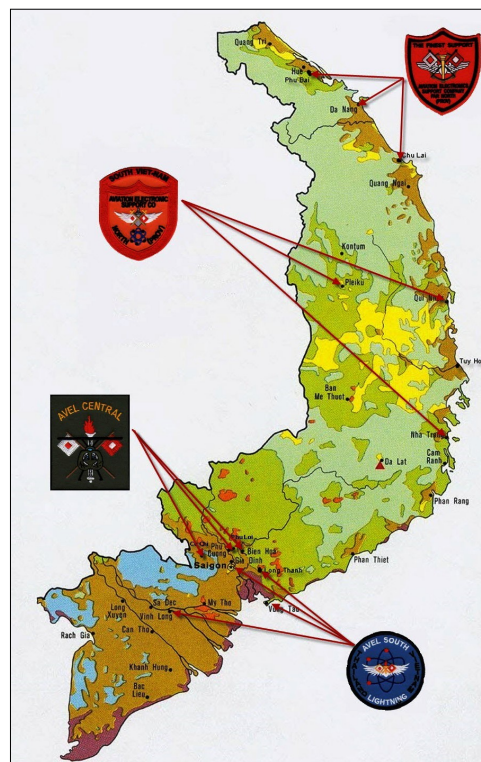


Celebrity Vietnam Vets

James Maitland (Jimmy) Stewart

The Stewart family had deep military roots as both grandfathers had fought in the Civil War, and his father had served during both the Spanish-American War and World War I. Since Stewart considered his father to be the biggest influence on his life, it was not surprising that when another war eventually came, he too served. Unlike his family's previous infantry service, Stewart chose to fly.

Nearly two years before the December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Stewart had become a private pilot and had accumulated over 400 hours of flying time. Considered a highly proficient pilot, he even entered a cross-country race as a co-pilot in 1939.[20] Along with musician/composer Hoagy Carmichael, seeing the need for trained war pilots, Stewart teamed with other Hollywood moguls and put their own money into creating a flying school in Glendale, Arizona which they named Thunderbird Field. This airfield trained more than 200,000 pilots during the War, became the origin of the Flying Thunderbirds, and is now the home of Thunderbird School of Global Management.



Later in 1940, Stewart was drafted into the Army Air Corps but was rejected due to a weight problem. The USAAC had strict height and weight requirements for new recruits and Stewart was five pounds under the standard. To get up to 148 pounds he sought out the help of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's muscle man, Don Loomis, who was legendary for his ability to add or subtract pounds in his studio gymnasium. Stewart subsequently attempted to enlist in the United States Army Air Corps but still came in under the weight requirement although he persuaded the AAF enlistment officer to run new tests, this time passing the weigh-in, with the result that Stewart successfully enlisted in the Army in March 1941. He became the first major American movie star to wear a military uniform in World War II.

Since the United States had not entered the conflict and due to the Army's unwillingness to put celebrities on the front, Stewart was initially held back from combat duty, although he enlisted as a private, he earned a commission as a Second Lieutenant and completed pilot training. He was subsequently stationed in Albuquerque, NM, becoming an instructor pilot for the B-17 Flying Fortress.

The only public appearances after he went into flight school were limited engagements scheduled by the Air Corps. "Stewart appeared several times on network radio with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, he performed with Orson Welles, Edward G. Robinson, Walter Huston and Lionel Barrymore in an all-network radio program called We Hold These Truths, dedicated to the 150th anniversary of the Bill of Rights. But mostly, Stewart's days and nights were spent preparing for his upcoming flight tests, ground school and academic examinations for his commission."

Continued on Page 2

Jimmy Stewart, Continued from Page 1

Still, the war was moving on. For the thirty-six-year-old Stewart, combat duty seemed far away and unreachable, and he had no clear plans for the future. But then a rumor that Stewart would be taken off flying status and assigned to making training films or selling bonds called for his immediate and decisive action, because what he dreaded most was the hope-shattering specter of a dead end. So he appealed to his commander, a pre-war aviator, who understood the situation and reassigned him.

In August 1943 he was finally assigned to the 445th Bombardment Group in Sioux City, Iowa, first as Operations Officer of the 703rd Bombardment Squadron and then its commander. In December, the 445th Bombardment Group flew its B-24 Liberator bombers to RAF Tibenham, England and immediately began combat operations. While flying missions over Germany, Stewart was promoted to Major. In March 1944, he was transferred as group operations officer to the 453rd Bombardment Group, a new B-24 unit that had been experiencing difficulties. As a means to inspire his new group, Stewart flew as command pilot in the lead B-24 on numerous missions deep into Nazi-occupied Europe. These missions went uncounted at Stewart's orders. His "official" total is listed as 20 and are limited to those with the 445th. In 1944, he twice received the Distinguished Flying Cross for actions in combat and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. He also received the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. In July 1944, after flying 20 combat missions, Stewart was made chief of staff of the 2nd Combat Bombardment Wing of the Eighth Air Force. Before the war ended, he was promoted to colonel, one of only a few Americans to rise from private to colonel in four years.

Stewart continued to play an active role in the United States Air Force Reserve after the war, achieving the rank of Brigadier General on 23 July 1959. Stewart did not often talk of his wartime service, perhaps due to his desire to be seen as a regular soldier doing his duty instead of as a celebrity. He did appear on the TV series, *The World At War* to discuss the 14 October 1943, bombing mission to Schweinfurt, which was the center of the German ball bearing manufacturing industry.



This mission is known in USAF history as Black Thursday due to the incredibly high casualties it sustained; in total 60 aircraft were lost out of 291 dispatched, as the raid consisting entirely of B17s was unescorted all the way to Schweinfurt and back due to the current escort aircraft available lacking the range. Fittingly, he was identified only as "James Stewart, Squadron Commander" in the documentary.



In 1966, Brigadier General James Stewart rode along as an observer on a B-52 Stratofortress bombing run during the Vietnam War; he also flew combat duty missions during that conflict. At the time of his B-52 mission, he refused the release of any publicity regarding his participation as he did not want it treated as a stunt, but as part of his job as an officer in the Air Force Reserve. He served as Air Force Reserve commander of Dobbins Air Reserve Base in the early 1950s and after 27 years of service, Stewart retired from the Air Force on 31 May 1968.

WELCOME HOME, JIMMY



Statistics From The Wall

997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam.

1,448 soldiers were killed on their last day in Vietnam.

The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968 ~ 245 deaths.

The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 - 2,415 casualties.

A little history most people will never know.

What's Your Number? The Vietnam War Selective Service Lottery



During the Vietnam War, young men gathered in college dorms and friends' homes to listen to live TV and radio broadcasts of the U.S. Selective Service System drawing lottery numbers to determine who would and would not be drafted.

366 blue plastic capsules contained the birthdays that would be chosen in the first Vietnam draft lottery drawing on December 1, 1969. The first birth date drawn that night, assigned the lowest number, "001," was Sep-

How did Prominent Figures do?

Oliver Stone: 113, September 15, 1946
Pat Sajak: 007, October 26, 1946
Bruce Springsteen: 119, September 23, 1949
Sylvester Stallone: 327, July 6, 1946
Samuel Alito: 032, April 1, 1950
Clarence Thomas: 109, June 23, 1948
Dan Quayle: 210, February 4, 1947
Al Gore: 030, March 31, 1948
Bill Clinton: 311, August 19, 1946
George W. Bush: 327, July 6, 1946
Billy Crystal: 354, March 14, 1947
David Letterman: 346, April 12, 1947
Tom Daschle: 043, December 9, 1947
Howard Dean: 143, December 17, 1948
Jay Leno: 223, April 28, 1950
Rudy Giuliani: 308, May 28, 1944
Stephen King: 204, September 21, 1947
OJ Simpson: 277, July 9, 1947
Bill Murray: 204, September 21, 1950



Some in this list, who were already serving and whose draft status had been resolved, were not affected by the draft lottery. Otherwise, every male aged 19 to 26 had a stake in the 1970 draft lottery, as it determined the order in which men with birth dates between 1944 and 1950 were called to report for induction in 1970. Some on the above list were already serving, received student or medical deferments, volunteered for other service, or for various other reasons were not drafted in 1970.

The highest draft number called for induction from the 1969 lottery was 195.

The next lottery, held in 1970, applied only to men born in the year 1951; the lottery of 1971 covered men born in 1952; and the final lottery in 1972 applied to men born in 1953; however, men born in 1953 were not drafted due to abolition of the draft in 1973.

An estimated 70,000 American men fled to Canada to evade the draft or as deserters. Overall, an estimated 60% of potentially eligible men escaped the draft in the Vietnam years, mostly by qualifying for exemptions of many different kinds.

In 1969 my number was 105. In 1970 I was 323!



Charles Fink's 'Bury Me With Soldiers' poem about Vietnam endures

By Martin C. Evans

martin.evans@newsday.com

August 5, 2018

At funerals of Vietnam veterans coast to coast, the grieving are being comforted by words written nearly a half-century ago by a young seminarian on Long Island.

“Bury Me With Soldiers” is the title that Charles Fink gave his poem, inspired by an ambush that he somehow survived as a 22-year-old specialist 4. Today, at 71, Msgr. Charles Fink leads Our Lady of Snow Roman Catholic Church in Blue Point.

On May 27, 1969, Fink was in the humid jungle countryside east of Saigon. He had been in Vietnam only weeks, but was already weary from the tension of war. On this day, the St. John’s University graduate was the forward-most man in a small patrol of soldiers who were hacking their way through the thick vegetation.

Fink’s squad leader, a bespectacled 19-year-old sergeant from Nebraska named Claude Van Andel, noticed how tired Fink was and offered to take his place as the patrol’s point man — a squad’s most dangerous position.

Moments later, a mine exploded. Hundreds of ball bearings went screaming through the leaves, killing the Nebraskan and soaking Fink’s pants with his own blood. The firefight that followed left most of the dozen or so U.S. troops either dead or wounded.

Fink ended up spending a year in Vietnam. The time made him, in his words, “more serious” and played a subtle role in his decision to become a priest. He wrote the poem a few years after coming home, when he was a student at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington. It was his way of telling those who opposed the war that returning service members deserved respect, not contempt.

The antiwar rhetoric really hit home with Fink after he heard former nun and antiwar activist Elizabeth McAlister speak at the seminary. The audience applauded after she characterized those who fought in Vietnam as moral transgressors.

“I was so outraged that so many were nodding in approval,” Fink said. “I wrote the poem within a few days of that. It was my take on soldiers, as opposed to the one she made.”

Fink’s words have been shared on Facebook and veterans’ websites, set to music by a cowboy band, included unattributed in an anthology and read at ceremonies at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. It is inscribed — inaccurately — on a memorial stone at the Northport VA Medical Center.

“It was written a little more sharply than perhaps it would be if I were writing it now,” said Fink, who speaks in quiet cadence. “At the time, I was really angry in the aftermath of that talk. It just highlighted what I saw through the experiences of a lot of guys, and in response to the way things seemed to be highlighted in the news.”

The ambush that inspired Fink also inspired another member of the patrol, a mortar man named Jan Scruggs, who had been assigned to the squad that day because it had been short a rifleman.

Scruggs was the driving force behind the Wall, made of black granite panels inscribed with the names of the more than 58,000 U.S. troops killed in Vietnam. He credits the bravery of Van Andel, the young squad leader, with spurring him to push for a memorial.

Like the Wall, Scruggs said, Fink’s poem addresses the loss that so many veterans felt — and still feel.

“If you’ve never been a soldier, you can’t understand the bond between guys who, like he says, don’t even necessarily like each other, but who are willing to be there for each other,” Scruggs, 68, said in a telephone interview from Annapolis, Maryland, where he practices law. “His poem captures the bond soldiers feel.”

Continued on Page 5

Charles Fink, Continued from Page 4

Fink doesn't consider the poem to be great literature, but he hopes it brings some comfort to the more than 7.3 million living veterans who served during the Vietnam War.

"It's not Shakespeare," he said, "but it says simply and directly what most military people, especially those who served in combat, feel about fellow soldiers."

Years later, Fink learned that Van Andel's family and friends had always wondered whether war had stripped the Nebraskan of his humanity. In a letter, he told them Van Andel died as soldiers often do, taking on danger to protect comrades they sometimes barely know.

"I wish you could have seen him the day he died," he wrote. "Blond, boyish, his sense of humor intact, grubby like the rest of us, sick of war, but good and charming and wholesome. The war killed him . . . but it never destroyed him."

BURY ME WITH SOLDIERS

I've played a lot of roles in life;
I've met a lot of men;
I've done some things I'd like to think
I wouldn't do again.

And though I'm young, I'm old enough
To know someday I'll die,
And think about what lies beyond,
Beside whom I would lie.

Perhaps it doesn't matter much;
Still, if I had my choice,
I'd want a grave 'mongst soldiers
When at last death quells my voice.

I'm sick of the hypocrisy
Of lectures by the wise.
I'll take the man, with all his flaws,
Who goes, though scared, and dies.

The troops I knew were commonplace;
They didn't want the war.
They fought because their fathers and
Their fathers had before.

They cursed and killed and wept — God knows
They're easy to deride —
But bury me with men like these;
They faced the guns and died.

It's funny, when you think of it,
The way we got along.
We'd come from different worlds,
To live in one no one belongs.

I didn't even like them all;
I'm sure they'd all agree.
Yet I would give my life for them,
I hope. Some did for me.

So bury me with soldiers, please,
Though much maligned they be.
Yes, bury me with soldiers, for
I miss their company.

We'll not soon see their like again;
We've had our fill of war.
But bury me with men like them
Till someone else does more.

Pvt. Charles Fink, 199th Infantry Brigade (Light)



USS ENTERPRISE DEACTIVATION

The aircraft carrier USS Enterprise (CVN 65) arrived at Naval Station Norfolk, Va., on Nov. 4, 2012 and was decommissioned in 2017. The Enterprise's return to Norfolk was the 25th and final homecoming of her 51 years of service.

It could cost more than \$1 billion to dismantle the Navy's first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, according to the Government Accountability Office, an investigative arm for Congress that routinely reviews U.S. agencies and programs.



JANE FONDA REGRETS???

I don't usually like to talk about Jane Fonda but saw this story and wanted to pass it on.

Jane Fonda says she regrets 'horrible' message that posing with anti-aircraft gun in Vietnam.

Jane Fonda said she's still confronted by Vietnam War veterans over her 1970s anti-war activism and welcomes the encounters. (I can't imagine these encounters are very comfortable for her.)

Such moments provide an opportunity to talk, she said, which needs to be done with what Fonda called "an open mind and a soft heart."

The actress drew bitter criticism after being photographed atop an anti-aircraft gun during a controversial 1972 visit to North Vietnam. Meeting with TV critics recently to discuss a new HBO documentary on her life, she expressed regret for that moment.



She said it was thoughtless to perch on the gun and called it "horrible" to think about the message her action sent to soldiers and their families, she said.

It was an earlier meeting with U.S. soldiers in Paris that sparked her activism, Fonda said. Her belief that America always fought on "the side of the angels" was shaken by what she heard and later read.

She felt betrayed and lied to by America's leadership over the war and decided she would do everything possible to help stop it as part of a movement, Fonda said.

Regret? Too bad she didn't apologize.

NEW AVEL, AVIONICS AND VIETNAM VETERANS REGISTERED

Sill, Edward L. SP/5

P.O. Box 2333

CA 93644

317th LEM, Vung Tau: 16 Dec. 1970 - 6 Sep. 1971

edwlsill@gmail.com

Also served in Vietnam: 1st Radio Research Company, Cam Ranh Bay Vietnam

MOS: 26M2T

Comments: I served as a S.L.A.R. Radar repair instructor at Fort Huachuca Arizona between my two tours in Vietnam.

TAPS

None Reported

PRAYERS NEEDED

Dan Harmon (Avel North): Can't make reunion this year. Just put in VA hospital in Kansas City, Mo. Diagnosis leukemia to go along with Mantel Cell lymphoma and prostate cancer. All caused by Agent Orange.

PHOTOS

None Submitted

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Dan Harmon, 1204 SW Arborcrest Dr. Lee's Summit, Mo. 64082. 816-516-1105

All Avel Gathering/Reunion 2018

This years gathering/Reunion will be held in Huntersville (near Charlotte), North Carolina. AS of this News-letter we have 61 people attending including 33 vets and 28 guests. I expect more to register as the summer progresses.

October 18 - 21, 2018

Country Inn & Suites

16617 Statesville Rd.
Huntersville, NC 28078

We have a room block from 15 - 24 October but please reserve your room as soon as possible if you think you are coming. You can always cancel your reservation without cost 48 hours before check-in.

They have 3 handicap rooms and one has already been reserved.

Call 704-895-6565 and tell them you are with the Avel Vietnam Reunion. If you have any problems call Jack McCabe at 847-778-3473.



Events Planned

If you are flying in please note that there is no shuttle from the airport to the hotel. However, when you have made your flight arrangements we will pick you up at the airport when you arrive and drive you back for your return flight.

The hotel is just a short 30 minute (when traffic is good) to downtown Charlotte. Information of attractions and activities in Charlotte and the surrounding area will be forthcoming.

Wednesday, 17 October

Early bird arrivals will be treated to dinner at the McCabe's house on their deck.
Our house is a short 25 minute drive from the hotel.

Thursday, 18 October

Ft Jackson hold basic training graduations on Thursday morning at 09:00.
Those who would like to go will be car pooled.
For those interested we will car-pool to Port City Club in Cornelius for dinner

Friday, 19 October

Ladies luncheon at Red Rocks Café, Birkdale Village. We will provide transportation
John Veers Martini Golf Outing: Verdict Ridge Golf & Country Club, 11:00. Cost is \$44.00/per person. We can bring our own beverages on the course.

Saturday, 20 October

We will bus to two or three wineries for tasting and lunch. All costs paid by the Avel Reunion.
Final group dinner at the hotel in the Hospitality Room

Sunday, 21 October

Transportation to the airport will be provided by Jack and others with cars for those who need.

We will have a hospitality room with complete beverages and snacks throughout the event.

Cost of the Reunion is \$70.00/person payable to Avel Reunion

Mail checks payable to "Avel Reunion" to Jack McCabe, 2120 Augusta National Dr., Denver, NC 28037

DOES YOUR UNIFORM STILL FIT?

We received a few photos and want MORE! Send them to my email and I will publish them in the next Newsletter! [Send them to jmccabe51@gmail.com](mailto:jmccabe51@gmail.com).



Bill Bussey, Avel Central



John Veers, Avel Central

IN-COUNTRY



WINNING THE HEARTS AND MINDS...OF US!

IN-COUNTRY



THE MESS HALL BAROMETER.



AVEL VIETNAM



August 2018 Newsletter