



SENTINEL

NEWSLETTER OF THE QUIET PROFESSIONALS

SPECIAL FORCES ASSOCIATION CHAPTER 78

The LTC Frank J. Dallas Chapter

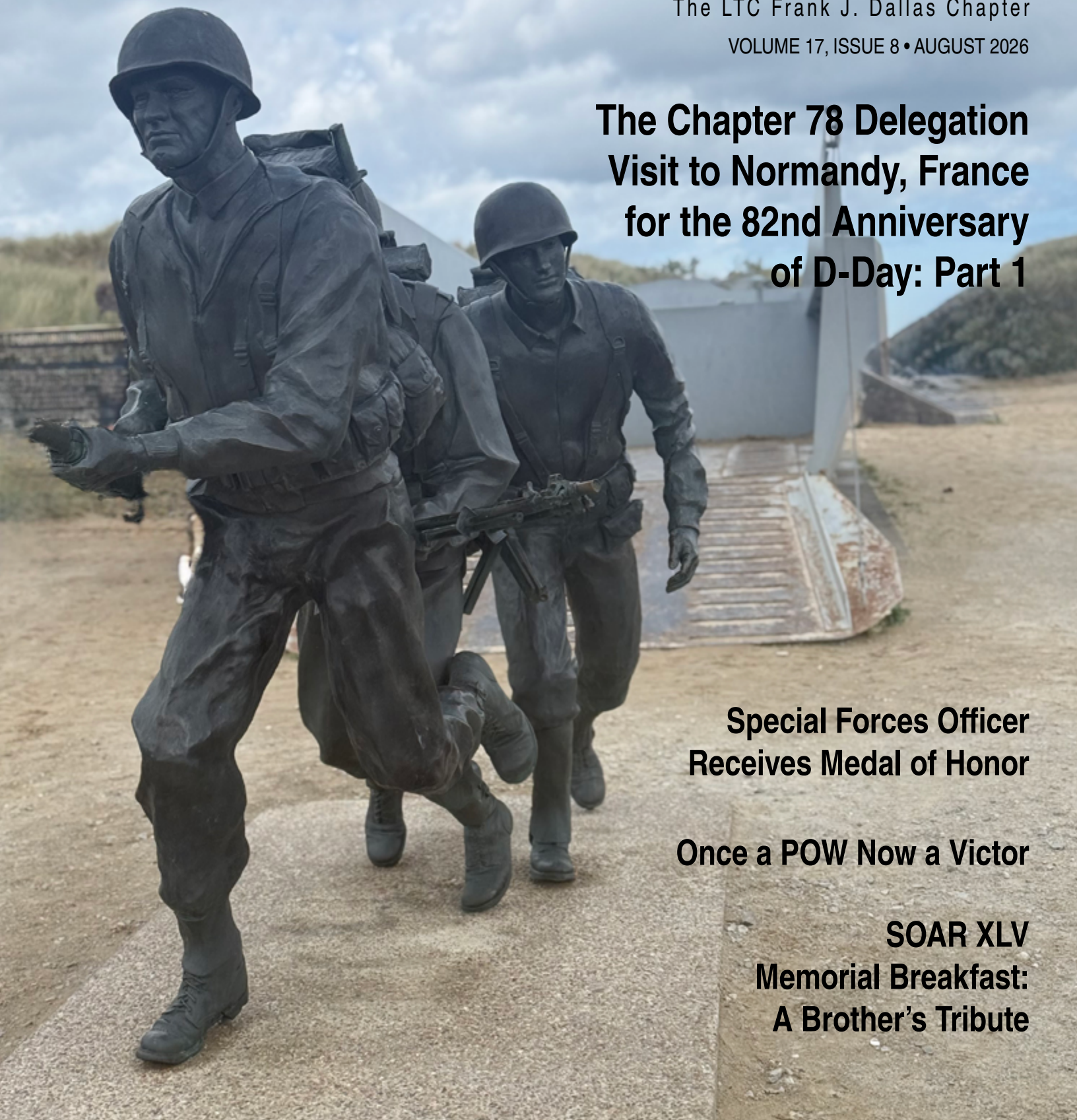
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The Chapter 78 Delegation Visit to Normandy, France for the 82nd Anniversary of D-Day: Part 1

**Special Forces Officer
Receives Medal of Honor**

Once a POW Now a Victor

**SOAR XLV
Memorial Breakfast:
A Brother's Tribute**





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FRONT COVER: The Higgins Boat Monument is located at Utah Beach. One of the most iconic boats in WWII history—the Higgins boat, or LCVP (Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel)—ferried Allied troops onto the beaches of Normandy. This was one of the many locations visited by the Chapter 78 delegation that visited Normandy, France, for the 82nd anniversary of D-Day. You can read the first installment of the story about this adventure beginning on page 4. (Photo courtesy of Aaron Brandenburg)

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From the President | August 2026



James McLanahan
President SFA Ch. 78

A Place at the Table

I was lucky that a friend suggested I join the SFA. I had no plans of ever going to meetings for Ex-Special Forces guys. It seemed to me that after the Army gave me my 214, there was nothing more to do, and I would just be reliving my glory days. I also mistakenly thought it was just a drinking club, and I had already drunk enough for two lifetimes. My buddy let me know I was wrong, and just meeting the guys at the chapter was probably worth the price of admission.

Much to my surprise (I am sometimes a little stubborn and can be a slow learner because of it), he was right. My friend doesn't usually speak up unless he is pretty sure he's right. But like I said, slow learner. The first meeting I went to, I was expecting to get the new guy treatment and have to spend the next few months proving myself, as I had always had to do over the course of my career. I was wrong about that one too. Instead of having to earn a place at the table, one had been prepared for me. And I was welcomed with open arms by legends from our community who were so humble that they had questions for me about my war and how it had differed from theirs. They offered me to join them in Chapter endeavors, and I quickly discovered that even though the mission the Army gave me had ended, I could choose to accept another one: steward the profession I had loved. We could help Green Berets from the past, present, and future. And together we can get a lot done. Our chapter does tend to punch a bit above its weight, but many Chapters across the country do. I am glad to be a part of it. I feel like I get a lot more than I give.

Before I forget, the one who recommended I join the SFA was MSG (Retired) Earl Plumlee, Medal of Honor. He did the chapter a huge favor the first time we ran the luncheon, and I know his contribution was felt by the audience. Not everyone has a friend telling them to visit their local chapter, and oh, by the way, how about you pick up a shovel? We have work to do.

To the Green Berets who are currently serving and who are recently retired, you should know you have a place at the table, and if you want, work to do. We will be here when you're ready. ♦

De Oppresso Liber,
James McLanahan
President, SFA Chapter 78



New Chapter member James McLanahan was welcomed in December 2019 by then-Chapter President John Stryker Meyer.



SFA Chapter 78 Monthly Meeting

August 15, 2026

Breakfast – 0800 • Meeting – 0830

Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos
The Pub at Fiddlers Green
4745 Yorktown Ave Bldg 19,
Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5176

Please send RSVP by Monday, August 10 to
VP Don Deatherage @ drdeathca@gmail.com

Next month—September 19, 2026

Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos
The Pub at Fiddlers Green

2026 Meeting Schedule

September 19
October 17 • November 21
December (to be announced)

From the Editor | August 2026



How Miller
Sentinel Editor

A dream trip combined with a pilgrimage, that's what 6 Chapter 78 members and some wives undertook, along with a thoroughly involved tour group, **Walk Among Heroes**. Some of them describe the intense experience here. You will also see pictures of some of the tributes that have been added or preserved through the ensuing years since **6 June, 1944** along the Normandy coast. Among the surprises were the very appreciative attitudes of the local residents. **There is more to come next month in Part 2.**

But first, another Green Beret has recently been awarded the **Medal of Honor** for his actions in Afghanistan before he joined Special Forces. Then **2LT Nicholas Dockery** helped his unit survive by having them charge an ambush and placing himself repeatedly between members of his unit and enemy fire, including a grenade. See the writeup to hear this incredible tale.

Author **Greg Walker**, received an unusual request from **COL Martin Stanton** when he picked him up to drive him to the Green Zone in Baghdad. The Colonel wanted to stop by the Al Rasheed Hotel on the way for personal reasons. After readily agreeing, Greg found out why. When the Colonel was in Iraq before, he was being held there by Sadaam Hussein's youngest son Uday as a hostage/ human shield during the runup to desert Storm. This time he was visiting as a victor.

The Global War on Terrorism Memorial Foundation announced another milestone in their years-long process to realize the memorial. They have revealed the **initial design concept** after a long outreach for input from the public for what they wanted the memorial to convey. The reveal was live and videotaped: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMbjt0-hHNg>. You might want to skip the first fifteen minutes which is dedicated to current sponsors.

The Special Operators Association (**SOA**) is a sister organization, comprised largely of MACV SOG Green Berets.

A large percentage of their members are also SFA members. **Jim Suber**, a Chapter 78 Gold Star Member is also a member of SOA due to having lost his brother **Randy Suber** on a SOG operation. Jim shares with us his address to an SOA convention about his brother Randy, Jim's experience of Randy's loss, and how SOA has brought him and his family comfort.

With our chapter president James McLanahan in Normandy and VP Don Deatherage also on vacation, Chapter Secretary Gary Macnamara led our June meeting. **James Stejskal** told us about **T.E. Lawrence** (of Arabia), a WWI special operative, and his book about him **Masters of Mayhem**. We invite you to see some photos of our meeting.

As always, please enjoy and keep sending in your stories about your SF deployments. Thanks again for the many stories we have already published. ❖

How Miller, *Sentinel* Editor

Independence, California Veterans Memorial Park Proposal Moves Forward



MG John Singlaub, an Independence native and Special Forces legend, will be honored at the proposed memorial.

By Debra Holm

In the September 2025 *Sentinel*, we reported that a proposal to create a Veterans Memorial Park in Independence met unexpected resistance when it was presented to the Inyo County Board of Supervisors the previous July.

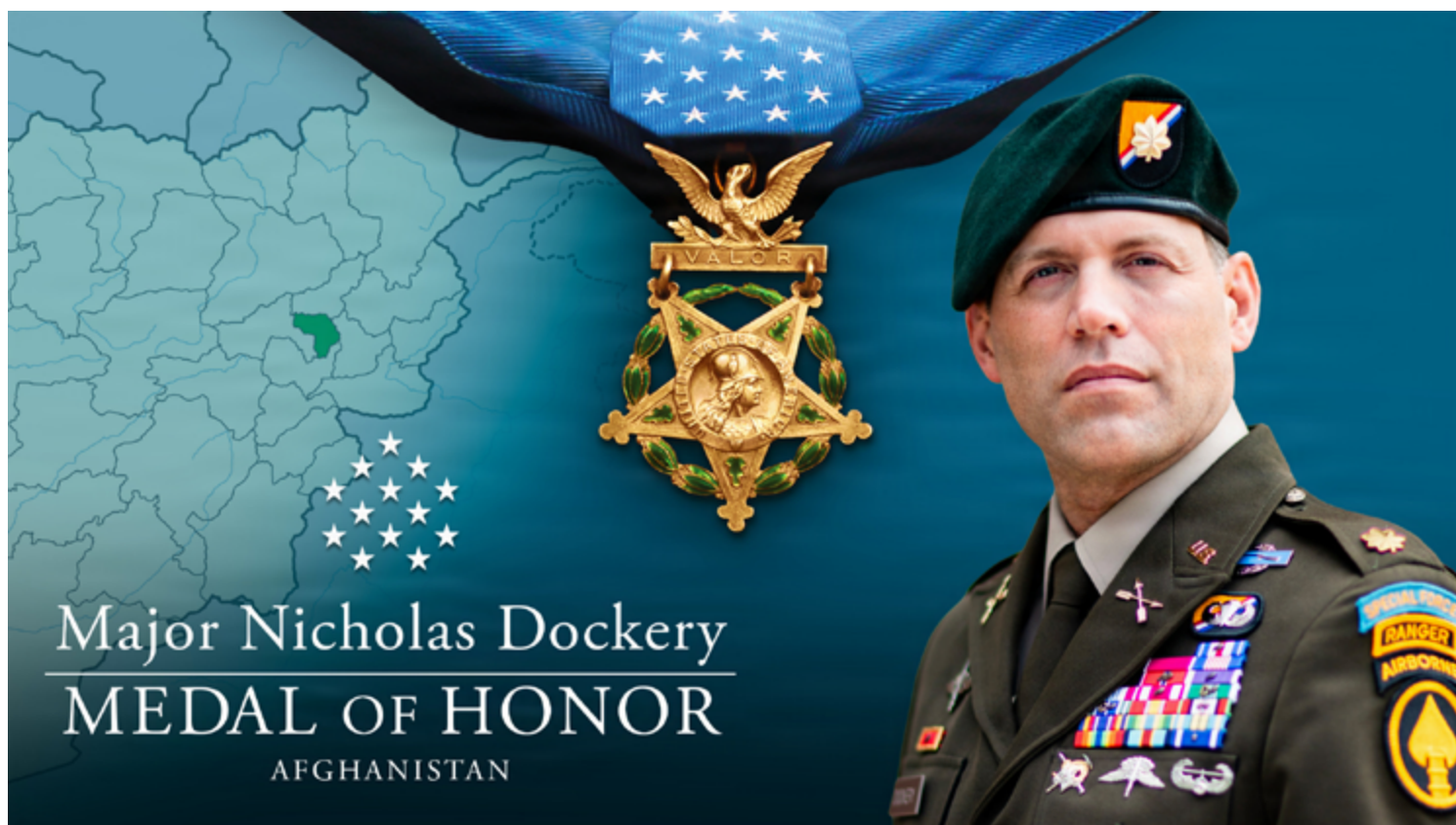
The plans for the memorial are alive and well. The working committee will soon return before the Board to seek approval for the project once again, having spent the past several months revising the plans based on the feedback received.

Although some believed the memorial proposal had come to an end just a few months ago, the widespread support from the community has inspired the committee to persevere.

Recently, the Turner Barnes VFW Post 8036 Auxiliary sent a letter to the Board expressing its strong support for the project. Dr. Bob Reed, a member of the working committee, shared the letter with the *Sentinel*. In it, the Auxiliary endorses the project and, in particular, the park's four key components:

- The prominent display of a 30' x 50' American flag, surrounded by the flags representing each branch of military service, serving as a powerful symbol of unity and sacrifice.
- The monument honoring Major General John Singlaub, a distinguished third-generation war hero who served our nation in three wars.
- The Wall of Honor, recognizing Inyo County veterans who have received combat decorations ranging from the Medal of Honor to the Silver Star.
- The inclusive element of engraved bricks, benches, and features that will honor all veterans of Inyo County, ensuring every service member's contribution is remembered.

As we receive updates on developments and progress, we will pass them onto you. ❖



SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER RECEIVES MEDAL OF HONOR

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Nicholas Dockery received the Medal of Honor from the President of the United States Donald J. Trump during a ceremony at the White House in Washington, D.C. on June 18, 2026, for his acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty on Oct. 2, 2012, while serving as a Platoon Leader, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade, 4th Infantry Division in Kapisa Province, Afghanistan.

On that day, Second Lieutenant Nicholas Dockery's platoon and associated Afghan forces were ambushed by an estimated 150 Taliban fighters. Ordered to eliminate the threat, Lieutenant Dockery planned and led an assault on the enemy forces. Lieutenant Dockery traversed 100 yards of open terrain under enemy fire to reach U.S. forces in need of assistance.

Hearing a U.S. Soldier had been wounded, Lieutenant Dockery fought his way to Soldiers who were taking cover in a building that was occupied by enemy fighters. Realizing the immediate danger, he organized and led the forces in clearing six rooms of the multi-level compound, killing one enemy fighter and detaining two others. When an enemy grenade landed nearby, he shoved a team member behind cover preventing him from being killed or wounded by the resulting blast.



(US. Army photo by Bernardo Fuller)

Attempting to regain momentum after the blast, Lieutenant Dockery led a four-man team to clear the compound's courtyard before the enemy used a rocket-propelled grenade, resulting in an explosion that incapacitated two Soldiers. Although dazed and wounded himself, Lieutenant Dockery went to the aid of the wounded Soldiers who were fully exposed to enemy fire. After helping one Soldier to his feet, he engaged and killed two enemy fighters who were attempting to approach the other injured soldier. Lieutenant Dockery provided first aid and used his own body to shield the Soldier from further injury, saving his life.

Air support assets could not differentiate between friendly and enemy positions, so Lieutenant Dockery marked his position on the building's roof, exposing himself to enemy fire on multiple occasions while providing covering fire to friendly forces evacuating the wounded. He was the last individual to leave the battlefield. ❖



Summary of the Chapter 78 Delegation Visit to Normandy, France for the 82nd Anniversary of D-Day Part 1



Walk Among Heroes D Day Group 2026



Left to right, Jack Boeki, Tom and Jill Turney, Jack Hugman



In early 2026 several members of SFA Chapter 78 began discussing the idea of sending a Delegation of Chapter members to the 82nd Annual Anniversary of the D-Day Invasion in Normandy, France. Tom Turney was charged with researching options and ultimately it was decided that the Delegation would travel to Normandy with a non-profit that has been taking WWII Veterans back to Europe for years. This group, Walk Among Heroes (<https://www.walkamongheroes.org/>), is an amazing group and anyone considering traveling to attend future D-Day Anniversaries or other activities they host honoring Veterans would be well advised to travel with them.

The Chapter 78 Delegation that traveled to France included Chapter 78 President James McLanahan; immediate past president Aaron Brandenburg and his wife, Kathleen; Bob and Arlinda Crebbs; Tom and Jill Turney; Robert Casillas; and recent Q-Course graduate Mike Quinn.

As part of our Walk Among Heroes group, besides the Chapter 78 Delegation, were two WWII Veterans accompanied by family members (Courtesy of Walk Among Heroes), as well as others who had signed up to attend the trip organized by Walk Among Heroes. The two WWII Veterans (the "Pair of Jacks") were:

Jack Boeki (102)

Born in the Netherlands, Jack Boeki was just 15 years old during the Nazi occupation of Europe. Repeatedly hunted by the Nazis, he escaped capture an incredible ten times through courage, quick thinking, and help from the Resistance.

As hiding places disappeared, Jack escaped to France, where he became involved in espionage operations with the highly secretive Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the organization that later became the CIA and laid the foundations for Special Forces.

Following a critical mission, the OSS sent Jack to the United States, where he enlisted in the U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps. On D-Day +2, Jack landed on Utah Beach with a team of agents and advanced alongside Allied forces through France and into Germany. His duties included locating, interrogating, and arresting Nazi operatives and war criminals.

Jack's journey from hunted survivor to American intelligence agent reflects extraordinary resilience, courage, and determination. Throughout his life, Jack has dedicated himself to sharing the lessons of freedom, survival, and leadership. As a Holocaust survivor, liberator, World War II veteran, speaker, and author, he continues to inspire future generations through his testimony and public appearances.

His story remains a powerful reminder of the value of freedom and the strength of the human spirit in the face of tyranny and war.

Jack (with the assistance of his daughter, Anna-Lea and his son JJ), has written a book over the past 20 years which will be released later this year. The book is called *From Fugitive to Freedom*, and is available for pre-order on Amazon.

Jack Hugman (99)

At just 18, John "Jack" Hugman answered the call of duty, enlisting in the U.S. Navy in November 1945. As a Seaman First Class stationed at the [Yokosuka Naval Base in Occupied Japan](#), Jack played a vital role in transforming a former Japanese kamikaze submarine factory into a key supply hub for American forces.

Working alongside the Navy Seabees, Jack operated German-made hammerhead cranes to unload cargo ships, manage critical inventories, and coordinate rail transfers of supplies to Army and Air Force bases across Japan. His two years of service helped lay the foundation for a peaceful post-war presence in the Pacific.

He was honorably discharged in 1947, having made a lasting mark in the early efforts of American rebuilding abroad.

Walk Among Heroes D-Day Group 2026

Each Chapter 78 Delegation member was assigned a day to be the scribe responsible for summarizing the day's activities which would then be compiled into a story for the *Sentinel*. What follows are the



Chapter Delegation at our Chateau holding *The Drop* and the *Sentinel*.

write-ups for each day, with the name of the person writing about that day. You will note that Aaron Brandenburg has written most of the daily logs as most of us deferred to him based on his superb writing skills—thank you Aaron!!

1 June 2026 – Aaron Brandenburg

We were picked up from our hotel by a volunteer from Walk Among Heroes. He was a former Navy SEAL, and we would hit it off from the moment he opened the van door. We drove for approximately 3:30 hours to the [Château de l'Isle Marie](#), where we would be staying for the next 7 days. During the drive, I was daydreaming and staring out the window; I couldn't help but marvel at the beauty of the French countryside. Similarly, I found myself asking why there had been so many significant wars and conflicts fought on these lands suited for a painting rather than carnage.

Eventually, we left the paved road and entered a dirt driveway lined with towering trees on both sides. Approximately 500m later, the path opened onto the site of the Château de l'Isle Marie. The Château is a magnificent structure both in size and grandeur; it remains a historic 300-acre estate in Picaerville, Normandy. With origins as a 9th-century Viking fortress, the castle grounds have remained in the d'Aigneaux family lineage since the 11th century. Through time, the building has housed Vikings, French royalty, Nazis, and Allied leadership after the invasion. Now, for the week of 1 June to 8 June 2026, it will host all 22 guests, including two WWII veterans, Jack Boeki and Jack Hugman, as well as volunteers from Walk Among Heroes.

2 June 2026 – Aaron Brandenburg

At 0600, we departed the Château en route to Normandy Beach, approximately fifteen miles away. It was during that short drive that the true magnitude of the trip began to settle in. What had started as an opportunity to visit historic sites had evolved into something



Château de l'Isle Marie



Chapter 78 Delegation standing above Omaha Beach (left) and (right) on Omaha Beach at Shay's Rock looking up the hill where German machine gun emplacements were concealed.



much More profound. We weren't simply going to see a beach; we were about to stand on the very ground where ordinary young men accomplished extraordinary things and forever changed the course of history. It was here, on this sandy beach, that the selfless strived to repel tyranny and create lasting peace.

The sky was gray, it was cold, and there was an occasional drizzle that reminded me of the opening scene of *Saving Private Ryan*. We were the first tourists on the beach, and oddly enough, it was peaceful. The waves in the distance are crashing against the now-white sands, seagulls are overhead, drifting in the water-soaked wind, and several horses are in a fast trot, pulling carriages across the beach. It is a stark contrast to what I had expected to see; knowing the horrors that had unfolded in a place of such beauty is almost unsettling.

I begin to picture the ramp lowering, those 18 to 19-year-old boys stepping off the [Higgins boats](#) into chaos, and suddenly the statistics of D-Day become faces. The bluffs are no longer lines on a map, the tide is no longer just a photograph, and the beach is no longer history but a place. Mothers and fathers imagine their sons, and grandparents remember how young they were on that day. Even those who don't consider themselves emotional are overwhelmed with tears of gratitude.

Wiping a tear from beneath rain-speckled, foggy glasses, I whispered, "Thank you."

We departed Omaha for [Pointe du Hoc](#), and with it came a dramatic change in scenery. Gone were the sweeping sands, replaced by a landscape permanently altered by war. The earth was pitted with massive artillery craters from eighty-two years ago, as though Normandy itself refused to forget what had happened on those cliffs.

Looking over the edge down at the water, I'm in disbelief. It is hard to believe that 225 Rangers scaled the 100 ft cliff under machine gun fire. Using, by today's standard, primitive gear, ladders, ropes, and grappling hooks. It is one thing to hear the stories; it's a whole different story to look down and realize that there was no cover and concealment.



Aerial view of Pointe du Hoc



View from above where the 2nd Ranger Battalion scaled the cliffs.



Lunch at Omaha Beach where the Delegation ran into an active duty SF Trooper who was having lunch with his son.

Walking into the bunkers at Pointe du Hoc stirred a different emotion than standing on Omaha Beach; it was more a feeling of unease than of sorrow. The thick concrete walls and the rusted remnants of war made the fighting feel intimate. It was impossible not to imagine both young American and German soldiers occupying these dark and stale places. There is an eerie silence inside the bunkers, the air feels heavy, and almost sacred. Instinctively, we remove our hats, our conversations are reduced to whispers, and we pause a little longer than intended. These concrete bunkers were built to withstand everything imaginable, except the 2nd Ranger Battalion.

The afternoon took us to [Utah Beach](#) which evokes a different emotion.

The beaches are wider and flatter; they seem less imposing. While it was windy, the atmosphere felt lighter, almost celebratory. We still felt immense gratitude, but there was a sense of relief mixed with it.

Utah Beach is also where Jack Boeckl landed on D Day +2 and it was a very emotional moment for him on his first visit back.

Troops on D Day were shuttled to the beach on Higgins Boats.

The story of Utah Beach is one of adaptation against all odds. Almost nothing went according to plan on Utah Beach. The chaos of the naval gunfire, smoke, and winds caused the first wave of troops to land 2000 meters from the intended landing zone. Rather than failure, Brigadier General Teddy Roosevelt Jr. stayed calm and famously said: "We'll start the war from right here."

In truth, Utah Beach reflects a truth familiar to most soldiers: No plan survives first contact, victory often belongs not to the side with the perfect plan, but to the side that adapts the fastest.



D Day View from Higgins Boat Landing. (Photo by Robert Capa; Public Domain)

HIGGINS BOAT MONUMENT

On June 6, 1944 the majority of Allied troops initially arriving on the Normandy Beaches landed in one of two craft: the British Landing Craft Assault (LCA) or the American Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel (LCVP). In fact, some 1,089 LCVPs took part in D-Day.

Developed by Andrew Jackson Higgins in 1941, the LCVP was built by Higgins Industries in New Orleans. The Higgins Boat carried up to 36 troops, was capable of up to 12 knots and could be outfitted with a pair of Browning M1919 machine guns. The boats were crewed by four personnel.

By the time of the Normandy landings the LCVP had been used in every theatre of operations including Operation Torch in North Africa, landings in Italy, and in southern France. It was also used in the Pacific theatre.

This memorial to Higgins, his boats, and the men who rode ashore in them has been given to the people of France by the citizens of Columbus, Nebraska, the birthplace of Andrew Jackson Higgins. The memorial here is a replica of a memorial built in Columbus in 2001, and is also a celebration of partnership between Columbus and Sainte Marie du Mont ... two communities tied together by history and a heritage of freedom.



Higgins Boat Memorial and Chapter member Aaron Brandenburg standing in a replica Higgins Boat.



Utah Beach



Normandy American Cemetery

3 June 2026 – Mike Quinn

Our day began before the gates opened at the [Normandy American Cemetery](#).

At 0830, in the quiet hours before the first visitors arrived, our Walk Among Heroes group was granted access to the American Cemetery overlooking Omaha Beach. There is a stillness to the Cemetery that is difficult to describe. The rows of white marble stretch toward the horizon, interrupted only by the sound of the wind and the distant surf below.

That morning, we raised two American flags. The first was carried aloft by World War II veteran Jack Hugman alongside Chapter members Tom Turney and James McLanahan. The second was raised by Jack Boeckl and me. For me, the moment carried particular significance. Jack Boeckl served in the French Resistance and later with the Office of Strategic Services. As a Green Beret, it is impossible not to recognize the lineage. The OSS remains part of the foundation upon which Special Forces was built. Standing beside one of those men beneath an American flag in Normandy was a reminder that our regiment's story did not begin at Fort Bragg, it began in places like this.

After the ceremony, our French guides, Chloé and Emma, led us through the Cemetery.

We moved from headstone to headstone while Jack Hugman and Jack Boeckl paused at each grave, rubbing sand across the carved letters—a Normandy tradition that brings the inscriptions into sharper relief.

At each stop, a life story was shared, briefly transforming a granite headstone into a person once again.

First was Nathan Baskind, a young lieutenant killed in Normandy whose remains went unidentified for nearly eighty years. Through modern DNA analysis, he was [finally identified and laid to rest under a Star of David in 2024](#). Eight decades later, his story lived on.



Chapter 78 Delegation Saluting the Colors after the Flag Raisings

A few rows away were [Norman and Robert Lantow](#), brothers buried side by side. Nearby rested [Robert and Preston Niland](#), whose family's wartime story would later help inspire *Saving Private Ryan*. Looking across the cemetery, it became impossible not to notice how many families sacrificed more than one son.

The story of [Ollie Reed Sr. and Ollie Reed Jr.](#) was equally striking. Father and son. Buried together in Normandy. Two generations who answered the same call and now rest together overlooking the beachhead they helped secure.

We stopped at the graves of twin brothers [Julius and Ludwig Pieper](#). Ludwig was buried first. Julius remained missing for decades before being identified and finally reunited with his brother seventy-four years later. Their story was a reminder that for some families, the war's final chapter did not close until well into the twenty-first century, and many family members passed without closure.

One stop carried particular weight. We stood at the grave of Technician Fifth Grade Edward Morozewicz, an Army medic killed on Omaha Beach. What made the story remarkable was not only how he died, but who remembered him. Morozewicz had served alongside fellow medic [Charles Shay](#), the Penobscot tribal member whose actions on D-Day would later earn recognition in both the United States and France. The two men were close friends. When Morozewicz was mortally wounded on Omaha Beach, he died in Shay's arms. For decades afterward, Charles carried the memory of that moment.

Our hosts from Walk Among Heroes had spent years getting to know Charles before his passing in December 2025. Following his death, they made a commitment to continue one of the traditions most important to him: visiting Eddie's grave whenever they came to Normandy.

As we stood before the headstone, it struck me that the story was no longer just about June 6, 1944, it was about lifelong friendship, loyalty and memory.

Standing at Eddie's grave, it was impossible not to think about Charles Shay holding his friend on Omaha Beach, and about the fact that he was burdened with that memory for the rest of his life. The scale of the war is staggering, yet the sacrifice is always personal.

Following the tour, we attended a wreath-laying ceremony at the foot of [The Spirit of American Youth Rising from the Waves statue](#). Aaron Brandenburg and Robert Casillas had the honor of placing the wreath with Jack Hugman and Jack Boeckl.

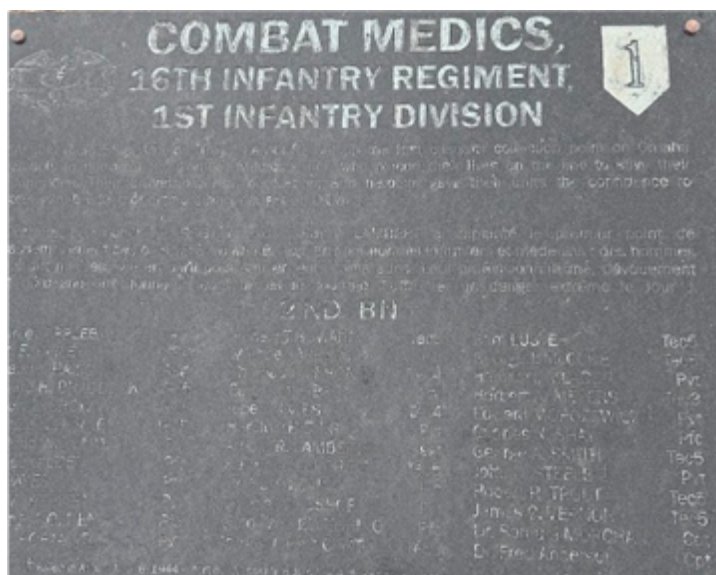
As the event concluded, a group of French schoolchildren approached. Their teacher, visibly emotional, asked whether the children might greet the veterans.

Within moments, the children surrounded Jack Hugman and Jack Boeckl, greeting them with hugs, handshakes, prepared drawings and smiles that crossed generations and oceans.

It was one of many reminders throughout the week that Normandy's memory of June 1944 is not confined to museums or anniversaries. It remains alive in the people. Eighty-two years later, French schoolchildren still understand that their freedom was purchased by young Americans who crossed an ocean, protecting a continent they had never visited and a people they had never met.



Chapter members Aaron Brandenburg and Robert Casillas helping the "Pair of Jacks" lay wreaths.



Memorial to Combat Medics on Omaha Beach

From Colleville-sur-Mer, we traveled to [Sainte-Mère-Église](#), a town inextricably linked to the story of America's airborne forces. Shortly after midnight on June 5th, 1944, paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions descended into the darkness around Sainte-Mère-Église. Their mission was to seize key road networks, secure the approaches to Utah Beach, and disrupt German defenses before the amphibious landings began. A fire burning in the town square illuminated descending paratroopers, making them easy targets as they drifted toward the ground. Some landed directly among German positions. Others landed on rooftops, in gardens, and in the middle of firefights. The church stood at the center of it all, a silent witness to one of the most chaotic airborne assaults in military history.

By dawn, Sainte-Mère-Église had become one of the first towns liberated in France and the first town liberated by American airborne forces. Today, American flags still hang from storefronts and memorials and



Permanent Memorial to Jack Steel



Stained Glass Window With Paratroopers

photographs are woven into daily life. The affection for American soldiers is not performative, and the people of Sainte-Mère-Église do not just remember the liberation, they live with it.

One of the most memorable stories belongs to [Private John Steele](#) of the 82nd Airborne Division. As German and American gunfire erupted in the town square, Steele's parachute became entangled on the church steeple. Unable to free himself, he hung suspended above the battle for hours, feigning death while fighting raged beneath him. A parachute still hangs from the church tower today, ensuring that no visitor forgets the chaos of those opening hours. Inside the church, we heard lesser-known stories and admired the stained glass windows picturing paratroopers.

By afternoon, we gathered at an Airborne Memorial in the town square. Veterans, active-duty paratroopers, local citizens, French officials, and visitors from around the world stood together before the monument dedicated to the airborne soldiers who descended into Normandy before

dawn on D-Day. The ceremony reflected not only on the accomplishments of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions, but on the enduring bond between Normandy and the Americans who helped liberate it.

Throughout the day, I found myself struck by the contrast that exists throughout Normandy. The atmosphere is vibrant, the cafés are full and the streets are lined with flags.

Yet beneath that energy is something deeper: a quiet, solemn reverence.

You see it in the cemetery, in the schoolchildren carrying hand-drawn pictures for veterans, in the townspeople who continue to decorate their homes with American flags more than eight decades after the war, in the way the people of Sainte-Mère-Église speak about American paratroopers as if they arrived yesterday.

For those who serve or have served, Normandy offers something more than history: it offers perspective.

The names etched into marble at Colleville belong to young men who never had the opportunity to grow old. Yet their legacy remains visible everywhere—in the flags, the memorials, the churches, the schoolchildren, and the enduring gratitude of a people who have never forgotten who came to help liberate them.

Green Berets often speak about standing on the shoulders of the giants who came before us. Among the rows of marble overlooking Omaha Beach, the meaning of that phrase became impossible to miss. And for an entire day, we walked among them.

4 June 2026 – Aaron Brandenburg

Another layer of history, emotion, honor, and remembrance as we paid our respects to the young men who sacrificed their lives to save the world from tyranny. We started the day at a C-47 Memorial Garden site near Picauville, France. The aircraft took a direct hit during the D-Day airborne assault, and all 20 men aboard were killed.

The site itself sits in an unassuming field on a small farm surrounded by hedgerows. At ground level, the silhouette of a C-47 has been etched into the earth and backfilled with black slate rock bordered by timber edging.

The Shaw family imported Virginia Tulip trees and planted four of them in an arch at the nose of the aircraft, symbolizing the four pilots who led the way. At the tail of the aircraft, the remaining sixteen trees form a V-shape, representing the paratroopers who were lost that fateful day. From above, the Virginia Tulip trees create the shape of a fully deployed parachute, paying homage to the 101st Airborne. May the souls of those men forever fly with the eagles, a symbol of freedom.

Jack Boeki arrived in his wheelchair, wrapped beneath a blanket. This 102-year-old Holocaust survivor and D-Day veteran paused to salute the colors of our nation. Shortly thereafter, the ceremony began, and so did the weather. Torrential winds arrived with sheets of rain. Standing unfazed, cold, and soaked, the color guard held their staffs as both the American flag and the 101st Airborne colors violently whipped in the wind. It was as if they were battling Mother Nature herself.

The small crowd, me included, was soaked to the bone. Yet no one moved. The significance of the moment was overwhelming. Patriotism swelled, and tears welled in the eyes of many. At the same time, soldiers and civilians alike rushed forward, forming a shield of umbrellas to keep old Jack dry.

Stoically, he sat. Sorrow and pain in his eyes, his weathered face remained fixed and focused. Near the end of his 102-year journey, he had come to say goodbye to those who never made it home. After several powerful speeches, including remarks from the commander of the 101st Airborne Division, the ceremony concluded. As if it had been planned and timed perfectly, the clouds broke apart, and the sun emerged.

It felt symbolic. As though our nation's colors had prevailed. As though Mother Nature had finally relented. As though our fallen heroes were being wrapped in warm sunlight by some airborne guardian of the heavens.

We traveled several kilometers away to a small bridge known as La Fièvre. At first glance, it is an insignificant structure of stone and concrete stretching roughly 100 meters across a marsh. Yet with



Chapter Member Bob Crebbs at the Airborne Memorial.



Former Sainte-Mère-Église mayor Maurice Renaud, addressing the crowd.



C-47 Memorial Garden



Colonel Keith Nightingale speaks at La Fièvre Bridge.



La Fièvre Bridge from Helen Patton's Chateau

an estimated 60 percent casualty rate among the units involved, it became the site of one of the most consequential battles in the storied history of the 82nd Airborne Division.

The ceremony began with a detailed account of those critical days delivered by Colonel Keith Nightingale. Without notes or hesitation, he transported us back to 6-9 June, 1944. As he spoke, I could almost smell the gunpowder and taste the metallic tang of blood shed by those young men who gave everything for their country.

Once again, the skies darkened. The wind began to blow, and the heavens opened with the fury of a Panzer attack. Cold and wrapped in modern rain gear, I couldn't help but think of the conditions those young men endured. For many of them, the war had begun only twenty-four hours earlier. For most, it had already ended. Bodies torn apart. Lives cut short. The unavoidable truth is, mothers and fathers would soon receive the Western Union telegram informing them of their loss. Children would grow up without fathers, fathers without sons; families would forever carry the weight of a collective sacrifice.

Just 100 meters from the bridge, [Helen Patton](#), granddaughter of [General George S. Patton Jr.](#), has painstakingly transformed the old mill house into a guesthouse. Through her efforts, she preserves not only a historic location but also the stories of the men who fought there.

After a handshake and a hug, I presented Helen with an SFA Chapter 78 coin. In return, Helen handed us General Patton's iconic riding crop that General Patton regularly carried.

Some experiences stay with you forever. The truth is, Normandy makes sure of that.

Coming next month in part 2: Chapter 78's Normandy journey continues—from the Resistance memorial and Angoville-au-Plain's bloodstained pews to the American Cemetery, where a 107-year-old veteran reads a letter home and a crowd rises for "the Pair of Jacks." History stopped being something studied—it became something felt.



Above, Chapter 78 Delegation holding Patton's riding crop with Helen Patton and Jack Hugman.

At left, Aaron Brandenburg with Helen Patton after presentation by Aaron of Chapter 78 Challenge Coin.



Baghdad, Iraq — “Army Col. Martin Stanton (left) has been in Iraq before — as a prisoner of war...” (Photo from author collection)

Once a POW Now a Victor

By Greg Walker (U.S. Army Special Forces, Ret.)

Colonel Stanton sat next to me in our Humvee, his rifle across his knees, barrel pointed outward from the passenger seat. We'd made the run on what would be later called Route IRISH, a long stretch of highway linking North Palace/BIAP to the recently seized Green Zone, the highway even then a magnet for Iraqi snipers and the occasional RPG-7 rocket. A second Humvee with two additional security personnel had trailed behind us. Stanton had been captured in Kuwait City during what became Operation Desert Storm. Stanton, a former POW, meant we were taking no chances this time around regarding his safety.



Colonel Stanton, once a POW, returned to Baghdad as a liberator. Saddam Hussein, once a tyrant, was returned to Baghdad and in January 2004 declared to be a prisoner of war. He was tried and hung (Photo from author collection)

“Sergeant Walker, I'd like to visit someplace near by. It's where I was held prisoner here in Baghdad. Can we do that, please?”

The Al Rasheed Hotel was about a mile from our location. Originally it had been owned and operated by Uday Hussein, youngest son of recently toppled dictator Saddam Hussein. The 3rd Infantry Division was securing key locations in the Green Zone and the Al Rasheed was one of these. We pulled up just outside the entrance to the hotel and I spoke with the infantrymen stationed there. When they learned who Stanton was they nodded with respect towards him. We were in.

The hotel's grounds were deserted, its once lavish pool empty. For roughly a half hour I walked quietly beside the colonel as he retraced his experiences as a POW / human shield. His room was on the 9th floor. He was allowed to spend a short time outside each day then taken by his guards back upstairs. He offered neither he nor the other prisoners there knew what their fate might be to include execution.

Stanton's mood, as I best recall today, was somber. A man with a great sense of humor and massive engaging smile neither was present as we toured special spots around the complex. The elevators weren't working but I offered, if he wished, we could take the stairs up to the 9th floor — perhaps his room / cell was open?

“I don't think that's necessary, Sergeant. But thank you anyway.”

When we returned to the hotel entry point a reporter for Stars and Stripes was waiting for us. We posed for several photos, Stanton's great smile now back. It was easy to tell it had been like a massive and very heavy weight had been lifted from his shoulders. We climbed back into our Humvee and I asked him “Sir, how do you feel?”



Caption: Colonel Martin Stanton and the author after our journey back in time at the Al Rasheed Hotel. The author had clipped a red rose from one of the many gardens, pinning it to his uniform in honor of his wife back home. (Photo from author collection)

Colonel Stanton looked over at me and quietly answered. “When I was first brought here it was as a prisoner. When I was released I was a prisoner who had been let go, not freed, just let go. Today, this time, I came here as a victor.” ❖



(Photo from author collection)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Greg Walker is an honorably retired “Green Beret”. During Operation Iraqi Freedom he served at CFLCC Main in Kuwait on the Special Operations Forces Integration Detachment, reporting directly to the war-fighting commander, LTG David D. McKiernan. Mr. Walker was one of two senior Special Forces advisors to join McKiernan’s Early Entry Command Post (EECP) in Baghdad after Saddam International Airport had been seized. He provided mobile reconnaissance of suspected arms caches in the city, intelligence assessments to the commander, and personal security details for individuals such as Colonel Stanton.

Today Greg lives and writes from his home in Sisters, Oregon, along with his service pup, Jasper.

Global War on Terrorism Memorial Reveal 6.10.26



On 10 June 2026, the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) Memorial Foundation staff sent an email invite to their Zoom reveal of the initial design of the GWOT Memorial. The Memorial will stand on the Reserve of the National Mall — roughly between the Lincoln Memorial and Vietnam Veterans Memorial—commonly known as “The Wall.”

The presentation, which begins about fifteen minutes into the video, can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMbJt0-hNng>

The GWOT Foundation welcomes further input and support.

Share your reaction:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/gwotmfinitialdesign>

Make a donation:

<https://gwotmf.org/donate>

See the full initial design concept:

<https://www.gwotmemorialfoundation.org/design-concept/>

For more information visit www.gwotmemorialfoundation.org

“I was moved by the initial renderings of the GWOT Memorial. This was the first time I had seen mockups, and they far exceeded my expectations. The fact that it is a living, breathing Memorial dedicated to such an expansive population of veterans, their families, and communities spanning 20 years is what sets it apart from all others. I am so proud to be a small part of this mission.”



NATE BOYER, U.S. Army GWOT Veteran, Former Green Beret, Philanthropist, Humanitarian, GWOTMF Board of Advisors

SOAR XLV Memorial Breakfast: A Brother's Tribute

By Jim Suber

Speech delivered at the Special Operations Association's
Unreturned Heroes Memorial Breakfast at SOAR XLV, October 20, 2021
All accompanying photos are courtesy of Jim Suber

Thank You:

On behalf of the family members here this morning and, I'm sure, MIA families everywhere, "thank you" for this beautiful ceremony honoring these 132 heroes—And very special "thank you" to Bonnie Cooper for that tremendous presentation.

It is a privilege to be here—especially with these MIA families. Each one has an amazing story. I wish there was time for all of them to speak here today. If you have the chance, please ask them about their loved-one and their individual search for answers.

Thank you to the Special Operations Association, the Special Forces Association, and to the Special Forces Charitable Trust. Special thanks to SFA Chapter #78 in Orange County, California—for including my family in its chapter. It has been awesome!

Thank you to the National League of POW/MIA Families – especially to Ann Mills Griffiths. She is amazing. Her leadership, dedication, and sheer tenacity have produced results, and we are all very grateful!

Thank you, of course, to the DPAA and to Stony Beach in (what is and has always been) a mission far beyond challenging.

I must also say how grateful I am for the extraordinary American value to do everything possible to return all warriors home. This is not only morally right, but, also, uniquely American. Thank goodness President Reagan re-established this standard forty years ago. It not only prioritized the return of all Missing warriors, but—still to this day—assures all "active-duty" military that the United States is committed to returning each warrior home. It took me a long time to finally understand that bigger purpose, but I now do—and it's made all the difference to our family.

Background:

My oldest brother, Sergeant First Class Randy Suber, was the assistant team leader on Recon Team Oregon in MACV-SOG, Command & Control North. The 6-man team, led by "1-0" Staff Sergeant Ron Ray, was listed as Missing-in-Action on November 13, 1969. The brief report said that the team was "attacked and overrun by a numerically superior enemy force" around 1600 hours about 15 miles inside Laos in Saravane Province. The report said that three of the four indigenous team members were killed, and that both Ron Ray and Randy Suber were wounded and unresponsive. The surviving team member, Nguyen Van Bon, was rescued several days later. Interestingly, all four indigenous team members were previously in the North Vietnamese Army—fighting against the United States just one year earlier.

That short report was all the communication provided to my family for many years. At that time, we had no knowledge about "The Secret War" or the requirement for those who served in it to sign an



Randy Suber, MACV-SOG, CCN, Recon Team Oregon
MIA November 13, 1969

agreement prohibiting any communication about their activities for 20 years. The only clue was that the team was lost in Laos – not in Vietnam—and that American soldiers were not supposed to be there.

I was eleven years old at the time. My sister, Mardy, was 3 years older than Randy, and brother, Steve, was 3 years younger than Randy. My Dad was a career Air Force officer – a World War II combat veteran with the Distinguished Flying Cross, and, at the time RT Oregon went missing, was the commanding recruiter for Missouri and Illinois. My mother came from a long line of distinguished career military professionals serving in every war since the Revolutionary War.

Randy Suber was fascinated with adventure, risk, danger and independence. Sound like anyone else you know?? By twenty years old, he climbed the Matterhorn (instead of final exams for his first and only Spring semester), rode a motorcycle from Munich to St. Petersburg in the Soviet Union, swam the Bosphorus, backpacked to the Mount of the Eternal Flame in Eastern Turkey, and ran with the bulls in Pamplona. Before all of that, he was an All-State running back on two state championship football teams at New Mexico Military Institute. He was amazing, and, absolutely, my hero.

We, of course, were devastated by the loss of Randy. All things considered, my parents showed incredible strength, wisdom and compassion. They were also, remarkably, quiet; perhaps too quiet. It was as if they, too, had signed that 20-year confidentiality agreement – even though we did not know it existed!! Other than a small group of trusted friends and family, we did not talk about Randy outside of our home.



Randy Suber, New Mexico Military Institute, All-State Running Back 1965

My parents loyally attended League of Families meetings every year they could. I joined them for one League meeting in the mid 1980's when I was in my twenties. It was depressing.

While there, I met the youngest brother of Sergeant First Class Donnie Shue – another MACV-SOG Command & Control North Recon man. That team was lost in Laos just 10 days before my brother's team. We had a lot in common, but not much to say... neither with enough information to have a meaningful conversation. Perhaps that would have been different a few years later after articles and books about The Secret War began to surface.

As you know, Donnie Shue and his teammates, Gunther Wald and Bill Brown were recovered in 2010, and buried at Arlington Cemetery in August 2012.

Like all MIA families, there were plenty of sad moments for us.

Do you remember in the early 1970's being encouraged by the DOD to send a "care package" to your loved-one? It was as if someone thought this was a "sneaky way" to get North Vietnam to confirm that your loved-one was a prisoner-of-war. Exactly as instructed, my mom mailed the "care package" directly to a prison in North Vietnam.

As part of the package, she included a beautiful pair of wool socks that she had knit. The package was returned to us several months later – directly from that prison. Everything was intact except for the wool socks – which some North Vietnamese soldier had decided to keep. Why not just keep the whole package? Why spend the time or postage to return it? That was weird and disheartening.

My sister and brother still find it much too painful to talk about Randy. So, we rarely do. Unlike my siblings, I wanted answers to three questions:

- 1) What were Randy's activities in the War – particularly outside UN sanctioned borders?
- 2) What really happened to him? and
- 3) Why haven't we met anyone who knew or served with him?

My wife, Irene, and son, James—both here today—along with our three daughters have been incredibly supportive. My son, James—with his own curiosity, love for history, and outstanding research skills, joined me on this, in a big way, over the last ten years. He took my research—and then added even more.



July 4, 1968, (L-R), Jim Suber, Dean Butler, Steve Suber, Randy Suber



Larry Suber and Randy Suber, 1968 or 1969

Big Breakthrough:

The Department of Defense scheduled a "Families Update Meeting" in San Diego in January 2018. I did not want to attend. I disregarded three different invitations. A few weeks before the meeting, though, a loud thought suddenly came to me. (It was a new thought—especially after 48 years, and, definitely not my thought.)

The purpose of attending that meeting was not to learn more about my brother's case; instead, it was to support the much bigger mission—



April 2018 Meeting, Mike Taylor (MACV-SOG, CCN RT Oregon)

to support all family members, all DPAA and Stony Beach professionals, and, most of all, all current “active-duty” military everywhere—reinforcing that extraordinary American standard of returning all warriors home.

That single thought lifted the weight off me. It gave me new purpose, freedom, and joy. So, then, I knew that I needed to attend!

The meeting was packed. It included families from the Vietnam War, Korean War and World War II. During the “sharing” period, Barbara Birchim (here today—the wife of MIA MACV-SOG recon man James Birchim) encouraged family members to learn about their loved-one’s military alumni groups. That idea had never occurred to me. Truthfully, I did not know there was an organization like the SOA. I certainly knew about the League of Families, but had not attended a meeting since the one mentioned earlier. Apparently, men from SOA started attending League meetings—in a meaningful way—after my parents passed on.

During a break at the Update Meeting, I walked by a man wearing the unmistakable MACV-SOG logo on his shirt. That man was John Stryker Meyer. “Tilt!” Ever heard of him?? Rick Estes was there, too—representing the SOA. What were these two SOG men doing at this meeting??? It caught me completely off guard. With my new perspective, I had no expectations of meeting anyone there who served with my brother.

Not only did Tilt know my brother, but, within months, he introduced me to three men who served very closely with him: Mike Taylor, who ran two missions with him on Recon Team Oregon, Dan Thompson, the covey rider on the team’s last insertion, and Lynne Black, the man who led the “bright light” rescue mission for the team a few days later.

It felt like I had hit the lotto! Between these men—and a few others—met here at SOAR (in 2018 and 2019), I got answers to those three questions—and so much more. It was, and still very much is, the greatest blessing, and has, definitely, led to more healing for our family. It also gave us an even greater appreciation for the character, courage, valor, honor and patriotism exemplified by Special Operations men in The Secret War. My parents would be so grateful.



July 2019 SFA Chapter 78 Meeting, John Stryker Meyer, AKA Tilt, at left, Jim Suber, center, and Doug LeTourneau, AKA The Frenchman, at right.

What would have happened if I wallowed in self-pity, and not attended that meeting? What if Tilt had not attended? Or not worn his MACV-SOG shirt?

How many other MIA families—especially from the 132 heroes honored today—have not met their loved-one’s SOA comrades? I bet it’s a lot.

Mike Taylor also asked that I provide some perspective, as a MIA family member, on the efforts of SOA and SFA on the accounting mission.

First, to us, YES, your efforts have, no doubt, contributed to the return of many men. Keep it up, please – especially for the 132 men honored here today! I don’t know what specific strategies and tactics can produce even better results, but I am sure that your leadership team is working on that.

Second, for each one of you—keep telling your story! Writing – books, articles, poetry—public speaking, media interviews, podcast interviews, motorcycle campaigns, road races, golf tournaments, whatever!

Your stories are incredibly inspiring – exhibiting uncommon duty, honor, and courage under the most extreme circumstances! I promise you—it is not just Americans hungering to learn more about your experiences, but, also, people throughout the “free world.” Especially now, the world really needs what you can share with them.

Last, please continue to proactively connect with all SOA MIA family members. In fact, I would expand that effort to include the resolved MIA case families and KIA families. Connect them to their surviving comrades. Share stories. Share photos, please! These connections have made all the difference for us. I think it will help everyone!

Conclusion:

I hope I have provided a little more insight from one MIA family’s experience.

Thank you, again, for today’s beautiful ceremony, and God bless America! ❖

View Jim Suber delivering this speech on YouTube! Visit <https://youtu.be/wQoqWTfgWd0>



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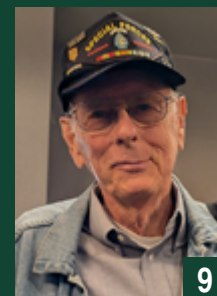
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Guest Speaker, James Stejskal Army SF Veteran, Author and Historian

1 2 Guest speaker James Stejskal, a former Special Forces and intelligence professional, receives a chapter coin from Chapter 78 Secretary Gary Macnamara.

James gave a presentation based on his book *Masters of Mayhem: Lawrence of Arabia and the British Military Mission to the Hejaz*. Beginning with an overview of T.E. Lawrence, his talk included details about the operations that became known as "Hedgehog," the code name for the British military campaign during WWI to destroy the Hejaz Railway, and how unconventional warfare played a part.

If you haven't already done so, be sure to read the review of this book in the SFA's quarterly publication *The Drop*, Spring 2026 edition (<https://thedroponline.com/features/masters-of-mayhem.html>).

- 3** Car enthusiasts in the audience enjoyed seeing the slides in the presentation that featured Rolls Royce armored cars.
- 4** Secretary Gary Macnamara led the meeting.
- 5** Bob Crebbs took the podium to share about the Normandy D-Day tour.
- 6** Thomas Golden **7** Jim Suber **8** Robert Casillas
- 9** Ham Salley **10** David Gibbs and his wife, Karli.
- 11** Left to right, Richard Simonian, How Miller, and James Stejskal
- 12** Jim Cragg
- 13** Erik Berg displays socks that AVAG chaplain Doreen Matsumoto brought to share with our chapter members.
- 14** Our newest chapter member, Richard Negrete

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