he said.

Back at Fort Sam Houston he had taken several tests, did well and was sent to leadership school at Fort Jackson, S.C. in Aug. 1951. Next came Engineer Officer Candidate School at Fort Belvoir, Va. Garrot called the OCS school the greatest experience he



Floyd Garrot served with the U.S. Army during the Korean War (Jeff Meek photo)

ever had, great training with great officers in charge.

He finished second in his class and received a commission on June 3, 1952. Garrot then was placed with the 40th Engineer Pipeline Company at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. as Company Commander. Once there he had to sign off on all the property books which would then make him responsible for all the unit's equipment. But his predecessor had apparently not run too tight a ship and Garrot found many things unaccounted for. Eventually matters were sorted out, Garrot signed the books and moved on with his duties.

Thereafter he got orders to report to Korea. After a 30 day leave he went to San Francisco and boarded a troopship headed for Japan, arriving in late Dec. 1952. "It was cold," said Garrot of the area. He then flew to Korea in a cargo plane. "I think that was as cold as I've ever been in my life. It was just cold air blowing through that plane," he recalled. After landing in Taegu he reported to the 417th compound which was surrounded by concertina wire.

There he became Company Commander for most of the 10 months he served with the unit. "What we

did there was we took care of all the brass in that Brigade,” Garrot said of the duties.

I asked him to describe a typical day. With a big smile and a laugh Garrot said, “A typical day for me was getting chewed out by the Executive Officer because of something that didn’t go quite right in our little compound.” Taking care of the officers meant making sure they were comfortable. “We had a very excellent mess hall and we had good provisions,” Garrot said. The compound also had a motor pool, officer’s club, nice barracks and a cadre of Koreans that helped the unit.

Garrot said he had a lot of interaction with the Koreans inside the compound. He remembers paying them with stacks of money because of the hyper-inflation in the country at that time. He also remembers dealing with the head of the Korean helpers who later turned out to be a crook.

He had let other Koreans inside the compound to steal things. “We had to let him go,” said Garrot. “They were extremely poor people and would steal stuff to try to stay alive. They had nothing.”

Garrot said Taegu was in terrible shape, one of

the worst places he’d ever seen. “We saw roofs of houses that were made out of beer cans. I couldn’t believe the poverty,” he said.

Ten months later he was due to go home. The armistice had been signed and the men were asked who wanted to be separated. Garrot was selected and in a few days flown back to the U.S. via Alaska. From there he went back to Fort Sam Houston and was discharged on Oct. 30, 1953.

He went right back to work for Humble Oil in Texas as a junior petroleum engineer, a career he stayed with until retiring in 1986. Two years later he and wife Pat moved to the Village from New Orleans. The couple has five children: Lynn, Mike, Carol, Sherry and Bill.

Reflecting on his time in service he again said it was a very interesting experience. Garrot said he grew up in a sheltered environment as a kid on a sugar plantation and did not have much exposure to the real world. Responsibility and discipline were the two traits he learned that helped him move forward with his life.



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MCCAMEY PLATOON LEADER WITH 'THE BIG RED ONE'

Later joined S-3 Operations
as mission support



Tom McCamey

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

The U.S. Army's First Infantry Division has a storied past, serving at Cantigny and elsewhere in World War I, in North Africa, Sicily and Normandy, France on D-Day, June 6, 1944. The First, known as "The Big Red One" also fought in Vietnam, arriving in Oct. 1965 for duty in III Corps.

As a division they were awarded many medals, including 11 Congressional Medals of Honor, 67 Distinguished Service Crosses, 905 Silver Stars for bravery in action and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm. With the First Infantry Division in 1969 was Hot Springs Village resident Tom McCamey who served as a rifle platoon leader and was the recipient of the Purple Heart Medal and Combat Infantry Badge to name just a few of his distinguished awards.

McCamey grew up in Texas and after graduation from Abilene Christian University he received a draft notice in Nov. 1966. This led him to enlisting so he could stay out of the infantry, but as you will see that isn't how things progressed for him.

He first went to Ft. Bliss, Texas for basic training, then to Fort Wachuca, Ariz. to await Officer Candidate School (OCS). A few weeks later he went to Ft. Sill, Okla. for OCS prep for eight weeks of artillery training. "That was unusual because I was an infantry candidate," McCamey said.

Then in July 1967 he received orders to report to Ft. Benning, Ga. for six months of OCS. McCamey told me he loved the schooling and that the leadership and training was outstanding. "I found out I could do things I didn't know I could do," he added. Most of the schooling was on leadership matters and skills.

In Dec. 1967, as a Second Lieutenant, he reported to Ft. Knox, Ky. where he became a motor pool officer for two months. Then came his overseas assignment. McCamey was headed to Wildflecken, Germany with the Third Infantry Division, 2nd Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment. The unit was a mechanized infantry outfit whose job was to meet any enemy that may cross the Czech border. McCamey said the Wildflecken area saw lots of winter weather, adding that summer lasted about two days. There his job was supervising that motor pool.

In March 1969, he was ordered to Vietnam. Upon arrival it was an "oh my" moment as he watched others leaving in their worn-out boots and uniforms. "It's rather solemn," he said of the sight.

He joined the First Infantry Division as a rifle platoon leader assigned to "D" company. McCamey praised his platoon sergeant. "He kept me alive," he said.

His first three weeks in the jungle was a real eye-opener. "I was afraid I was going to die, and it was getting to me," said McCamey of the pressures of

combat and the many nightly ambushes in the area of the Michelin Rubber Plantation, 30 days at a time on duty. McCamey was told he was replacing their leader who had got out of a helicopter and was shot dead before he touched the ground. Not exactly a comforting thought.

The men did not wear socks inside their boots to keep out moisture. McCamey did not take his boots off for three weeks. "We were constantly moving, constantly ambushing, doing something and I didn't want to take my boots off because if you get caught in an ambush or firefight, you're barefooted and got to move. That was unacceptable so my feet turned into rubber and pulp. I'm a spiritual man and I had to come to grips with the reality that, Thomas, you can't keep doing this, you have to make peace with dying and responsibility. After that I did really well," McCamey said of overcoming his fear and becoming the necessary leader he needed to be for his men.

On the early morning of Aug. 11, 1969, his platoon was pulling out of an area when suddenly out of nowhere two enemy soldiers walked right into their position. Startled, both sides began firing and McCamey was hit in the leg. "I didn't even fire a shot, but I did see them run off," he remembers.

And then there was the time when one of the men with him had a seizure during a firefight but made it out okay.

In the battalion he was in, McCamey later joined S-3 (Operations) to work on air strike coordination and mission support at a tactical ops center. McCamey would be in on the radio coordination of ground and air actions.

One day an Australian pilot asked to be in on the ground war instead of in the air. "I told him 'Good luck'," laughed McCamey who added that the pilot returned weeks later unharmed. "He was brave and foolish," said McCamey.

His battalion was known as "The Black Scarfs" which they wore around their necks. Their call sign was "Dracula." Later he found out the enemy was aware of the unit and had a great deal of respect for them.

In Nov. 1969, he headed home and was discharged

on Dec. 1. As a civilian he went into human resources as an executive in the health care industry. On July 1, 1998, he retired. Oh, and he was also a scuba instructor for three years as well.

He and wife Maureen moved to the Village in Nov. 2001 from the Florida Keys. He has two children: Kendall and Keelan.

Reflecting on his days in uniform McCamey said he was glad he served and found out a lot about himself. "It's been very, very helpful to me," he concluded.



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World War II veteran Horace Shankwiler with his medal. (Jeff Meek photo)

SHANKWILER LEAD PILOT IN 8TH AIR FORCE

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

Flew 25 missions in B-24 over Europe

The United States 8th Air Force, based throughout England, played a huge role in the Allied victory in Europe in World War II. At its peak, the “Mighty Eighth” could use up to 2,000 four engine bombers to carry out their daylight bombing campaign over German held targets and positions.

Former Hot Springs Village resident Horace Shankwiler was a lead pilot in the 8th Air Force, 701st Squadron, 445th Bomb Group. He successfully flew 25 missions and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his service in the air from September 1944 until May 1945.

Born and raised in Michigan, Shankwiler was leaving church when he first heard of the attack at Pearl Harbor. He and a friend decided to join the Army Air Corps as it was called then. In late 1942, he finally

received his orders to proceed to Miami Beach, FL for his initial physical training.

Later, in Missouri, he flew BT-13's and in Stuttgart, Arkansas he trained on the twin engine AT-10. It was there that he earned his wings. While there he swore to himself that he would never return to Arkansas because of all the bugs, high heat and humidity.

After a leave, he learned to fly the B-24 Liberator at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, Alabama. Upon completion of that training he flew to Westover Field in Massachusetts to pick up his crew.

After training together, they were sent to Southampton, England. He was on his way to a replacement depot but was taken off the train and sent directly to the 445th Bomb Group based at Tibenham Field.

His first job was not piloting an airplane. Instead, it was to sort through the belongings of the airmen that did not come back from the devastating Kassel, Germany mission. In that mission only 5 out of 35 bombers returned to base. 300 airmen were lost on that single mission over Germany.

Shankwiler's missions began about 10 days later. They would approach through Holland as they made their way to the target areas in groups of 12 planes.

The Germans would estimate their altitude and put-up anti-aircraft flak in a "box barrage" in front of the formation. They had no choice but to fly straight through it.

As a pilot he sat in a "coffin", a steel-like configuration surrounding the pilot to protect them from enemy flak. He would also lay a flak suit on his chest for added protection.

On his first mission, seeing all those black puffs of bursting flak around their plane, Shankwiler recalled, "Boy, if I get through this it will be something. It was scary to look into that stuff. I later, on two occasions, had a ship (plane) on both sides of me have a wing sheered right off and they just turn right over and go straight down. It's terrifying to see these ships go down".

On one mission his B-24 had over 300 holes in it. He had his rudder shot up and had to steer the plane by alternating power to different engines. They also had no brakes and had to hand-crank the landing gear down.

Of his 25 missions, his ship got torn up on 7 or 8 occasions as he participated in bombing runs over submarine pens, railroad switching yards, canals, and several cities like Cologne.

They flew above 18,000 feet and carried two tons of bombs. There were times when he was not sure the plane would make it back to England because it was in such bad shape. But indeed, it did, every time.

As a lead pilot he would always get the best airship available because all the other pilots followed his actions and commands. To get in the required 25 missions he actually took off about 75 times. Many times, the missions were scrubbed due to weather or other factors.

In March 1945, he also came up against a new German weapon – the jet fighter. Shankwiler told me, "They went through the formation so fast our gunners didn't have a chance. We were amazed. We didn't know what they were at first."

Shankwiler also shared with me his thoughts on the infantry down below. "I don't know how they did it. I just don't know. Sure, we were going through the same type of thing, but we had a little more protection. We were in it for only minutes."

Shankwiler recalled another mission that showed that poor planning could result in tragic results. They were on their bomb run, bomb bay doors open, when out of nowhere a group of B-17's appeared up above and to his right. The B-17's started dropping their bombs. Shankwiler immediately ordered the group to drop their bombs and turn hard to the left. "We would have lost our whole group if we would have kept going", he said.



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He got back to his base at Tibenham and was questioned as to why his target had not been hit. Doing the questioning was Wing Commander and Hollywood actor Jimmy Stewart. Shankwiler told Stewart what happen. Stewart confirmed it with the navigator, was satisfied with the explanation, and returned to his base.

As a lead pilot, his war was over after 25 missions. I asked him what his thoughts were as that last mission came closer and closer. Shankwiler said, “You worried a little bit more, am I going to get through the next one? You prayed a lot; you thought a lot and you tried to sleep a lot.”

After touchdown on that 25th and final mission Shankwiler was greeted by a member of the office staff who told him he was on rest and recuperation. The next day he found himself resting in a castle and wearing civilian clothes. He remembers how good it felt to have a bath in hot water. “Oh man. That was the greatest feeling in the world,” he recalled.

When the war ended, he and others rode bicycles to the nearby town. The people there were outside with wine and champagne to celebrate with them. The feeling was tremendous. The war was finally over.



World War II B-24s in formation. (Photo courtesy of Horace Shankwiler)

He flew his war weary B-24 back to the U.S. at the end of May 1945. “I dropped it in from about four feet. It was the worst landing I ever made. I was so glad to get it on the ground,” Shankwiler said.

He was discharged and spent his career in the automotive paint business before retiring here to Arkansas; where he had told himself many years ago, he would never return.

I read the citation he received for the Distinguished Flying Cross back in May 1945. It is in a scrapbook along with many other memories of his service to our country. It’s a service we should never forget.



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RON FRITZ SERVED WITH USMC IN VIETNAM

Guided aerial attacks on designated targets

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

In Vietnam the First Marine Air Wing (MAW) had six Marine Air Groups (MAG) totaling 225 helicopters and 250 fixed wing aircraft at the height of battle during the war. They were based at places like Da Nang, Chu Lai, Quang Tri and Phu Bai out of which flew F-4 and F-6 fighter-bombers as well as other attack aircraft. Hot Springs Village resident Ron Fritz served in Vietnam with the First Marine Air Wing as an electronics specialist guiding aerial attacks on designated targets.

He was attending Mankato State University in Minnesota when, in 1965, he decided to leave school. While driving home to tell his parents he noticed a Marine Corps recruiting office.

Fritz stopped, signed the paperwork and continued on home.

Upon his arrival he asked them if they wanted to hear the bad news or hear the other bad news, then informed them he was headed for the Marine Corps.

In September he began his boot camp training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) in San Diego, Calif. After a Christmas leave, he returned for infantry training followed by schooling for his job as an electronics/radar operator with a Marine Air Wing. "We would control ground intercepts and were trained to vector, or steer, friendly aircraft towards enemy aircraft, do radar controlled bombing missions and anything having to do with controlling Marine Corps aircraft," said Fritz of the job.

Next, he was assigned to a Marine Corps air facility in New River, N.C. While there he was recruited for Officer's Candidate School but declined the offer. In October 1967, he left for Vietnam, already a Sergeant. From the states he flew to Okinawa, Da Nang and on to Chu Lai to join his unit, Marine Air Control Squadron Five (MACS-5)



Ron Fritz served in the United States Marine Corps. (Photo courtesy of Ron Fritz)

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After settling in, Fritz worked to keep U.S. aircraft clear of friendly artillery and naval gunfire. "We would be sent the naval gunfire and artillery gunfire missions, when they were going to shoot the big guns, and then we would find out where they were shooting them from and where they were shooting them to, what their elevation was, etc., and then we would plot those so we could send our fixed wing and our helicopters around them, or under them or over them, whatever the case may be," said Fritz. His shift was eight to 12 hours per day, seven days a week.

On Jan. 21, 1968, the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) attacked the Marine firebase at Khe Sanh, the westernmost anchor of a series of bases paralleling the DMZ. It wasn't long until the base was cut off and a siege began. Resupply and support could only be accomplished by air.

Fritz was told his radar unit - TPQ-10 - was going to be taken to Khe Sanh to provide bombing mission data. "I said okay, where's Khe Sanh?," smiled Fritz. Little did he know he was headed for a battle that would enter the history books on the Vietnam War.

The unit boarded a Sea Stallion helicopter and made their way to Khe Sanh. As they approached the base from 8,000 feet up the pilot brought the chopper straight down almost like the helicopter was in a vertical tunnel. "That's when the rockets came in from every direction," said Fritz.

Immediately the pilot ascended back up to 8,000 feet. "We were plastered to the floor of the helicopter, and he was back up to 8,000 feet that quick," Fritz recalled.

Awhile later fighter jets arrived and put down covering fire as the chopper inserted the men and their equipment.

Once on land the unit set up the radar near an abandoned bunker and began working on target coordinates so bombing missions could take place.

The base was attacked daily, and U.S. drops of supplies had to be by parachute because nothing could land on the runway. Frequently L.A.P.E.S. drops were made by pushing equipment out the back of a C-130 flying just a few feet above the ground.

Fritz and his unit continued to coordinate U.S. air attacks, sometimes with the huge B-52 bombers that dropped their payload from such a high altitude one couldn't see them from the ground. He remembers

the close-in B-52 strikes only 1,000 meters away from his position. "It (the bombs) sounds like freight trains coming out of the sky. You literally had to find something to hold on to because the ground around us shook so badly. You couldn't stand up," Fritz said of the bombing effects. Other tactics involved using napalm and delayed fuse bombs to strike at the tunnel network nearby. "You could see the tunnels collapsing," said Fritz.

The NVA would attack nightly and each morning there would be several dead NVA in the wire along the base perimeter.

At this point Fritz showed me a Life Magazine dated Feb. 23, 1968, showing several photos of Khe Sanh, one of which shows a burning C-130 on the runway. In the foreground are four men looking at the scene before them. He's not positive but is pretty confident he is the third man from the left in the famous Life Magazine photo.

Fritz's unit was to be relieved in two weeks, but it took five weeks before they could get out. "The entire five weeks you were in your bunker running a mission. You came out for nothing except to go to the bathroom," he said.

Finally, after five weeks the unit was taken out and brought to Da Nang for more radar-like work. After that Fritz was sent back to the U.S. His first stop was Santa Ana, Calif. where he was discharged on Aug. 30, 1968.

As a civilian he went to work for Northwest Airlines as an FAA licensed aircraft dispatcher and eventually was over the Northwest System Operation Control (SOC) with Northwest, now Delta, for 38 years.

In April 2005 he retired and with wife Vicki moved to the Village. The couple has three children: Tina, Ryan, and Scott.

As the interview concluded Fritz talked about the dissent in the U.S. during the war. "I am convinced the dissent was due to essentially our universities and our media. It appealed to the young people who were 18 and didn't want any part of it. They didn't want to go over there. They were scared, let's face it," Fritz said.

He added that he is thankful he survived Khe Sanh and the war in general. "There were a lot of people that suffered, and I wasn't one of them, fortunately. I know a couple of guys here in the Village that are still suffering today because of it (the war)," he concluded.

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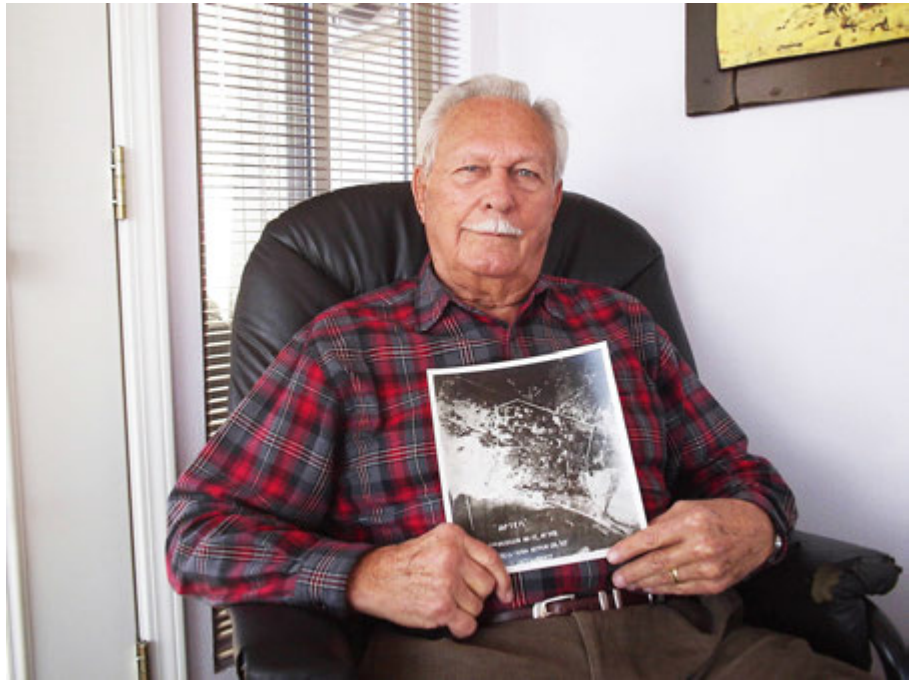
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DOBBS FLIES IN LAST BOMBER MISSION OF WORLD WAR II

Hit the Nippon oil refinery at Akita in northern Honshu



Jack Dobbs with an aerial photo of a World War II target. (Jeff Meek photo)

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

The 20th Army Air Force carried out heavy bombardment operations in Formosa, Burma, Thailand, and Japan. Their headquarters was moved to Guam in July 1945. A part of the 20th was the 315th Bomb Wing. This and other units flew in the last bomber mission of World War II. Former Hot Springs Village resident Jack Dobbs served in the 315th Wing, 501st Bomb Group as a gunner.

After Pearl Harbor, Dobbs went to enlist, but was told he was too young. His parents would not sign off on an early entry, so he had to wait one year. Later, he was talked into a voluntary induction rather than a regular induction. As such, Dobbs became part of the

U.S. Army.

His training began in Battle Creek, Mich. Then it was 13 weeks of infantry training at Jefferson Barracks in Mo. During that time, he was also qualifying for entry into the Army Air Force. Dobbs qualified for pilot training and was sent to a college training detachment in Ohio. In just five months, Dobbs and the others received a year's worth of physics and calculus.

Later, in San Antonio, he learned new pilots were no longer needed. Would-be pilots were to be sent to gunnery school. "We were all set to fly. That was a big disappointment," remembers Dobbs.

In Florida, he learned all about the 50-caliber

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machine gun, including how to take in apart and put it back together while blindfolded. Dobbs next trained in Nebraska and Jamaica.

From Nebraska he was sent to New Mexico and was assigned to a B-29. His job would be the central fire control gunner. After training was completed, the unit was sent to Guam. When he arrived, Dobbs noticed there was a 200–300-foot cliff at the end of their runway. In Guam, it rained every day, but the men got used to it and, in the rain, if necessary, watched movies or played softball or horseshoes. About 10 days later, Dobbs was off on his first mission to a target at Truk.

A short time later, the unit was assigned targets in Japan. His B-29, named Star Wagon, flew a total of 15 missions. The 315th was assigned the job of destroying oil refineries.

Once the bombers would near their targets, the Japanese would send up a plane that flew out of range, but along with the B-29's. This was to determine air speed and altitude. They would then radio that information to the flak gunners on the ground waiting for the American planes to arrive.

Dobbs final mission turned out to be one of significant historical importance. As things turned out, it would be the last bomber mission of World War II and it played a major role in the ultimate surrender of the Japanese the following day.

After the U.S. dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Allied leaders thought Japan would certainly surrender. However, several days after the Nagasaki bomb on Aug. 9, 1945, the Allies had not yet received any word of surrender.

Growing impatient and fearing Russian intervention in the fight against Japan, General George Marshall ordered air strikes to resume on a 24-hour basis.

On Aug. 14, the 315th, along with other bomb units, took off for their targets.

The 315th was to hit the Nippon oil refinery at Akita in northern Honshu. The mission would take approximately 17 hours of flight time.

On Aug. 14, at approximately 11:30 p.m., Dobbs and the others were flying over Tokyo and the Emperors' Imperial Palace on their way to Akita. Because of this, a blackout took place on the palace grounds. What many

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people don't know is this blackout spoiled an attempted coup-d-etat by elements of the Japanese military to sabotage a recording made of the Emperor's announcement of the act of surrender.

This coup went so far as to kill Lt. Gen. Takeshi Mori, Commander of the Imperial Guards Division and then issue false orders for the division to mobilize.

For hours, these traitorous military officers and men searched the palace grounds for the recording, but were unsuccessful, largely due to the fact that the entire area was in complete darkness due to the American air raids in progress.

Finally, on Aug. 15, at about 8 a.m. as Dobbs and the 315th were on their way back to Guam, the official announcement of surrender was broadcast, and the war was over.

It is also at this time the Star Wagon and other B-29's was running low on fuel. "As the fuel got shorter and shorter, we'd keep leaning the engines out so we could stretch the gasoline," said Dobbs. The thought crossed his mind that he had survived their last return flight to the airbase.

He remembered those cliffs at the edge of the runway they would be approaching and worried about the possibility of an engine failing at that point. If that happen, it would alter their flight path and the plane might crash into the side of the cliff, but, thankfully, Dobbs' plane landed safely.

As they taxied off the runway, one of the

engines quit running. Had it happened only a minute earlier, the plane and all those aboard could have been killed. It had been a close

call that none of the crew would forget.

Dobbs was sent home in April 1945 and was discharged on May 6, 1946. He spent a very successful career in the automotive industry working in several major cities in the U.S.

He eventually retired and moved to the Village in 2002.

Dobbs, who has since passed away, was an active volunteer in several areas, especially VFW Post 10483 and, as you may remember, was once chosen as a Citizen of the Year.

In 2003, he was at a reunion of the 315th when he learned a book had been written about their last mission.

Jim Smith, a crewman aboard the Boomerang, had written a book called, "The Last Mission: The Secret History of World War II's Final Battle." The book details the events surrounding the bombing mission and the chaos going on at the palace grounds.

That last flight is Dobbs' strongest memory of the war. He told me that when those wheels on that B-29 touched the ground on August 15th, it made an impression on him that forever remained. The war was over, he had made it and he would live to return home to his family and his country.



A World War II Military Government Team, 8th U.S. Army, in Okayama, Japan. Former Hot Springs Village resident Wes Soerens is front row, third from right. (Photo courtesy of Wes Soerens)

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HOLLINGSWORTH MEMBER OF 25TH INFANTRY IN VIETNAM

His platoon was in Cambodia tasked with disrupting the Ho Chi Minh Trail

Jeff Meek
VOICE CORRESPONDENT

Hot Springs Village resident George Hollingsworth was born in South Carolina, but grew up in Mississippi where his family lived near Jackson. He attended college, got a degree in psychology and then went to graduate school at Southern Mississippi for one trimester. But Hollingsworth got drafted in Jan. 1969, was inducted in June and went for boot camp training to Fort Bragg in North Carolina.

Next came advanced infantry training at Fort McClellan, Ala. This training focused on weaponry – M-16s, grenade launchers, mortars and more. He was recommended for NCO Academy at Benning and reported there in Nov. 1969. “There was a shortage of NCOs. They were looking for a way to bring people through the ranks a little quicker,” Hollingsworth said of the school. Upon graduation he was promoted to E-5 and assigned as a staff NCO at the Advanced Infantry Training Center at Fort Polk, La.

In May 1970 he was again promoted and, not surprisingly, received orders for assignment in Vietnam.

Once in country Hollingsworth reported at first to the 95th Replacement Depot at Long Binh and was assigned to “D” Company, Second Battalion, 12th Regiment, 25th Infantry Division. “When I stepped off the plane I was scared,” admitted Hollingsworth of his first few days in Vietnam.



George Hollingsworth served in the U.S. Army. (Jeff Meek photo)

In June he reported to the company’s headquarters unit at Dau Tieng and was then transported to his unit (Third Platoon) in the field. The platoon was in Cambodia trying to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh trail. Primarily his unit carried out ambush patrols.

One day on patrol they ran in to a large enemy force and took heavy fire. “To this day I can hear rounds going into mahogany trees,” he said. About combat, Hollingsworth told me that when the fight begins, so too does the training at which point one goes into “autopilot” as he described it. “But I could feel my heart pounding in my chest. I thought I was going to have a heart attack. Then I realized I wasn’t breathing,” he said.

Hollingsworth got himself under control and moved his men into position. “From then on your training kicks in. You’re just wired,” he said. After the fight ceased, he felt exhausted, likely from all the adrenalin pumping through his body while in that life and death situation.

We talked about ambush patrols, the mechanics of it and other matters. Hollingsworth says now as he looks back on it, he feels the unit was used as bait.

“They wanted us to stay engaged to report kills for body counts. If you saw the movie ‘Platoon’, that’s what we did,” he said. The unit depicted in Oliver Stone’s epic Vietnam War movie was Hollingsworth’s unit’s sister unit.

The men would be out on patrol from 7 to 10 days as he recalled, moving through many areas, looking for the enemy. They’d patrol during the day and set up an ambush position at night, usually along trails or areas of reported enemy movements in an effort to stem the flow of men and materials.

Hollingsworth’s platoon seldom numbered more than 20 men, so if a large enemy unit came by, the smart move was to let them pass. That decision was his, seeing as he was the ranking soldier in the unit because his superior officer had been killed in Cambodia.

Hollingsworth described setting up an ambush, saying the company would get to the general area they were going to watch by afternoon. As light began to fade the company would divide into three platoons. Hollingsworth and a few other men would go out and scout for two or three sites in which they would set up for the night. Once found, the rest of the platoons came in and made preparations. He would place men so his M-60 machine guns formed a kill zone and place others to take care of what he called “fire points.” Each man then put two claymore mines out in front of them to establish a perimeter of sorts.

Next a guard schedule was organized as the men settled in for the night. “You never slept,” Hollingsworth noted. Then the next morning the men would meet at a designated location, join up as a company again, and repeat the patrolling and ambush process.

Hollingsworth spoke about newly arrived men and that none of the experienced guys wanted to know about them. And that the newbies were called “bullet magnets” because of the wrong moves they’d make, like how to sleep during an ambush.

The new guys would sleep on their back with their feet towards the area where the enemy was likely to approach. If something happened, they’d sit up and thus become an easy target. The correct way was



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to sleep facing the approach.

In 1971 the 25th Infantry Division packed up and left Vietnam, but Hollingsworth and his brigade went to Hawaii. Later in March he reported to Fort Dix, N.J. where he got a new uniform and was discharged.

Right away Hollingsworth went back to school. He said his tan body and haircut told others he was fresh out of the military.

This was a time of protest and Hollingsworth was one of the many unfortunate warriors not well treated by an angry civilian population. He recalled stopping in the airport in Philadelphia on the way home where he and a buddy entered a coffee shop, killing time waiting for another plane. He said they were in their Class "A" uniforms, medals and all, as they sat down awaiting service. But the waitress ignored them. "I was hurt. I thought I'd be respected. I was embarrassed so we left," said Hollingsworth.

As a civilian he worked 14 years in the mortgage business, then became a mental health counselor in Williamsburg, Va., retiring in 2006. With wife Sharon they moved to the Village in 2014 from Williamsburg. They have four children: Beth, Virginia, Leslie and Adrian.

Reflecting back on his days in uniform Hollingsworth said he found it tough to set in a classroom upon returning to college. He'd get really anxious setting in a 90 minute class. "I was crawling out of my skin after 90 minutes. And I didn't understand 'weekend'," Hollansworth said of understanding what free time



This photo showing North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers was developed from a roll of NVA film captured by U.S. Army troops. (Photo courtesy of former U.S. Army intelligence officer Tom Johnson)

meant after a year of 24/7 duty in the infantry.

Hollansworth also talked about meeting his wife and parents at the airport back home. As he approached them he could tell they were looking at him, then at other passengers. "It dawned on me, they don't know who I am. This is my mother and daddy and my wife and I'm saying to myself 'they don't know who I am'," Hollingsworth said.

Finally as he got closer he told me they had a visceral reaction to him. "I thought sooner or later somebody's got to be glad to see me. I was sure glad to see them," said Hollingsworth.

About being in Vietnam Hollingsworth said, "I kept it a secret. I didn't tell anybody." He still deals with the demons at night. "I've got the heebie-jeebies setting here just talking about it and that was 50 years ago," he said.

Hollingsworth concluded by saying he was really grateful that nowadays the American people don't hold the individual soldier responsible for policy that's made by people with no association with the military.

BRUNSON AND 20TH AIR FORCE BRING WAR TO JAPAN

Flew B-29 bombing missions in closing months of the war

Jeff Meek
VOICE
CORRESPONDENT



Reginald C. Brunson.

The job of the 20th Air Force was to bring the war to the homeland of Japan. With B-29 Superfortresses our pilots and their crews dropped over 342,000,000 pounds of bombs during their active status from April 1944 until the end of the war. It also was the Twentieth that dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and after the war the Twentieth dropped supplies to Allied prisoners of war in Japan.

The B-29 was a huge airplane. It weighed 60 tons when fully loaded, ran on four 18-cylinder engines and had a top speed of 350 miles per hour. It could fly as high as 36,000 feet and had a range of over 3,000

miles. The early models had problems like engines overheating. During testing in February 1943, due to an engine fire, a B-29 crashed into a meat packing plant killing the crew of 11 and 20 others on the ground.

Chuck Brunson was a member of the 20th Air Force, 500th Bomb Group, 500th Bomb Squadron. Based on the island of Saipan, Brunson participated as a pilot in bombing missions all over Japan.

In December 1942 he entered the Aviation Cadets in Elmira, NY. In January 1943 he received a notice to report to Atlantic City, NJ for basic training. His next stop was Nashville, TN for classification.

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Additional training took place in Alabama and Indiana where Brunson was commissioned in August 1944.

In October he flew his first B-29. In Arizona he learned how to bomb a target and navigate at night. From there Brunson and his crew were sent to Kansas to pick up their brand new Superfortress. They then flew it to Hawaii, Guam and finally Saipan. The day after Brunson arrived on Saipan, he took off on his first mission. The target was Fukuoka.

On those early missions the planes flew at high altitude. Unknowingly, they were flying against the jet stream and were having trouble reaching some of their targets. At times they would have to drop their bombs early and head for home. Later, General Curtis LeMay changed the flights to nighttime, lower-level missions using incendiary bombs also known as firebombs. These bombs used phosphorus that would stick to just about anything and then burn. The desired effect was to spread fire throughout an area.

Many Japanese cities were built mostly with wooden structures. These bombs would ignite fires that would spread from building to building and thus destroy entire neighborhoods. Anyone who's studied World War II knows of the fire raids that burned large areas of Tokyo and elsewhere to the ground in an attempt to bring the Japanese government to their knees and formally surrender. Brunson took part in the deadly fire raids over Tokyo, raids which killed more Japanese than the two atomic bombs dropped later in August 1945.

The fires would be so intense the heat would create powerful updrafts. "Once they got started it was a real sight to see because the whole area was burning," Brunson remembers. At 19,000 up he could actually feel the updraft in his B-29. "It was like flying through rough air," he said.

Later, near the end of the war, the B-29's would drop leaflets telling the Japanese where and when we were going to bomb their cities. Brunson remembers that at



World War II - In the background is the Japanese Emperor's Palace. Note a person bowing in the foreground (Photo courtesy of Tom Brown)

the end of the war there weren't any strategic targets left for them to bomb. They would end up bombing areas they had previously destroyed.

Although these flights did not encounter much opposition from enemy aircraft, there still was danger all around. On one of his missions, they had a lot of flak damage to their B-29, but were still able to get home. On another mission they returned to base with just enough fuel to land.

During one of the fire raids, Brunson looked up from his pilot seat. Only 100 feet above him was another B-29 with its bomb bay doors open. "That was a scary moment. I didn't know if he had dropped his bombs. He was right on top of us," he recalls.

August 1945 Brunson was back home for more schooling and for training for the invasion of Japan. On his return flight he first heard of the use of the atomic bomb. Soon the Japanese surrendered, and the invasion wasn't needed. Like 1,000's of others he was very relieved. "We were a lucky bunch of men. It would have been a blood bath." Brunson said of the pending invasion of the Japanese homeland.

After the war he decided to stay in the service. He became a part of Strategic Air Command (SAC) and during the Korean War flew recon missions in a B-29.

He stayed in the service until 1966 and then continued with aviation in civilian life.

Brunson's employment included many years of working for the FAA from which he retired in 1988. It completed a life of aerial service to our nation. In World War II that included 25 successful missions, mostly at night, over 1,000's of miles of vast expanses of water.

As this interview was concluding, Brunson said there was something else he wanted included. He said, "Yeah, today I think a lot about those fire bombs. You know we killed a lot of civilians over there. That's a shame. I guess there was no other way of doing it. It makes you kind of wonder. It's just amazing that they would not surrender."



GNOCCHI WITH ROASTED CAULIFLOWER

Serves 4 (as a main course)

- 1 small head cauliflower, cut into small florets
- 1/4 cup fresh sage leaves
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 1 pound gnocchi (fresh or frozen)
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan

Heat oven to 400 F. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss the cauliflower and sage with the oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Roast, tossing once, until the cauliflower is golden brown and tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Fifteen minutes before the cauliflower is finished, cook the gnocchi according to the package directions. Divide the gnocchi among bowls and top with the cauliflower and Parmesan.

Tip: Cauliflower florets are easier to separate if you remove the core first. Place the head stem-side up. Using a paring knife, cut around the core at an angle, creating a cone-shaped piece, then lift it out. If the head is very large, halve it first through the core.



GINGER PAPAYA SMOOTHIE

Yields 4 1-cup servings

- 1 cup chilled papaya nectar
- 1 container (8 ounces) peach low-fat yogurt
- 1/2 cup silken tofu
- 1/4 cup whey protein powder
- 3 tablespoons crystallized ginger
- 2 cups papaya cubes, frozen
- 4 papaya spears for garnish (optional)

Combine papaya nectar, yogurt, tofu, whey protein powder, and crystallized ginger in a blender or smoothie maker. Blend on high speed for 45 seconds or until mixture is puréed and smooth. Add papaya cubes and blend on high speed again until mixture is smooth. Serve immediately garnished with papaya spears, if desired.

Tip: Crystallized ginger is fresh ginger that has been cooked in sugar syrup to render it both sweet and tender. It is usually then coated with sugar to prevent the slices from sticking together. To find crystallized ginger, look in the baking section of your supermarket rather than the produce aisle.

“What If?”

Maybe the only way to survive a Nuclear fallout

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The advertisement features a dramatic background of a nuclear mushroom cloud explosion against a dark, stormy sky. In the foreground, a small glass bottle of Nascent Iodine is shown. The bottle has a white label with blue and green text that reads "HARMONIC CONCEPTS NASCENT IODINE Dietary Supplement 15. oz (30 mL)". The text "What If?" is written in large, white, serif font at the top. Below the bottle, the text "Maybe the only way to survive a Nuclear fallout" is written in a bold, sans-serif font, with a yellow starburst graphic behind the word "fallout". At the bottom, the copyright information and purchase locations are listed.

NOVEMBER EVENTS

Pickin' in the Pines
4010 Park Ave.
3rd Saturday every month.

A Night in the Aegean
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 3 at 5:30 p.m.

Evening Lions Bingo
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 4 at 9 a.m.

Hot Springs Renaissance Fair
Garland County Fairgrounds
Nov. 4-6

Christian Comedian Ken Davis
Woodlands Auditorium
Nov. 5 at 7 p.m.

Ouachita Speaker Series
Ponce de Leon Center
Nov. 8

Library Book Club
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 9 at 10 a.m.

Audubon Speaker Series
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 10

Annual Veterans Day Show and Lunch
Woodlands Auditorium
Nov. 11

Country Two Steppers
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 12 at 7 p.m.

Spa Running Festival
134 Convention Boulevard
Nov. 12

HSV Players - Wizard of Oz
Woodlands Auditorium
Nov. 17, 18 & 19 at 7 p.m.

Friends of the Village Trails Work Day
Village Trails
Nov. 17 at 1 p.m.

Taste of the Holidays at Mid-America Science
Museum
Mid-America Museum
Nov. 17 at 5 p.m.

Evening Lions Bingo
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 18 at 7 p.m.

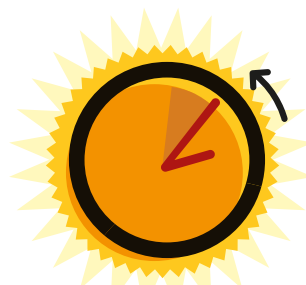
Beboppers Dance
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

Fall Arts and Crafts Fair
Coronado Community Center
Nov. 19 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

HSV Players - Wizard of Oz
Woodlands Auditorium
Nov. 20 at 2 p.m.

Tom Daniel Holiday Chili Cook Off
Exchange Street Parking Deck
Nov. 21

Newcomers Meeting
Woodlands Auditorium
Nov. 30 at 10 a.m.



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NOVEMBER 6

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Community Calendar



Thursday, November 17 at 3pm

Jodi Tillman of Evergreen shows us how to use our store to decorate for the Holidays



November Charity:

Donate your change in November & we'll match it to benefit the American Legion



Thursday, November 10 at 3pm

Hammer and Stain DIY Workshops
Crafts for the Holidays!



SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5 3PM - 5PM

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Wednesday, November 24:
Open until 2pm

Thursday, November 25:
Closed

Have a Blessed Holiday!