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Chapter/State News

What my father never told me
A Connecticut family celebrates an honor long overdue

By Jonathan Goldman



At the Commissioning Ceremony for the USCGC Robert Goldman are his three sons and their families: (l to r) Daughter-in-law Eleanor Goldman, her son Richard, and her husband Jonathan; daughter-in-law Gail Fresia and her husband Scott Goldman; and Yale Goldman. Jonathan, Scott and Yale are Bob's sons.

My dad was a hero, but he didn't like to talk about himself. When we boys asked him about the war, he just shook his head. All he said was that he was wounded during World War II when an enemy plane hit his ship. But thanks to a U.S. Military initiative to honor "under-recognized" Jewish, Black, and Hispanic veterans, we have found out what he did, and why the Coast Guard recently named a ship after him.

Bob Goldman grew up on a farm in rural Woodstock, Connecticut, where he went to a one-room schoolhouse. Because the town was too small to have their own secondary school, high school students were sent to the Woodstock Academy, a private high school. Depression times were tough, and in-town students were moved along, so Bob graduated when he was 16.

He thought he'd pluck chickens and pump gas for the rest of his life. But a gas station customer, a retired professor, saw that this young man was capable of more. He told Bob to hop into his car, drove him to the University of Connecticut, and helped him register for classes as an agriculture major. Bob put himself through school by working in the chicken coops. A perk: free eggs.

Nearby was the Coast Guard academy. Bob always thought that if he ever joined the military, it was that uniform he'd want to wear.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything. In October, 1942, Bob enlisted in the Coast Guard. He received medical training at Columbia University's School of Pharmacy to become a pharmacist mate (medical corpsman). In July 1944, he reported for duty on the United States Coast Guard (USCG) LST-66, headed for the Philippines. The LST (landing ship tank) was a naval workhorse, designed for transportation of machinery and men, and able to approach and unload on shallow beachheads.

Birthday Wishes

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

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>Paul H. Abel</i> | <i>Roger H. Anderson</i> |
| <i>James K. Barile</i> | <i>Brian W. Canny</i> |
| <i>Stephen Cole</i> | <i>Rodney Conlogue</i> |
| <i>Michael DeAngelis</i> | <i>Peter J. Donahue</i> |
| <i>Samuel W. Kotsch Jr.</i> | <i>Gary Lee</i> |
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| <i>John J. O'Boyle</i> | <i>Bruce W. Shewbrooks</i> |
| <i>Robert W. Tocionis</i> | |

Happy Birthday!

Nov. 12, 1944, was a day that my father never forgot. The LST-66 was onshore on Leyte Island embarking a combined Navy-Army reconnaissance unit. At 5 p.m., a Japanese Zero flew over the horizon and intentionally headed for the LST-66. What resulted was devastation on board. Four dead, and seven wounded. My father was on deck when the crash occurred. The man standing next to him was killed instantly.

Although he suffered shrapnel wounds and severe burns to his back, my father’s priorities were clear. Fire surrounded him. He jumped into a gun turret, to administer morphine to a suffering shipmate. In the midst of this, there was leaking aviation fuel and live ammunition at his feet. He was the last on his ship to get medical attention. He had refused to even sit down to be examined until all the wounded had been treated. His uniform had to be cut from his burned flesh. Like many of his generation, he never spoke of his combat experiences.

Later in life, he served as Post 45 Commander of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America.

In 2016, Coast Guard historian Dr. William Thiesen began looking into my father’s heroic service record. Five years later, there we were, participating in the commissioning of a Sentinel Class Coast Guard Cutter bearing the name “Robert Goldman.”

The Commissioning Ceremony took place on March 12, in Key West Florida. Among those in attendance: Vice Admiral Scott Buschman, Coast Guard Foundation President Susan Ludwig, and the commanding officer of the USCGC Robert Goldman, Lieutenant Commander Samuel Blase. My father’s daughters-in-law, Eleanor Goldman and Gail Fresia, held the traditional honors of ship’s sponsor and long glass presenter. Also present were my brothers, Yale and Scott, along with my sons Richard, Alexander, and Ari.

The USCGC Robert Goldman blazon carries the ship’s motto “Beyond the call of duty” – a quote from a shipmate describing my father’s actions on that November day. It also appears in the recommendation for the Bronze Star Medal he received.

The USCGC Robert Goldman is one of six Sentinel Class Cutters to be stationed in Bahrain as part of the Coast Guard’s Patrol Forces Southwest Asia. I have been told that the crew of the Robert Goldman is the finest and most experienced crew on the most technologically advanced cutter ever built, and I believe it.

We will be forever grateful to the Coast Guard for the honor given to my father.

Jonathan Goldman lives in West Hartford.



POW/MIA News



Extracted from The New York Times
With Undersea Robots, an Air Force Navigator Lost Since 1967 Is Found

A recovery mission off Vietnam’s coast showed how advances in technology have given new reach to the Pentagon’s search for American

war dead.

On a July morning in 1967, two American B-52 bombers collided over the South China Sea as they approached a target in what was then South Vietnam.

Seven crew members escaped, but rescue units from the Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard were unable to find six other men, including a navigator from New York, Maj. Paul A. Avolese. It wasn’t until last year that scientists scanning the seafloor found one of the B-52s and recovered Major Avolese’s remains.

“It was very humbling to be diving a site that turned out as hallowed ground, and realizing that maybe we were in a position to help bring closure back to families that had been missing this lost aviator,” said Eric J. Terrill, one of two divers who descended to the wreck.

Scientists say the recovery highlights a shift in the Pentagon’s ability to search for personnel still missing from the Vietnam War.

For decades, such efforts have mainly focused on land in former conflict zones. But in this case, American investigators looked at an underwater site near Vietnam’s long coastline, using high-tech robots.

Their use of that technology is part of a larger trend. Robotic underwater and surface vehicles are “rapidly becoming indispensable tools for ocean science and exploration,” said Rear Adm. Nancy Hann, who manages a fleet of nine aircraft and 16 research and survey vessels for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

“They have proven to be a force multiplier when it comes to mapping the seafloor, locating and surveying wrecks and other sunken objects, and collecting data in places not easily accessed by ships and other vehicles,” Admiral Hann said.

Out to Sea

One reason for the new focus on Vietnam’s undersea crash sites is that many land-based leads have been exhausted, said Andrew Pietruszka, the lead archaeologist for Project Recover, a nonprofit organization. The group worked on the recent recovery mission with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, or D.P.A.A., the arm of the Pentagon tasked with finding and returning fallen military personnel.

“Over time, a lot of the really good land cases and sites they’ve already done, they’ve already processed them,” said Mr. Pietruszka, a former forensic archaeologist for DPAA who now works for the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego. “Now the majority of sites that haven’t been looked at are falling in that underwater realm,” he added.

As of late July, 1,584 U.S. personnel were still missing from the Vietnam War, the D.P.A.A.’s latest figures show. Bob Maves, an analyst for the agency who specializes in the war, said 420 of them were believed to have been lost along Vietnam’s coastline or within its territorial waters.

He said it was “technically true” that the majority of missing-in-action sites the agency has not yet looked at in Vietnam were underwater, but added that most were in places too deep for recovery operations.

The mission to find Major Avolesé’s B-52 bomber was the first time that the defense agency had allowed a nongovernmental partner to conduct work in Vietnam.

“Our hope, and both sides have discussed this, is that this is the first of hopefully many projects that we can be doing together, in conjunction, of course, with the Vietnamese government,” Mr. Pietruszka said.

On The Hill



Extracted from MilitaryTimes
\$270 billion VA budget plan moves ahead, with an eye towards completion in early fall

House lawmakers approved plans for a \$270 billion Veterans Affairs budget next year as part of a broader package of appropriations bills, leaving open the possibility that the department could have its spending plans for fiscal 2022 finalized early this fall.

The budget measure, which totals more than \$770 billion and would fund other agencies such as the Education and Treasury Departments, passed the last week of July along party lines, 219-

208.

Republicans have offered little resistance to the VA funding plan specifically, but have opposed broader budget proposals from President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats as too expensive.

Still, the passage of the VA plan opens the possibility of lawmakers approving a final deal on next year’s VA budget by Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year. Getting those agency budgets finalized before that date has been a rarity in Congress

in recent years, forcing lawmakers to pass short-term stopgap measures to avoid partial government shutdowns.

Agency leaders have complained in recent years that the short-term funding extensions create problems for new program starts and spending adjustments for operations. Sign up for the Retirement Report

But VA leaders are largely insulated from that problem, because Congress for the last decade has approved advance appropriations for the department to minimize the impact of Capitol Hill funding stalemates on VA medical care and benefits delivery.

Last year, as part of the fiscal 2021 budget agreement, Congress approved about \$240 billion in funding for the department for fiscal 2022, money that will be available regardless if a full budget deal is reached.

The \$270 billion budget plan would be the largest in department history and mark another substantial increase in funding for VA.

In fiscal 2001, the VA budget totaled about \$45 billion. By fiscal 2011, it was about \$125 billion, almost triple that total. Ten years later, in 2021, the department’s budget was nearly double that again, at \$245 billion.

The fiscal 2022 plan calls for a 13.5 percent raise in mental health care spending (to \$10.7 billion), a 14.5 percent boost in assistance for veterans facing homelessness (\$2.6 billion), and a 12 percent boost in gender-specific care and program support (over \$700 million).

Veterans Affairs News



VA spotlights special benefits for elderly wartime Veteran population

As a follow up to National Financial Awareness Day, Aug. 14, the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching an awareness campaign to

inform elderly wartime Veterans and their families of their lesser-known pension, funeral, burial and survivor benefits.

“VA’s pension benefit helps Veterans and their families cope with financial challenges by providing supplemental income,” said Acting Under Secretary for Benefits Thomas Murphy. “Currently, only 189,800 wartime Veterans and 139,800 surviving spouses are using their needs-based pension benefits that are meant to ease the burden on them, their families and caregivers. We need to ensure all of our wartime Veterans and their survivors are aware of their benefits.”

The following benefits are available through VA’s Pension and Fiduciary Service for use in planning and preparing for the future.

- VA pension is payable to wartime Veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to non-service connected disability, or who are age 65 years old or older, and who meet certain income and net worth limits.
- Special monthly pension is an additional benefit for Veterans in receipt of pension who are housebound, require the aid and attendance of another person to help them with daily activities (such as eating, bathing and dressing), have very limited eyesight or require nursing home care.
- For surviving spouses, there are two types of benefits P&F Service offers. Survivors Pension provides monthly payments to qualified surviving spouses and unmarried dependent children of wartime Veterans who meet certain income and net worth limits. Special monthly pension is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.
- Dependency and Indemnity Compensation is available to dependents and parents and generally is not based on income and assets (except the income limits apply to parents). DIC is a monthly monetary benefit paid to a surviving spouse, child or parent of a Veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, or when an active-duty service member dies in the line of duty. Special monthly DIC is also available to surviving spouses who are housebound or require the aid and attendance of another person.
- A surviving spouse of a Veteran who served on a Blue Water Navy vessel offshore of the Republic of Vietnam, or on another U.S. Navy or Coast Guard ship operating in the coastal waterways of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975, may be eligible for DIC benefits — even if they were previously denied.
- VA's funeral and burial benefits are available for both service-related and non-service-related deaths. New regulations allow a flat-rate burial and plot or interment allowance with decreased paperwork and maximum payment permitted by law.
- For those interested in burial benefits such as a Presidential Memorial Certificate, burial flag, headstone or marker, the National Cemetery Administration has information about pre-need eligibility.

Many vulnerable senior wartime Veterans are targeted with misinformation. In many cases, this is because they are not fully aware of their benefits, which increases the chances of them being taken advantage of and/or defrauded.

VA encourages elderly wartime Veterans and their family members to consult a VA-accredited representative if they want or need help filing a claim. They are reminded to beware of

individuals or companies that promise benefits or ask for money upfront, as only VA can make final determinations on eligibility.

Factsheets are available to assist Veterans with limited resources. Pension eligibility information has details on how Veterans and their families can get help filing their claim for free. See:

<https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/factsheets/limitedincome/pensionprogram-and-representation.pdf>

From ConnectingVets

Kabul's fall to Taliban forces 'devastating' for some Afghan veterans

The news out of Afghanistan is leading to a wave of emotions for those who saw the conflict up close.

It has been difficult for veterans who gave their blood, sweat, and tears while serving in Afghanistan to see the nation devolve into chaos and carnage as the Taliban took over the capital of Kabul following the decision by the U.S. to withdraw its forces.

"They were told when they came back that their mission was accomplished, that they had secured something for the long-term benefit of Afghanistan and to see it completely in control of the Taliban right now is really devastating," said Jeremy Butler, CEO of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America. "For those who served over there, especially those who saw real combat, lost friends, family members, this is going to be especially challenging."

Butler wants those veterans to know that they were still successful in their mission.

"Their service was not wasted," Butler said. "I think despite the challenges the country now faces the fact that so many Afghans understand freedom, understand what it means to be educated, understand what it means to have an ability to chart their own future. I think it can't be understated how important that is for the future of Afghanistan despite how bleak it is right now. I think it's very important that the veteran and military community remembers that."

"There should be no doubt, for those that did serve, that their service was honorable and they should be proud of what they did," Butler added.

In remarks delivered from the White House on Monday, President Joe Biden says he stands "squarely behind" his decision to pull troops from the country while conceding "this did unfold more quickly than we had anticipated."

There is frustration among most veterans of the war, but beyond that Butler said opinions vary.

"Everything from 'it doesn't matter to how bad things are, the decision to get out was long overdue' to 'we should still have servicemembers over there fighting the Taliban and we should stay for as long as it takes,'" Butler said.

He tells WCBS 880's Peter Haskell that the U.S. needs to do everything it can to rescue the country's allies, including interpreters and others left behind.

"We have left thousands of our allies out to dry unfortunately," Butler said. "We encouraged Afghans to stand up, to fight for these freedoms, to educate their women and girls, to start businesses, and now as we leave the country we see those opportunities rapidly fading away."

Biden vowed to continue to support the safe departure of U.S. allies still serving in Afghanistan.

The war was designed to stop the threat of terror, but now with the Taliban back in control, Butler fears this could open the door to a new wave of terrorism.

"I think it is a very scary prospect as to what Afghanistan will become in terms of another safe haven through the training and recruitment and deployment of terrorists," Butler said.



From Military.com

Retirees and Disabled Vets Due for Record Raise Next Year

Military retirees and disabled veterans could see their monthly checks jump by hundreds of dollars each month in 2022, the largest increase since 1983.

The annual inflation-based Cost of Living Adjustment, or COLA, soon will be determined by the government, and all the figures point to an increase of at least 6%, and maybe more, beginning in 2022.

That means that next year, military retirees will see their monthly retirement check increase, with the average monthly check going up by around \$160. Veterans receiving disability compensation from the Department of Veterans Affairs also will see their monthly disability payments increase, with the average monthly amount increasing by nearly \$100.

According to the Defense Department, there are around 1.87 million military retirees, with an annual average retirement payment of \$30,265. The VA says nearly 5.1 million veterans receive disability compensation, with an annual benefit of \$18,549.

The annual COLA increase is based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is measured by the Department of Labor. That agency measures the costs of a select group of goods and services and compares those costs to the previous year. If there is an increase, retirees and many others receiving government benefits see an increase in their monthly payments for the upcoming year. If those costs go down, the government payments will remain the same in the upcoming year.

In 2021, costs for most goods and services have gone up much faster than they have in the past. The most recent data from the Department of Labor is showing a 5.4% increase from last year, and there are two more months left in the current fiscal year, which ends on Sept. 30.

So, unless there is a major turnaround of the economy, with prices dropping dramatically in the next month or so, next year's government payments should see a hefty increase.

The CPI also is used to determine federal employee retirement and social security COLA adjustments as well as other federal benefit programs, so the CPI increase will affect over 50 million Americans.

Extracted from ConnectingVets

How one Guardsman led fight for creation of Tomb of the Unknown 100 Years Ago

The United States has a Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers today because a New York National Guard Major and freshman Congressman thought it was necessary 100 years ago.

Hamilton Fish III was a 32-year old lawyer with a Harvard degree who could trace his roots back to the last Dutch governor of New Amsterdam, the original settlers of Connecticut, and the first Adjutant General of New York when he ran for Congress in 1920.

He was a progressive Republican member of the New York State Assembly before World War I and signed on to serve as a company commander in the 15th New York Infantry (Colored) of the New York National Guard.

When war came, he led Company K of what became known as the 369th Infantry Regiment, which went down in history as the Harlem Hellfighters. He earned a Silver Star, and the French War Cross. He took the medals and his famous name and ran for Congress from the Hudson Valley.

The British and French had interred unknown Soldiers with great ceremony on November 11, 1920 to commemorate the 908,000 deaths sustained by the British Empire and the 1.3 million French dead.

Fish thought that the United States, which had suffered 116,516 deaths – 53,402 in combat and 63,114 to disease-- between April 1917 and November 1918, should do the same. He became the lead advocate for a memorial to an American Unknown Soldier.

The purpose, according to Fish, was “to bring home the body of an unknown American warrior who in himself represents no section, creed, or race in the late war and who typifies, moreover, the soul of America and the supreme sacrifice of her heroic dead.”



Hamilton Fish III

“There should be no distinction whatever either in the matter of rank, color or wealth,” Fish said. “This man is the unknown American Soldier killed on the battlefields of France.”

Fish introduced Public Resolution 67 of the 66th Congress on December 21, 1920 to do just that.

The resolution called for the return to the United States of the remains of

an unknown American Soldier killed in France during World War I. Those remains were to be interred at the Memorial Amphitheater in Arlington National Cemetery.

America’s war dead had been buried in France near where they fell in combat. At the close of the war families were given the option of having the remains returned or interred in American cemeteries being built in France.

There was a precedent for these Soldier cemeteries in the 108 national cemeteries built to inter the remains of Civil War Soldiers and veterans since 1862. There was no precedent to honor a single Soldier.

The Congressional Committee on Military Affairs met on February 1, 1921 to discuss Fishes proposal. The options they discussed included:

- Returning the first three casualties of the war for reinterment under a war memorial;
- Picking one unknown member for each military service;
- And identifying unknown remains from every state of the union.

The idea was also floated that states might want to reinter unknown remains of their own.

Fish rejected any idea of having more than one unknown.

“It seems to me that that one unknown should be the only unknown, and should be absolutely unknown and unidentified,” Fish said.

“He should not be taken from any particular battlefield, but should be so chosen that nobody would know his identification or the battlefield he comes from. He should represent in himself the North, the South, the East and the West,” he added.

A key concern for Congress was ensuring the selected remains would remain forever unknown. The Army’s Quartermaster General, responsible for graves registration, reported 2,148 unidentified dead.

Fish emphasized that even as investigations into those war dead continued, there would still be remains that could not be identified. There were 1,717 “absolutely unknown dead” for consideration, he insisted.

Congress approved the resolution three days later, on February 4, 1921. In the last hours of his presidency, Woodrow Wilson signed Public Resolution 67 into law.

In October, 1921, four unknown service personnel were exhumed from four WWI American cemeteries in France: Aisne-Marne, Meuse-Argonne, Somme and Saint-Mihiel.

There was absolutely no indication as to name, rank, organization or date of death. Examination ensured each had died of wounds received in combat.

The four were moved to Chalons, France on October 23, 1921. All records concerning investigations into their identity were burned.

U.S. Army Sgt. Edward Younger, a wounded and decorated WWI Army veteran still serving with the Army of Occupation, selected the unknown on October 24, 1921.

“At first it was an idea that we (the six soldiers assigned to the detail) were to be just pallbearers, but when we lined up in the little makeshift chapel, Major (Robert) Harbold, the officer in charge of grave registrations, told us, ‘One of you men is to be given the honor of selecting the body of the Unknown Soldier,’” Younger said of the experience.

“He had a large bouquet of pink and white roses in his arms. He finally handed the roses to me. I was left alone in the chapel,” Younger said.

“There were four coffins, all unnamed and unmarked. The one that I placed the roses on was the one brought home and placed in the national shrine. I walked around the coffins three times, then suddenly I stopped. What caused me to stop, I don’t know. It was as though something had pulled me. I can still remember the awed feeling that I had, standing there alone,” Younger recalled.

The remains of the selected Unknown Soldier were transferred to a silver and ebony casket. The casket was inscribed: ‘An Unknown American who gave his life in the World War.’

On November 9, 1921, the Unknown Soldier laid in state in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda. About 90,000 mourners paid their respects during a public visiting period on November 10, 1921.

The next day, November 11, 1921—two years after World War I ended—the unknown remains were carried on a horse-drawn caisson in a military procession through Washington, D.C. and across the Potomac River to Arlington National Cemetery.

To stress the national unity in the effort, President Warren G. Harding and Congress declared November 11, 1921, Armistice Day, a federal holiday.

Across the country, Americans observed two minutes of silence at the beginning of the ceremony.

“We are met today to pay the impersonal tribute,” President Harding said in his remarks. “The name of him whose body lies before us took flight with his imperishable soul. We know not whence he came, but only that his death marks him with the everlasting glory of an American dying for his country.”

Harding placed the Medal of Honor on the casket.

The Soldier was buried atop a two-inch layer of soil brought over from France so that he might rest forever atop the ground on which he fought and died.

“Today's ceremonies proclaim that the hero unknown is not unhonored,” Harding said.

Congressman Hamilton Fish III would be the first to lay a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The marble sarcophagus visitors see today was erected in 1931 and the ceremonies of the Tomb Guardians were established.

Fish served in Congress until 1945 and lived until 1991. He was tremendously proud of his advocacy for an American Unknown Soldier.

“I . . . had first-hand knowledge of the brave sacrifices made by American forces during the First World War, and I wanted America, as a beacon of freedom and democracy, to have her own memorial to honor the Unknown Soldier,” Fish said in his 1991 book, *Memoir of an American Patriot*.



Inscription on the Tomb of the Unknown:

Here Rests in Honored Glory an American Soldier Known But to God

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 October 2021 newsletter is 24 September 2021. Due to space availability, the editor reserves the right to include or not include photos for a given month.

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