

Inside This Issue

Chapter/State News
POW/MIA News
At The Capitol
On The Hill
Veterans Affairs News
Sgt. John Levitow MOH
P-38 Can Opener

Meetings

Due to increasing COVID-19 cases in CT, the Chapter 120 membership meeting will be tentatively held on Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 7:00pm in the Machinists Union Hall, 357 Main St., East Hartford.

The Board of Directors will meet on Thursday, April 29 at 7:00pm. Call the Chapter office for any changes in schedule. Chapter members are welcomed to attend.

Notice

If you have moved or changed your address, PLEASE notify us immediately. Call the Chapter office at (860) 568-9212, mail us at the address on the back of this newsletter or e-mail the Newsletter editor at ctchapter120@aol.com.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: In accordance with Title 17 of U. S. C. Section 107, any copyrighted work in this newsletter is distributed under fair use without profit or payment to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving the included information for nonprofit research and educational purposes only.

Special Announcement from the VVA Elections Committee



The Election Committee wants to thank those individuals who have already stepped forward as candidates for the 2021 VVA National Election. The committee recognizes that this past year has been overwhelming for all of us and has caused great uncertainties about our national convention.

Due to these uncertainties that have plagued all of us, the Election Committee has changed the filing deadline date for those wishing to run for national office from March 31, 2021, to June 30, 2021. This change comes on the heels of the March 6 Board of Directors special meeting, followed by their vote to move the convention date to November 2-6, 2021, and meet in person in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Now that we know our direction, we can move forward to make the 20th VVA National Convention the best convention ever, despite the challenging circumstances that have faced each of us this difficult year.

Hopefully, this deadline extension will allow the extra time needed for those individuals to consider their options to run for national office, based on their individual circumstances. And it will allow extra time for people to plan to come together to determine what the future direction of VVA shall be.

At this time in VVA's history, the importance of those who choose to run for office—the officers and board members—cannot be overstated. Each represents the members and bears the weight of VVA and its future direction on their shoulders.

— *The VVA National Elections Committee*

CHAPTER 120 OFFICE	568-9212
Board of Directors	
Roger Anderson	528-4338
Paul Barry	569-3530
Peter Galgano	828-1999
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
Frank Zizzamia	569-0705
Executive Officers	
Bob Burgess, President	646-0205
Phil Morneault, Vice President	930-2122
Phil Morneault, Treasurer	930-2122
Peter Lund, Secretary	644-9770
VVA Service Representatives	
John Cutler	568-9212
E-Mail: VVA.Service.Rep@att.net	
Gerald Fabry, MD	884-7271
E-Mail : gerfab@comcast.net	
Gary Waterhouse	656-0430
E-Mail : gwaterhouse@cox.net	
Membership	
Frank J. Mello, Jr.	604-3879
E-Mail: Fmello336@yahoo.com	
Women Vietnam Veterans	
Patricia Dumin	620-4131
Product Sales	
Leigh Lovering	528-8312
lhlovering@gmail.com	
Newsletter/Website	
John Cutler	282-7470
E-Mail: ctchapter120@aol.com	
Notary Public	
Gary Gazdzicki, Sr.	812-5703
Vet Centers	
Hartford (Area Code 860)	563-8800
New Haven (Area Code 203)	932-9899
Norwich (Area Code 860)	887-1755
Danbury (Area Code 203)	790-4000
All Telephone Numbers are Area Code 860 unless otherwise noted	

Chapter/State News

State Council elections

At the February 2021 State Council meeting, the following officers were elected for a two-year term:

- President:** Patricia Dumin
- Vice President:** Peter Galgano
- Treasurer:** Vacant
- Secretary:** Peter Lund

Purple Heart Motorcycle license plates approved in Florida



Thanks to the personal initiative and persistent determination of Aaron A. Weaver Chapter 776 Military Order of the Purple Heart Patriot **Glenn Beaulieu**, the Florida Legislature passed legislation (HB 1135) during the 2020 legislative session that was enacted into law by Governor Ron DeSantis authorizing a Purple Heart license plate for motorcycles owned by Purple Heart recipients, effective January 1, 2021. The Purple Heart motorcycle license plate now joins the Purple Heart vehicle license plate that has been available to Purple Heart recipients for over two decades.

MOPH Chapter 776 presented Glenn a well-deserved Special Recognition Award at the Purple Heart Meeting.

Glenn pursued this effort for the past four years by himself. Glenn was awarded two purple hearts in Vietnam and he does ride a Harley, so he had good reasons to push for this legislation.

Glenn is a 38 year Life member of VVA Chapter 120.

Birthday Wishes

Birthday wishes go to our members born in April. May you have many more!

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Robert Bagge</i> | <i>Arthur Bagnall</i> |
| <i>Stephen Clark</i> | <i>James J. Gavin</i> |
| <i>Steven Harris</i> | <i>Walter Korfel</i> |
| <i>William V. Loder</i> | <i>Nathaniel Milliner</i> |
| <i>David R. Motowidlak</i> | <i>William J. Neligon</i> |
| <i>John J. Orvis</i> | <i>John F. Panciera</i> |
| <i>Bruce E. Raccio</i> | <i>Gerald A. Sweeney</i> |
| <i>C. Daniel Thayer, Jr.</i> | |

A very special birthday wish goes to Gary Cutler, son of Chapter member John Cutler. Gary was born 50 years ago while his father was in Vietnam.

Receive "The CONNECTION" by E-Mail and Help Your Chapter Today

The monthly Chapter 120 newsletter, *The Connection*, is available by e-mail. Currently, 97 members receive the newsletter by e-mail, saving the Chapter nearly \$1,800 in postal fees, printing costs and mailing supplies annually. The newsletter is available in Adobe format (.pdf), attached to your e-mail. If you wish to receive the newsletter via e-mail in lieu of postal mail, please e-mail the newsletter editor at ctchapter120@aol.com

POW/MIA News



Medal of Honor recipient and Korean War Army chaplain accounted for

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency announced today, March 5, that Korean War Medal of Honor recipient, Army Chaplain (Capt.) Emil Joseph Kapaun, has been accounted for.

Kapaun, of Pilsen, Kansas, served as a chaplain with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. On Nov.



2, 1950, the 3rd Battalion was near Unsan when the unit came under heavy fire and received orders to withdraw.

Eventually surrounded and besieged by Chinese Communist Forces, unit members became trapped and dug inside foxholes or behind bunkers. Kapaun stayed with the wounded but was soon captured and marched from village to village, with little food and shelter, to Old Pyoktong, later known as Chinese Camp 5,

on the south bank of the Yalu River.

While a captive, he ministered to other prisoners of war, although he became mortally ill. He celebrated a final Easter Mass for the POWs in late March and shortly afterward was taken to the "sick house", an old pagoda where he died of exhaustion and possible heart failure induced by pleurisy at the age of 35 on May 23, 1951.

Chaplain Kapaun repeatedly risked his own life to save the lives of hundreds of fellow Americans. His extraordinary courage, faith and leadership inspired thousands of prisoners to survive hellish conditions, resist enemy indoctrination and retain their faith in God and country.

"After 70 years Chaplain (Capt.) Kapaun has been accounted for. His heroism and resilient spirit epitomized our Army values of personal courage and selfless service," said acting Secretary of the Army John E. Whitley.

In 1993, Pope John Paul II declared Chaplain Kapaun a servant of God, the first stage on the path to canonization. Kapaun was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President Barack Obama at a White House ceremony on April 11, 2013.

Currently there are approximately 7,500 service members who served in the Korean War who remain unaccounted for.

At The Capitol



VA Committee votes on Bills

The VA Committee voted to move eighteen bills out of committee for floor action on March 18. Details for these bills can be viewed at: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/va/>

HB05592 - AN ACT REDEFINING "VETERAN" AND ESTABLISHING A QUALIFIED CONDITION REVIEW BOARD.

HB05736 - AN ACT CONCERNING PRICE PREFERENCES FOR VETERAN-OWNED BUSINESSES IN STATE CONTRACTING.

HB05737 - AN ACT CREATING A VETERANS AND MILITARY TOURISM TRAIL.

HB06316 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE EVALUATION OF MILITARY TRAINING EVALUATION APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE LABOR DEPARTMENT.

HB06427 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND BYLAWS OF THE MILITIA UNITS.

HB06428 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT OFFICE PROGRAM ACCOUNT.

HB06429 - AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE EXPANSION OF PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

HB06480 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE FUNERAL EXPENSES OF CERTAIN VETERANS.

HB06481 - AN ACT CONCERNING SPECIAL REGISTRATION MARKER PLATES FOR VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES WHO SERVED IN PERIODS OF WAR.

HB06482 - AN ACT EXCLUDING FEDERAL VETERANS' BENEFITS FROM INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

HB06483 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENROLLMENT OF CHILDREN OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PURPLE STAR SCHOOL PROGRAM.

SB00413 - AN ACT WAIVING CERTAIN FEES FOR VETERANS FOR OCCUPATIONAL LICENSURE.

SB00614 - AN ACT EXEMPTING VETERANS FROM PAYMENT OF THE FARES FOR BUS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES.

SB00859 - AN ACT CONCERNING CERTAIN DEPOSITS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS' INSTITUTIONAL GENERAL WELFARE FUND.

SB00861 - AN ACT WAIVING CERTAIN MEDICAL MARIJUANA FEES FOR VETERANS.

SB00914 - AN ACT CONCERNING HMONG LAOTIAN SPECIAL GUERRILLA UNITS WHICH SERVED IN THE KINGDOM OF LAOS.

SB00916 - AN ACT CONCERNING FEES FOR CERTIFIED COPIES OF VITAL RECORDS SOUGHT IN CONNECTION WITH THE SOLDIERS, SAILORS AND MARINES FUND.

SB00917 - AN ACT EXEMPTING VETERANS' FEDERAL PENSION BENEFITS FROM INCOME ELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

On The Hill



From FEDweek

Bill Would End Offsets for Disabled Vets

Disabled veterans would get full military entitlements, under bipartisan companion measures now pending before both houses of Congress.

If passed, the bills would end the dollar-for-dollar offset of veterans' disability pay from military medical compensation for service members who left the service after being medically retired with less than 20 years' service.

The VA administers disability pay, while DoD is responsible for military

retirement pay. Enactment would allow some 42,000 veterans with disability retirement to receive full compensation, said Reps. Gus Bilirakis, R-Florida, and Raul Ruiz, D-Calif., co-sponsors of the House measure. Their bill, the Retired Pay Restoration Act (HR 303), is dedicated to Maj. Richard Star, an Army reservist who recently died of cancer. Even though Star served a total of 29 years in uniform, he asked as a final wish that military and veterans service organizations continue to press Congress for an end to the offset. Several previous efforts to pass such legislation have failed.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Officers Association of America, Wounded Warrior Project, Military Coalition and Disabled American Veterans are among the service organizations voicing strong support of the increased benefit.

Both the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs committees are considering the bill.

Sens. Jon Tester, D-Montana, and Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, and Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, are sponsoring the Senate version. Tester and Moran are chair and ranking member of the committee.

Extracted from Connecting Vets

Lawmakers introduce bill to extend VA care to 490,000 more veterans ill from Agent Orange

Efforts in Congress last year to add hypertension to a list of diseases linked to Agent Orange at the Department of Veterans Affairs failed, keeping Vietnam-era veterans from accessing care for high blood pressure connected to the toxic exposure.

Now, lawmakers are making another attempt to add hypertension and MGUS (Monoclonal Gammopathy of Undetermined Significance), to a list of presumptive conditions at VA, which will qualify those veterans for care and benefits.

As many as 490,000 Vietnam-era veterans could benefit from the change, if the bill passes Congress and becomes law.

Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Chairman Jon Tester, D-Montana, introduced the Fair Care for Vietnam Veterans Act this week, along with support from 16 other senators. Tester said the bill would "put an end to decades of veterans wrestling with bureaucratic red tape" at VA, adding that there is sufficient scientific evidence to connect the illnesses to the toxic herbicide.

Last year, Congress approved adding three new illnesses to a list of conditions VA recognizes as connected to Agent Orange and therefore provides care and benefits for -- bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's-like symptoms. But in January, VA officials said the about 34,000 veterans affected may not see benefits from Congress' action for months or even years.

Hypertension had been a fourth condition that lawmakers, advocates and veterans pushed for Congress to include, but ultimately was left out, and Congressional staff with knowledge of those negotiations told Connecting Vets cost was a leading factor. Estimates suggest the expansion of benefits could cost as much as \$11 billion to \$15 billion over the first 10 years.

"Our fight is far from over," Tester said in a statement Wednesday. "These folks are suffering while their government makes them wait, and they can't wait any longer."

VA officials under VA Secretary Wilke argued against adding hypertension to the list because of continued doubts about its link to Agent Orange, despite the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine in 2018 finding "sufficient" evidence to connect the two. VA argued it needed to continue to conduct its own studies on all four conditions before making a decision, and the results of those studies (due by the end of 2020, then delayed by the coronavirus pandemic to mid-2021) have not yet been publicly released.

In March 2019, Veterans Health Administration acting head Dr. Richard Stone told Congress VA "hoped" to make a decision on those illnesses "within 90 days," but that time came and passed and no decision was made.

As of March 2021, hypertension and MGUS are the only illnesses linked to Agent Orange exposure by the National Academies that have not been added to VA's list of conditions presumed to be caused by such exposure.

"Decades after the Vietnam War, there are veterans still waiting for the care and benefits they deserve," Kristina Keenan, associate director of Veterans of Foreign Wars, said Wednesday. "VA has yet to add these to the list of presumptive conditions even though the science shows they meet a stronger evidentiary standard than some of the previously approved conditions."

The bill could bring "justice for nearly a half-million Vietnam veterans ... who have waited far too long for access to VA health care and other benefits earned through their service to our

nation," Disabled American Veterans National Commander Stephen "Butch" Whitehead said.

Now that Congress has moved to force VA's hand on the three diseases previously approved, officials said the regulatory process to officially begin expanding benefits for veterans with bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's-like symptoms could take up to two years, though newly installed VA Secretary Denis McDonough told reporters last week he hopes for a speedier resolution. So far, the exact timing for those changes to go into effect remains unclear.

McDonough also said he planned to consider high blood pressure as another covered condition, and he said cost would not be the primary consideration for him.

"Inevitably, people ... focus first on the cost," McDonough said in a previous press briefing. "I want to focus first on the facts and on the data and what we know."

Veterans Affairs News



MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY
**Department of Veterans Affairs
Commemoration of the 50th
Anniversary of the Vietnam War**

On the 29th of March, our Nation will commemorate National Vietnam War Veterans Day, an opportunity for VA employees and all Americans to recognize and thank our Vietnam Veterans and their families for their service and sacrifice during one of America's longest wars.

All of us at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) encourage everyone to remember and respect the nine million American men and women—more than six million of whom are living today—who served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces during our involvement in Vietnam from November 1, 1955 to May 7, 1975. Whether they were stationed in-country, in-theater or elsewhere during those two decades, they answered the country's call to service.

This year, VA will again join more than 11,000 organizations across the country as a commemorative partner supporting the Department of Defense in this Vietnam War Commemoration. The program was launched in 2012 by then President Barack

Obama, and the commemoration and recognition activities will continue until 2025.

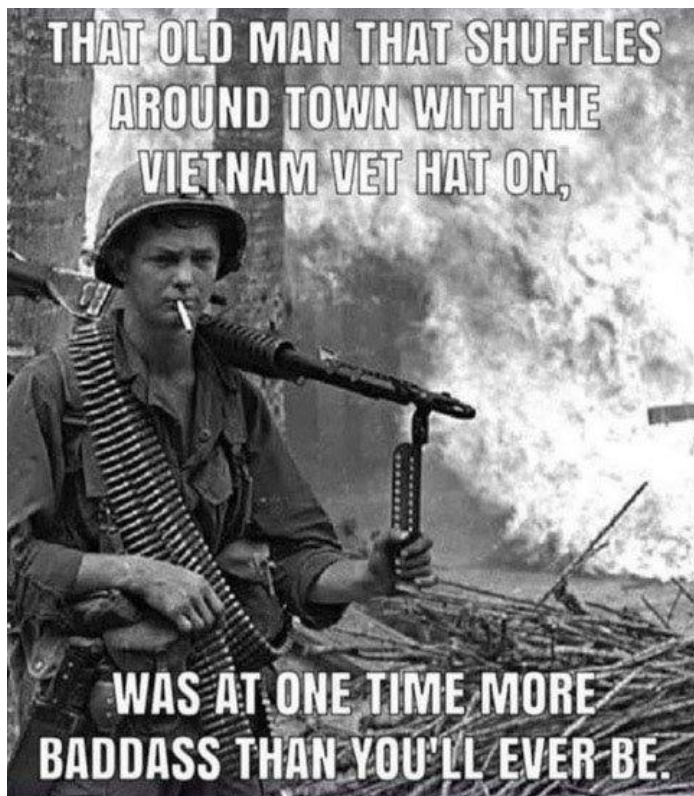
Because of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 pandemic, we must safely avoid large in-person events, but I invite all VA leaders to find safe opportunities to plan or participate in small community sponsored activities from March 25 - March 29. Outside of these dates, we should remember that we can always thank and welcome home Vietnam Veterans any time of the year.

Please remember and help us reach out to Vietnam Veterans who may be living in remote locations, those who are physically unable to attend commemorative events and those in assisted living, geriatric, rehabilitative or palliative care facilities. We encourage every American to show their deep gratitude to this generation of warriors and their families. Vietnam Veterans living in these conditions may especially appreciate your care and concern.

I also encourage everyone to visit the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War website at the following link: <https://www.vietnamwar50th.com/> to learn how you as an individual, as a member of an organization or an employee at a facility can be a commemorative partner and participate in this year's important tribute. Official commemorative partnerships offer historical media and opportunities to request lapel pins and other recognition items to present to Vietnam Veterans.

Thank you for your abiding devotion to America's Veterans and your service to our Department.

- Denis McDonough



From Military.com

The number of veterans experiencing homelessness rose slightly even before the coronavirus pandemic

The number of veterans experiencing homelessness increased in 2020 even before the effects of the coronavirus pandemic damaged employment prospects and financial resources for the community, according to a new report released by the Department of Housing and Urban Development on Thursday.



The increase is a concerning backslide from improvements in the last decade, since then President Barack Obama announced a federal effort to address the issue.

From 2010 to 2019, the number of veterans without stable housing decreased by more than 50 percent. However, the figure increased slightly in 2020, rising to 37,252 in HUD's annual point-in-time estimate, up by a few hundred individuals.

The totals mean that of every 10,000 veterans in the United States, 21 were experiencing homelessness at the start of last year. Veterans make up about 6 percent of the population of the United States but 8 percent of the country's homeless population.

The estimate released Thursday is based on surveys conducted in January 2020, about two months before business closures and other financial impacts of the coronavirus pandemic began.

In a statement, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge called the results "very troubling, even before you consider what COVID-19 has done to make the homelessness crisis worse."

Officials won't know the full impact of the pandemic on the number of veterans experiencing homelessness until later this year, when the results of the January 2021 point-in-time count are released. The 2020 numbers were scheduled to be unveiled last fall, but were kept hidden for months for unspecified reasons.

In a statement, Veterans Affairs Secretary Denis McDonough said the newly-released numbers indicate that more needs to be done to help veterans facing crisis that could lead to homelessness.

"Even a slight pre-pandemic uptick in veteran homelessness after significant declines since 2010 is extremely concerning," he said. "The Biden Administration's recommitment to Housing First — a proven strategy and dignified way to help Veterans and others achieve stable, permanent housing — will help accelerate progress in preventing and eliminating veteran homelessness."

Across all groups, the number of Americans experiencing homelessness increased about 2.2 percent from 2019 to 2020. HUD estimates about 580,000 individuals were without stable housing as of January 2020.

More than 90 percent of veterans experiencing homelessness were men, according to the HUD survey. Black veterans made up about one-third of all veterans dealing with unstable housing, even though they make up just 12 percent of the total veterans population in America.

California alone accounted for nearly one-third of all of the veterans experiencing homelessness in America, with 11,401. California, Florida, Texas and Washington — four states with the highest total number of veterans among their residents — together had about 70 percent of all of the homeless veterans in American.

The HUD report notes that 28 states actually saw decreases in their total number of veterans experiencing homelessness, a positive trend. North Carolina, Oregon and Utah all saw double-digit percentage decreases in their homeless veterans' population.

Officials from the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans said that any increase in veteran homelessness should be "unacceptable."

"People across the country are suffering due to (the pandemic's) economic fallout, making it much more critical to work diligently to ensure veterans can access housing as we continue our mission to end veteran homelessness," they said in a statement. "We are also hopeful that having new national leadership in place that has prioritized ending homelessness and focusing on racial equity and building a system of care that works for all veterans will also have a positive effect."

From Task & Purpose

52 years ago, this airman threw himself on a burning flare to save his crew

The annals of the infantry and Special Forces community are filled with tales of heroes throwing themselves on grenades to save their buddies. Just in the past 20 years, four Medals of Honor were earned by service members who dove onto explosives, knowing full well what the consequences would be.

But 52 years ago, an airman proved that such heroism isn't limited to troops on the ground. Sgt. John Lee Levitow (then an Airman First Class) saved his entire aircrew in the skies above Vietnam by throwing himself on a flare that was mere seconds

from igniting into a 4,000 degree fireball that would have melted right through their aircraft.

How did such a strange situation come to be? According to the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, on February 24, 1969, Levitow was a loadmaster aboard an AC-47 gunship flying a night mission in support of Long Binh Army post, in the country's south.

Troops at Long Binh were besieged by enemy mortar fire, wrote Air Force Magazine in a 1984 article. The AC-47, using the call sign Spooky 71, was loaded up with 7.62-mm Miniguns and thousands of rounds of ammunition to help them out.



AC-47 "Spooky"

To guide their aim and provide illumination for troops on the ground, Air Force Magazine explained, the AC-47s used Mark 24 magnesium flares, which were three-foot long metal tubes that weighed 27 pounds apiece.

On a normal day, an airman would trigger the arming mechanism of the flare and chuck it out the plane's cargo door. Ten seconds later, an explosive charge would open the flare's parachute, and 10 seconds after that, the magnesium would ignite, generating a light of 2,000,000 candlepower and a heat of 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

But February 24, 1969 was not a normal day.

While flying over Long Binh, one of Levitow's crewmates, Airman Ellis Owen, had his finger in the safety pin ring of a flare, getting ready to toss it through the cargo door when an enemy mortar round smashed into Spooky 71, ripping a two-foot hole through the right wing and perforating the fuselage in over 3,500 places, according to Levitow's Medal of Honor citation.

The explosion wounded all five of the crew and slammed them to the floor as Spooky 71 fell into a steep, descending turn to the right, momentarily out of control.

The 23-year-old Levitow, though stunned by the blast concussion and peppered with over 40 fragment wounds in his back and legs, "staggered to his feet and turned to assist the man nearest to him who had been knocked down and was bleeding heavily," the citation read.

Levitow dragged his crewmate away from the opened cargo door, but he noticed that the flare Owen had been holding was now rolling around the aircraft floor amidst thousands of Minigun rounds.

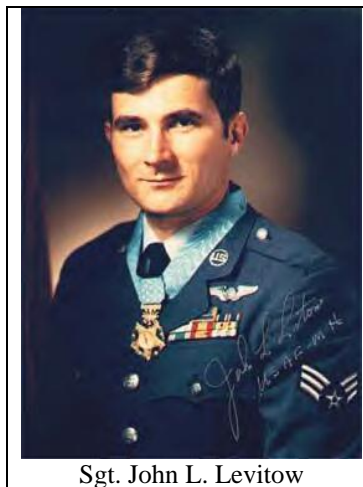
The flare was armed and smoking, and Levitow had no way of knowing how much time was left before it blew. The igniting mechanism could have been damaged too, which might ignite the flare even faster.

"Realizing the danger involved and completely disregarding his own wounds, Sgt. Levitow started toward the burning flare," the award citation read. "The aircraft was partially out of control and the flare was rolling wildly from side to side."

Maybe it was because of the roller coaster airplane, or the loss of blood, or the partial loss of feeling in his right leg, but Levitow just couldn't grab the rolling flare with his hands. Instead, he dove on the burning flare and hugged it to his body as he dragged himself to the cargo door.

With a last burst of strength, the airman hurled the flare, which ignited immediately after leaving the aircraft. As Levitow lapsed into unconsciousness, the pilot regained control of the plane. They landed at Bien Hoa, Spooky 71's home base, and the wounded Levitow was flown to a hospital in Japan.

But that mission wasn't enough for the airman. When he recovered from his wounds, Levitow, who had already flown 181 combat sorties, flew another 20 before returning stateside and completing his enlistment as a C-141 loadmaster at Norton Air Force Base, Calif.



Sgt. John L. Levitow

On May 14, 1970, just over a year after nearly dying over Long Binh, Levitow was awarded the Medal of Honor at the White House by President Richard Nixon.

"Sgt. Levitow, by his selfless and heroic actions, saved the aircraft and its entire crew from certain death and destruction," read the citation. "Sgt. Levitow's gallantry, his profound concern for his

fellowmen, at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of his country."

Levitow passed away from cancer in 2000. But his legacy burns bright today due to all the awards, buildings and bridges named after him – including The Sgt. John L. Levitow Healthcare Center at CT DVA, Rocky Hill.

So next time you see the airman's name or face anywhere, remember that heroism aims high.

From Vietnam Magazine

The P-38 "John Wayne" Can Opener

On Jan. 21, 1968, the Marines of Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment, successfully defended Hill 861 protecting Khe Sanh against an assault by two battalions of the North Vietnamese Army. As the shock of combat wore off, some Marines used their "John Wayne" can openers on C-ration cans to grab a quick meal. The P-38 can opener was one of the troops' most important pieces of field gear in Vietnam. The can opener was included with every case of C-rations.

The P-38, first used on a large scale with the widespread distribution of C-ration cans during World War II, consisted of a short, notched sheet-metal handle with a small hinged blade that rotated to pierce the can lid. The C-ration's World War II colleague, the K-ration, used a "key" opener. Simple and easy to use: the P-38 had a handle that was designed with a hole in it so the device could be lowered into boiling water for cleaning. However, most of the troops used the hole to hang the can opener from their dog tags or key chains.

To open a can, one unfolded the P-38 blade, hooked the notch on the can lid and "walked" the opener around until the lid could be lifted or removed. The handle can also serve as an ad hoc flat-head screwdriver. Other uses for the P-38 included cleaning mud and debris from boots, sharpening pencils, trimming threads from uniforms and stripping wires.

The origins of the P-38 designation are unclear. There are three plausible theories: The P-38 is about 38 mm long; it could open a can faster than the P-38 fighter can fly; or 38 "punctures" were needed to open a C-ration can with it. Navy and Marine Corps personnel dubbed it the "John Wayne" in the belief that the actor did a training film to demonstrate its use, but the film has yet to surface.

More than 12 million were produced by 1970. Variations have been adopted by several nations, and the trusty P-38 remains in production worldwide today.



Newsletter articles/ stories/photos

Any articles, stories and/or photos submitted for the newsletter must be received by the "cut off" date for any given month. Photos must be accompanied by text which describes the event, names, dates and any other pertinent facts so our readers understand the story behind the photo(s). The newsletter editor will announce the "cut off" dates at each Chapter meeting. The "cut off" date for our May 2021 newsletter is 23 April 2021. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

This newsletter printed by



97B Pierson Lane
Windsor, CT
www.printhubct.com
print@printhubct.com
860-580-7909

Hartford Vet Center



25 Elm Street, Suite A
Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Phone: (860)-563-8800
Fax: (860)-563-8805



Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
Greater Hartford Chapter 120
P.O. Box 4136
Hartford, CT 06145