



Freedom's Voice

The Monthly Newsletter of the
Military History Center

112 N. Main ST
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
<http://www.okmhc.org/>



"Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History"

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Oklahoma Vietnam Veterans Day



On March 2, the MHC hosted a birthday party for ninety-two-year-old Korean War Veteran and POW, Cletys Nordin of Tulsa. Mr. Nordin was held as a prisoner of war by the Chinese for 966 days.

Besides Cletys Nordin, there are two other surviving Korean War POWs living in the Tulsa area, all of whom were in the same Chinese POW camp – Edwin Jones, III and Evelyn P. Perkins.

The MHC Salutes Vietnam Veterans

The Military History Center hosted its third annual Oklahoma Vietnam Veterans Day observance at Broken Arrow's First Methodist Church, in the evening of March 16.

Captain John Adair of Tulsa, a Vietnam War Navy veteran, was the featured speaker. The program also included a video projection of The Wall as MHC docent, Ken Collins, sang "More than a Name on a Wall", accompanied by docent, Dennis Hoch, on guitar. Rolling Thunder Oklahoma presented their Vietnam MIA remembrance program as Ms. Kay Guynes read the names of Oklahoma's thirty-two Vietnam War MIAs.

Important Date – May 5

The History Classic Golf Tournament

Attention golfers! The Military History Center and The Museum Broken Arrow will host their annual benefit golf tournament on May 5 at Battle Creek Golf Club. Proceeds of the golf tournament will equally benefit the Military History Center and The Museum Broken Arrow. Mark your calendars, and start practicing. Details will be in the April newsletter.

For information about participating as a player, sponsor or donor, contact BG Tom Mancino at 918-794-2712 or 918-277-2486.



Captain John Adair, USNR (retired)



Members of Rolling Thunder recognizing Oklahoma's Vietnam War MIAs



Dennis Hoch and Ken Collins



Korean War veterans – (standing) Don Hughes and Clarence Oliver – (sitting) George Banasky and Cletys Nordin. Don Hughes and George Banasky are career Air Force veterans, who also served in Vietnam.

Correction

A sharp-eyed and very knowledgeable reader of the February newsletter caught a serious factual error we made in the Robert Samuel Johnson story. The story should have said that Grabeski, Johnson and MacDonald were the leading air aces of the European Theater.

The top three U.S. air aces of World War II served in the Pacific Theater. Major Richard Bong, USAAF, was credited with forty aerial victories. He received the Medal of Honor for actions over Borneo and Leyte for the period October 10-November 15, 1944.

Major Thomas McGuire, Jr., USAAF, achieved thirty-eight aerial victories before being shot down and killed over Negros Island in the Philippines, on January 7, 1945. He received the Medal of Honor for actions over Luzon, December 25-26, 1944.

Captain David McCampbell, USN, achieved thirty-four aerial kills, including five in one day, on two separate occasions. He received the Medal of Honor for actions during the Battle of the Philippine Sea, "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot", on June 19, 1944.

Civil War Living History Program

Several local Civil War re-enactors presented a Civil War living history program at the MHC on Saturday, March 11. The program was planned to be conducted on the Memorial Flag Plaza, but weather intervened, and it was moved inside.

Re-enactors included men attired in Union and Confederate uniforms with reproduction Civil War weapons and ladies dressed in period clothing with some engaged in typical chores of the era, such as knitting and sewing. Musicians in period dress entertained with period music.



Curtis Payne (center) and two unnamed members of his group, Loco Focos, performing at the Civil War living history program



Support the Military History Center

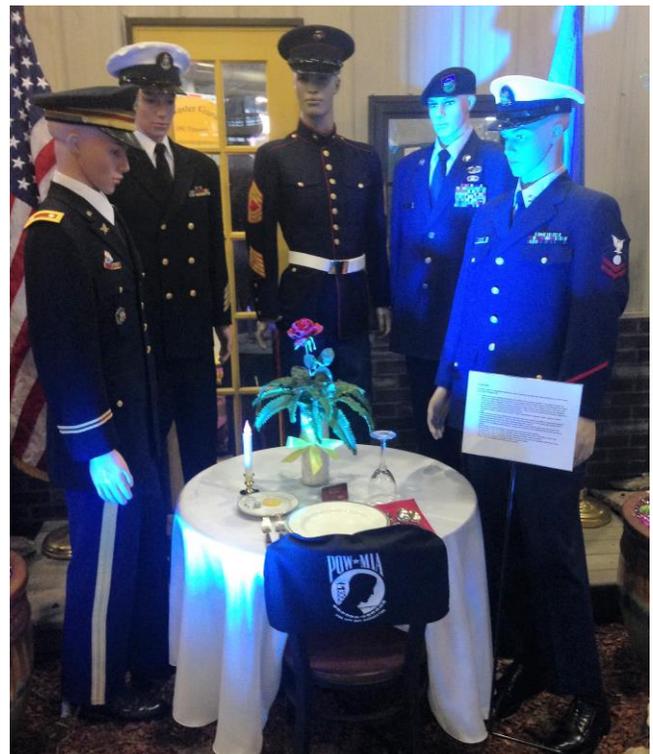
We believe the MHC provides a valuable service to the local community, especially to veterans and students. We ask for your financial support to help the MHC continue "Promoting Patriotism through the Preservation of Military History" and recognizing the sacrifices made by our veterans – past and present – to keep America free.

For more information, please contact the Military History Center at (918) 794-2712 to learn how you can be a financial supporter, or click on the link below to go to the MHC website at www.okmhc.org/donate/.

Monetary donations, as well as gifts in kind, are tax deductible, subject to IRS regulations.

Tulsa Home and Garden Show

At the 2017 Tulsa Home and Garden Show, March 9-12, the Home Builders Association Tulsa Master Gardeners' theme was a tribute to the armed services and emergency responders. The MHC provided militaria for the exhibit: a Mexican War era reproduction mountain howitzer and an MIA Missing Man Table exhibit.



In Memoriam



Lt. General Hal Moore at West Point – 2010

Howard Gregory “Hal” Moore, Jr. was born at Bardstown, Kentucky on February 13, 1922. From a young age, he wanted to attend the United States Military Academy. After appointments were expanded because of World War II, he finally entered the Academy on July 15, 1942, at age twenty. His was an accelerated class that graduated in 1945. He was sent for further training and then posted to Japan with the occupation army. During the Korean War, he saw combat as a Captain commanding a heavy mortar company of the 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division.

Hal Moore is best known for his command of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry “First Team” Division during the Battle of Ia Drang Valley in the Vietnam War. His battalion defended Landing Zone X-Ray in a fierce, three-day battle against numerically superior North Vietnamese regular army forces. He later co-authored a book entitled *We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young*, with UPI journalist, Joseph L. Galloway, detailing his experiences in the battle. A popular movie was later made, based on the book.

Including his time as a cadet at West Point, Moore served for thirty-five years, advancing to the rank of Lt. General. He retired on August 1, 1977, and settled in Alabama. He died at his home in Auburn, Alabama, on February 10, 2017, three days short of his ninety-fifth birthday.

General Moore is a legend in the Army. He and others were early proponents of the concept of air mobile warfare – ferrying troops by helicopter to isolated combat locations and continually re-supplying them by the same means. The success of the Ia Drang operation proved their thesis. The men of the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry who served under General Moore – then a Lt. Colonel – at Landing Zone X-Ray revere him for his unflappable demeanor, steadfast leadership and courage during the battle.

Bristow Names Street for Willard Parrish



The City of Bristow, hometown of Vietnam War veteran, Willard Parrish, has named a street for him. The street was dedicated in his name on February 17. Left to right in the photograph are Bristow City Councilor Rick Person, State Representative Cody Hilbert, Willard Parrish, State Senator James Leewright and Bristow Mayor Leonard Washington. Parrish was a member of 2nd BN, 7th Cavalry at Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. He was awarded a Silver Star for his heroic actions during the battle. He is also a member of the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame, inducted in 2016.



Insignia of the 7th Cavalry Regiment

The regiment’s nickname and marching song, “Garry Owen”, was adopted after the regiment was formed at Fort Riley, Kansas on July 28, 1866. Garry Owen is an old Irish drinking song that first became popular in the British Army.

Museum Hours and Admission Fee

Tuesday – Friday: 10:00 – 4:00; Saturday: 10:00 – 2:00
Closed Sunday and Monday and major Federal holidays

Adults – \$5.00

Members and Children under 18 – Free

For more information, call (918) 794-2712

www.okmhc.org



On September 20, 1965, SGT Larry S. Pierce was serving in Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 503rd Infantry Regiment, 173rd Airborne Brigade. On that day, near Ben Cat in the central highlands of South Vietnam, Pierce smothered the blast of an anti-personnel mine with his body, sacrificing his life to protect his fellow soldiers. For his heroic sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on February 24, 1966, and promoted to staff sergeant. President Lyndon Johnson presented the Medal to SGT Pierce's family in a White House ceremony.

Larry Stanley Pierce was born at Wewoka, Oklahoma, on July 6, 1941. His family moved to California, where he was raised in the city of Taft. Pierce joined the Army from Fresno, California in 1961. He is buried at Wasco Memorial Park in Wasco, California.

SSGT Larry S. Pierce is honored as a hero by both Oklahoma and California.



SGT Larry Pierce in Vietnam – 1965



General William M. Momyer, Commander of Seventh Air Force presenting the Silver Star to SSGT William Piazza

On January 31, 1968, SSGT William "Pete" Piazza, on his second tour in Vietnam, was serving as an Air Force policeman in the 3rd Security Police Squadron at Bien Hoa Air Force Base. On that day, the North Vietnamese and their Viet Cong allies launched simultaneous, furious attacks all across Vietnam in what was called the Tet Offensive. At Bien Hoa AFB: "With the brunt of the penetration attack being concentrated on a bunker on the east end of the base, Sgt. Piazza drove through an unmerciful hail of rocket, mortar, machine-gun and sniper fire to resupply the defenders who were rapidly expending their ammunition. When the Officer in Charge was killed, Sergeant Piazza assumed command, exposed himself to the barrage of incoming fire when deploying his personnel, and nevertheless, exhibited unrelenting stamina that rallied his men for eight hours in countering the hostile assault. The position was held; the westward progress of the hostile forces across the installation was thwarted; and untold numbers of lives and literally hundreds of millions of dollars of aircraft and other material had been saved". (SSGT Piazza's Silver Star Citation)

Pete Piazza retired from the Air Force as a Senior Master Sergeant in 1988 after twenty-eight years of service, including three tours in Vietnam. After retirement, he settled in Del City, Oklahoma, where he still lives. On May 12, 2014, Tinker Air Force Base renamed its Midwest Blvd. Gate the Piazza Gate.



SMSGT Piazza looking at the camera during the Tinker AFB gate renaming ceremony.

Women in the Military

Women have served almost continuously in the United State military beginning with the Revolutionary War. In the beginning, they served mostly as nurses, water bearers, cooks, laundresses and saboteurs. Little changed during the nineteenth century as women served mostly in hospitals or in related fields. In 1866, Dr. Mary Walker received the Medal of Honor for her services during the Civil War. She is the only woman to have received the nation's highest military honor. In 1901 the Army Nurse Corps was established. The Navy followed suit in 1908.

During America's participation in World War I (1917-1918), 21,480 Army nurses served in military hospitals in the United States and overseas. Eighteen African-American Army nurses served stateside caring for German prisoners of war and African-American soldiers. The Army recruited and trained 233 bilingual telephone operators to work at switchboards near the front in France and sent fifty skilled stenographers to France to work with the Quartermaster Corps. The Navy enlisted 11,880 women as Yeomen (F) to serve stateside in shore billets to release sailors for sea duty. More than 1,476 Navy nurses served in military hospitals stateside and overseas. The Marine Corps enlisted 305 Marine Reservists (F) to "free men to fight" by filling positions such as clerks and telephone operators on the home front. Two women served with the Coast Guard. More than 400 women military nurses died in the line of duty during World War I. The vast majority of these women died from a highly contagious form of influenza known as Spanish Flu, which swept through crowded military camps and hospitals and ports of embarkation.

A provision of the Army Reorganization Act of 1920 granted military nurses the status of officers with "relative rank" from second lieutenant to major, but not with full rights and privileges.

World War II (1941-1945) brought significant change to women's participation in the military. More than 60,000 Army nurses served stateside and overseas during World War II. The Army established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942, which was converted to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1943. More than 150,000 women served as WACs during the war; thousands were sent to the European and Pacific theaters. The Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) was organized and flew as civil service pilots. WASPs flew stateside missions as aircraft ferriers, test pilots and anti-aircraft artillery trainers. More than 14,000 Navy nurses served stateside, overseas on hospital ships and as flight nurses during the war. The Navy recruited women into its Navy Women's Reserve, called Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), starting in 1942. Before the war ended, more than 80,000 WAVES filled shore billets in a large variety of jobs in communications, intelligence, supply, medicine and administration. The Marine Corps created the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1943. Marine women served stateside as clerks, cooks, mechanics, drivers and in a variety of other positions. The Coast Guard established their Women's Reserve known as the SPARs (after the Coast Guard motto, *Semper Paratus* – Always Ready) in 1942. SPARs were assigned stateside and serve as storekeepers, clerks, pho-

tographers, pharmacist's mates, cooks and in numerous other jobs. In 1943, the US Public Health Service established the Cadet Nurse Corps which trained some 125,000 women for possible military service. Eighty-three Army and Navy nurses were captured during the early months of the war and held as prisoners by the Japanese. Altogether, more than 400,000 American military women served at home and overseas in nearly all non-combat jobs. As the country demobilized, all but a few servicewomen were mustered out.

The Army-Navy Nurse Act of 1947 made the Army Nurse Corps and Women's Medical Specialist Corps part of the Regular Army and gave permanent commissioned officer status to Army and Navy nurses. The Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 granted women permanent status in the Regular and Reserve forces of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps as well as in the newly created Air Force. In 1949, the Air Force Nurse Corps was established.

During the Korean War (1950-1953), servicewomen who had joined the Reserves following World War II were involuntarily recalled to active duty during the war. More than 500 Army nurses served in the combat zone and many more were assigned to large hospitals in Japan during the war. Navy nurses served on hospital ships in the Korean theater of war as well as at Navy hospitals stateside. Air Force nurses served stateside, in Japan and as flight nurses in the Korean theater. Many other servicewomen were assigned to duty in the theater of operations in Japan and Okinawa. During the Vietnam Era (1955-1975), some 11,000 American military women served in Southeast Asia, the majority of them nurses.

Today, women serve in almost all areas of the armed forces including as ship commanders and combat pilots. The Army and Marine Corps are currently working to integrate women into further combat roles.

From the beginning of America's military history, women in the military forces of the United States have contributed immeasurably to the success of the armed forces' many and diverse missions.



Brigadier General Diana M. Holland
76th Commandant of Cadets
United States Military Academy

Women in the Vietnam War

The Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation estimates that approximately 11,000 military women were stationed in Vietnam over the course of the war. Nearly all were volunteers, and ninety percent served as military nurses. Others worked as physicians, air traffic controllers, intelligence officers, clerks and other positions in the U.S. Women's Army Corps, U.S. Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps and the Army Medical Specialist Corps. In addition to women in the armed forces, an unknown number of civilian women served in Vietnam on behalf of the Red Cross, United Service Organizations (USO), Catholic Relief Services and other humanitarian organizations, or as foreign correspondents for various news organizations.

In the early years of the war, the Army resisted sending women other than nurses to Vietnam. The Women's Army Corps (WAC), established during World War II, had a presence in Vietnam beginning in 1964, when General William Westmoreland asked the Pentagon to provide a WAC officer and non-commissioned officer to help the South Vietnamese train their own women's army corps. At its peak in 1970, WAC presence in Vietnam numbered twenty officers and 130 enlisted women. WACs filled noncombat positions in U.S. Army headquarters in Saigon and other bases in South Vietnam. A number received decorations for meritorious service.

Nurses ranged in age from recent college graduates in their early twenties to seasoned career women in their forties or older. Members of the Army Nurse Corps arrived in Vietnam as early as 1956, when they were tasked with training the South Vietnamese in nursing skills. As the American military presence in South Vietnam increased beginning in the early 1960s, so did that of the Army Nurse Corps. From March 1962 to March 1973, when the last Army nurses left Vietnam, some 5,000 would serve in the conflict. Five female Army nurses died over the course of the war, including 52-year-old Lieutenant Colonel Annie Ruth Graham, who served as a military nurse in both World War II and Korea before Vietnam. She suffered a stroke in August 1968. First Lieutenant Sharon Ann Lane died from shrapnel wounds suffered in an attack on the hospital where she was working in June 1969. Lane was posthumously awarded the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Palm and the U.S. Bronze Star for heroism.

Members of the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps also played an important role in the conflict beginning in 1963. Five Navy nurses were awarded the Purple Heart after they were injured in a Viet Cong bombing of an officers' billet in downtown Saigon, on Christmas Eve 1964. They became the first female members of the U.S. Armed Forces to receive that award in the Vietnam War. Apart from nurses, only nine Navy women—all officers—served in Vietnam, including Lieutenant Elizabeth G. Wylie, who worked in the Command Information Center on the staff of the Commander of Naval Forces in Saigon beginning in June 1967, and Commander Elizabeth Barrett, who in November 1972 became the first female naval line officer to hold command in a combat zone.

Women also served as members of the Air Force Nurse Corps and the Women's Air Force (WAF) during the Vietnam conflict. Captain Mary Therese Klinker, one of the eight mili-

tary women killed in Vietnam, was the flight nurse on the U.S. Air Force C-5A Galaxy that crashed in April 1975 near Saigon. (The plane had been on a mission for Operation Babylift, which placed Southeast Asian orphans with families in the United States; 138 people were killed in the crash, including many Vietnamese children and a number of female civilians working for U.S. government agencies.) Klinker was posthumously awarded the Airman's Medal for Heroism and the Meritorious Service Medal.

The Marine Corps had a more limited female presence in Vietnam. Until 1966, only sixty female Marines were permitted to serve outside the continental United States, with most of those stationed in Hawaii. From 1967 to 1973, a total of twenty-eight enlisted Marine Corps women and eight officers served in Vietnam at various times.

In addition to the U.S. military women who served in Vietnam, an unknown number of female civilians willingly gave their services in Vietnam during the war. Many of them worked on behalf of the American Red Cross, Army Special Services, United Service Organizations (USO), Peace Corps, and various religious groups such as Catholic Relief Services.

Other American women traveled to Vietnam as foreign correspondents for news organizations, including Georgette "Dickey" Chappelle, a writer for the *National Observer*, who was killed by a land mine while on patrol with U.S. Marines outside Chu Lai in November 1965. According to the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, fifty-nine female civilians died during the conflict.



Lt. Colonel Annie Ruth Graham was born in Efland, North Carolina, on November 7, 1916. She served as Chief Nurse at the 91st Evacuation Hospital, Tuy Hoa, Vietnam. She began her tour of duty in Vietnam on November 16, 1967. She suffered a stroke on August 14, 1968, and was evacuated to Japan, where she died four days later. She was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

This Month's Featured Exhibit



Two sections of the MHC's extensive collection of Vietnam War artifacts. Copies of SSGT Piazza's Silver Star Citation and photo of him receiving the award are at the center above the display case

“Lest We Forget”



Vietnam Women's Memorial – Washington, DC

The Vietnam Women's Memorial is dedicated to the women of the United States military forces who served in the Vietnam War, most of whom were nurses. It depicts three uniformed women with a wounded soldier. It's part of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and is located on the National Mall, a short distance south of The Wall and north of the Reflecting Pool. The Memorial, designed by Glenna Goodacre, was dedicated on November 11, 1993. Eight military women, all nurses, died in the Vietnam War: Lt. Colonel Annie Ruth Graham, Captain Eleanor Grace Alexander, 1st Lieutenants Hedwig Diane Orlowski and Sharon Ann Lane, 2nd Lieutenants Pamela Dorothy Donovan, Carol Ann Elizabeth Drazba, Elizabeth Ann Jones (Army) and Captain Mary Therese Klinker (Air Force).

Freedom is not free.



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