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Faith No More

[When I read the editorial "Faith No More?," April, p. 2] I thought that (finally) somebody was thinking as I was, but the word never seems to get out.

I am a retired Navy Seabee and have a 19-year-old college student son. When he was a high school junior, he expressed a desire to join the military; I talked him out of it and told him that I would be much happier if he would go to college because the government will not honor his service once he leaves the military! I am an example of that thought.

I joined in 1965, did two tours in Vietnam, and was wounded once. I chose to stay for a career, but by doing so I had absolutely no GI Bill education benefits waiting for me when I retired in 1987; the Vietnam-era GI bill had expired by then, and because I chose to stay in uniform, I lost out. Had I gotten out after my first hitch, I would have had the opportunity to use it.

The erosion of my "entitlements" since retiring has left me with a bad taste in my mouth, and I could not subject my son to the same broken promises. Now we have Tricare, and I am told that I will pay twice as much for something that was "promised" to be free for life.

I don't want to sound like a disgruntled UAW worker, but I laid my life on the line and was promised things that never came true.

My son will never serve, and I have told his friends of the downfall of a military career.

Incidentally, I used to be a Navy recruiter in 1984. In the Enlisted Navy Recruiter Orientation (ENRO) course, they showed 30 years of different versions of the DD-214. Look them up. The wording and politics are obvious to all!

Leonard R. Webber
Gulfport, Miss.

The QDR Has Landed, Sort Of

Regarding the Pentagon's new ideas ["Editorial: *The QDR Has Landed, Sort Of*," March, p. 2]: I am particularly enthralled by the "joint capability areas" idea. The only "joint capabilities" are air capabilities. There are no

joint armored divisions or joint frigate squadrons. The capability that defines "joint" is airpower. That capability may be ground-based, or it may be naval, but it is always air.

Gen. Michael J. Dugan,
USAF (Ret.)
Dillon, Colo.

Lima Site 85

I read with great interest your story in the recent *Air Force Magazine*, "The Fall of Lima Site 85" [April, p. 66]. Chief Master Sergeant Etchberger was my father. It might interest you to know that the March 1969 issue of *Air Force and Space Digest* has a very short description and picture of my mother accepting the Air Force Cross from then Chief of Staff General McConnell on p. 130. The other thing that may be of interest is that my father is now being considered for the Medal of Honor. There is a Bill (HR 2674) in Congress to award him the MOH; in addition, there is paperwork that has made it as far as the Pentagon which would upgrade his Air Force Cross to the MOH.

Thank you so much for telling this story so that other Air Force personnel can learn about their heritage.

Cory Etchberger
Overland Park, Kan.

■ Also in the April issue, we erred in identifying Gerald Clayton as a lieutenant colonel. Though he was a lieutenant colonel when he deployed on the Lima Site 85 mission in fall 1967, he was promoted to colonel on Dec. 24, 1967 and retired in that grade.—THE EDITORS

Do you have a comment about a current article in the magazine? Write to "Letters," *Air Force Magazine*, 1501 Lee Highway, Arlington, VA 22209-1198. (E-mail: letters@afa.org.) Letters should be concise and timely. We cannot acknowledge receipt of letters. We reserve the right to condense letters. Letters without name and city/base and state are not acceptable. Photographs cannot be used or returned.—THE EDITORS

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To educate the public about the critical role of aerospace power in the defense of our nation.

To advocate aerospace power and a strong national defense.

To support the United States Air Force and the Air Force family.

Determination of a Sandy

John T. Correll has given us another excellent article about bravery under fire in Southeast Asia (literally) with "Determination of a Sandy," March, p. 42. I would like to make two comments related to the A-1 photo caption on p. 44. First, aircraft No. 738 is famous for more than just Bill Jones' Medal of Honor. That same aircraft was flown by Capt. Ron Smith as Sandy 1 during the June 2, 1972 SAR mission that recovered Roger Locher from deep inside North Vietnam. Captain Smith received the Air Force Cross for his actions, making No. 738 the only aircraft in Air Force history to have been directly involved in both an MOH and an AFC mission.

Second, No. 738 may have been the last USAF A-1 lost in Southeast Asia, but given that we transferred our remaining A-1s to the VNAF in November 1972, I would be surprised if it was the last of its type to go down in that conflict.

Please continue to publish similar articles about USAF activities in Southeast Asia—it is important history that we all need to be aware of.

Col. Ron Thurlow,
USAF (Ret.)
Beavercreek, Ohio

A great article on the heroism of Bill Jones! I first flew into [Nakhon Phanom, Thailand] in May 1966, landing on the sometimes treacherous rain slick PSP runway. In fact, one of our 22 TCS C-124s skidded off the runway and buried the nose gear in the soft Thai mud. The last mission I flew to Nakhon Phanom Air Base was in January 1967 when I landed on the new 8,000-foot-long asphalt runway. The PSP main runway was replaced a "skoshi" earlier than the September 1968 date stated in the article. Nimrod (A-26), Sandys, Fireflies, Pony Express, etc., did a yeoman's job in taking the war to the NVA from NKP! God bless 'em all!

Lt. Col. Jimmy B. Pickens,
USAF (Ret.)
Abilene, Tex.

Recognition Due

[The photo in the lower left corner of p. 56, March issue, "Tough Old Birds," shows an unidentified pilot inspecting battle damage to a propeller:] He is 2nd Lt. Ellis A. Wallenberg, 73rd Fighter Squadron (not the 7th), 318th Fighter Group, shown on Ie Shima (not Okinawa). During an engagement with Japanese fighters over Kyushu, Wallenberg had his canopy shot away, radio destroyed, and was slightly wounded. His engine

had also been hit and was losing oil. A 20 mm round had gone through the prop of his P-47N causing vibration. Escorted by a squadron mate, he managed to make it the 300 miles back to Ie Shima when his engine quit. He dead-sticked it onto the runway for this photo. Three weeks later, over the Ryukyu Islands, his plane was hit by flak and he had to parachute and was seen to fall to his death. Please give him the bit of recognition that is his due.

Jack Lambert
St. Paul, Minn.

Who Shot Down Yamamoto?

Having been a participant in the Yamamoto mission, I read your article with great interest and found it to be very accurate except in one small detail: the 30-foot altitude and a major disagreement with its conclusion about [1st Lt.] Rex Barber and [Capt.] Tom Lanphier, who were both very good friends of mine [*"Magic and Lightning," March, p. 62*].

In the 13th Fighter Command report "Subject: Fighter Interception," it stated we flew at 30 feet and, in another place, we flew 10 to 30 feet above the water. In truth, John Mitchell briefed us to maintain 50 feet of altitude, which I and my team mates did all the way to Bougainville. Ten to 30 feet above the ocean is ridiculous in that if one engine quits, only the most skillful of pilots could prevent crashing into the ocean before they could safely convert to single engine flying.

After Japanese records revealed that only two Betty bombers were shot down, not three, and no Zeros were shot down, Tom wrote an unpublished book (I have a copy) in which he claimed that only he should have full credit for shooting down Yamamoto's plane. Up to that time, Rex was willing to accept half credit, but after Tom let Rex and [Maj.] John Mitchell read it, they were in strong disagreement from then on.

My personal interest started the day after the mission when I asked Tom about the Betty bomber he said he had shot down. He told me that after he turned into the three Zeros on the right side of Yamamoto's plane (which in my mind was fabulous in that it gave Rex an unimpeded path to Yamamoto's plane), he shot at the oncoming Zeros and, as they passed, he made a 180-degree turn after which he saw a Betty bomber at about 90 degrees to him and at some distance. He fired his guns using lead, and the Betty's right wing came off and the Betty rapidly descended to a crash.

In 1988, the Nimitz Foundation at Fredricksburg, Tex., held its first symposium with its subject "The Yamamoto Mission." There were seven of us from the mission, plus Yanagua, the only survivor of the six Japanese Zero pilots. Through an interpreter, he told the audience that

no Zeros were shot down, five landing at Kahili and one at Ballalae, and then at about two o'clock the six took off, joined up, and flew back to Rabaul. After the talks, through an interpreter, he told me he was the only one still living because, in a fight with an F6F, he had his right hand hit, which had to be amputated and he could not fly any more. The other five were killed in combat later on. When he saw a P-38 about to attack Yamamoto's airplane (because they had had their radios removed to lighten the plane), he was unable to warn Yamamoto's pilot. He flew ahead and fired his guns in the hope that his tracers would warn the pilot, but to no avail. After the Betty was fired at, Yanagua stated it crashed after 20 to 30 seconds. (I have a copy of his sworn statement as to this fact.) Another book has a part of Admiral Ugaki's diary in which he said he saw the attack and that after Yamamoto's plane was hit, it took only 20 seconds before it hit the ground.

There is no way that the P-38G models that we flew with no aileron boost could make a 180-degree turn and fly to the fray in the cited 20 to 30 seconds. However, in Tom's unpublished book, he states that he followed Yamamoto's Betty bomber to near its crash site. [He] gave a very accurate description of the scene, and also how he had shot down Yamamoto's plane for the second time (of course,

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not mentioned by him was that it was the second time), which brings up the question: Should future review boards give him credit for shooting down one-and-a-half bombers? Without question, that would be ridiculous. It is my strong opinion that Tom never fired one round at any Betty bomber. Also, after Yanagua and Admiral Ugaki confirmed they had seen a P-38 shoot down Yamamoto's plane and said so, only Rex should be credited with this victory because their statements and Rex's are practically identical.

Douglas S. Canning
Maitland, Fla.

Thank you for an excellent article by Rebecca Grant on the interception and shootdown of Admiral Yamamoto. In the late 1980s, George Chandler, a World War II ace who knew all the principals in the story, began a quest to get Rex Barber sole credit for shooting down Yamamoto. He came to VFW headquarters in Kansas City where I worked and asked if we would support him. Though we did not offer money, we gave him morale support and encouraged the effort.

As a retired Air Force officer, I became so interested in the project that I volunteered to fly on my own time and money to Bougainville and film the bomber wreckage and the area over which the battle took place. Unfortunately, before I could get over there, the locals began fighting with each other and a small civil war took place. One night at a Military Officers Association of America dinner, I mentioned the project to Col. Jim Jarman, USAF (Ret.). "Oh," he said, "I knew both of those guys, Barber and Lanphier. Barber was the one who got Yamamoto."

I was stunned. Here sat a man who had all the information that dozens of others were searching for. He recounted how the mission had been kept secret even after it was over, to keep the Japanese from learning that we were decoding their messages. But someone from Guadalcanal who had gone back to the States had let the cat out of the bag. Immediately the story was released. Jarman, in his quarters on Guadalcanal, heard the radio broadcast and went out to find Barber and Lanphier. He learned that they were at the base theater.

As Jarman approached the theater, the two fliers walked out. Jarman gave them the news. Lanphier immediately turned to Barber, shook his hand, and said, "Congratulations, you got him."

I relayed that story to George Chandler, but he never followed it up, and he lived just a few hours away in Pratt, Kan. Jarman died a couple of months later. Had the Jarman statement been

made part of the record, Barber might have received the credit he was due.

Maj. Vern J. Pall,
USAF (Ret.)
Tucson, Ariz.

March Roundup and Memories

I was really hyped after reading "Aggressors Come Back With F-15s" in the March issue of *Air Force Magazine* [*"Aerospace World," p. 18*]. I was with the 64th Fighter Squadron during WWII, and the squadron has seen continuous service these many years with only name changes to the 64th Fighter Interceptor Squadron and Aggressor Squadron. After a hiatus of 17 years, the 65th is back in the fold, sharing ramp space with the 64th at Nellis. Both squadrons, along with the 66th, formed the 57th Fighter Group during WWII, and it was the group, not the squadron, that received Distinguished Unit Citations (we called them Presidential Citations), and I recall it was four, not three, as reported in the story.

I once attended a reunion with the much younger guys of the 64th FIS and was introduced as the only guy in the room who won his war.

It seems as though the March issue was written just for me. Reading the remarkable story of Bill Jones [*"Determination of a Sandy," p. 42*], I had a flashback to April 15, 1945 when my P-47 exploded in a ball of fire half way through a dive bomb run. Like Jones, I was the flight leader and felt a loud "Ka-Boom" under the fuselage as we neared the target. My Air Medal states, "Upon approaching the target area the flight encountered an intense barrage of anti-aircraft fire, and Captain Berry's aircraft was hit and damaged. Nevertheless, he led the flight to the target and from a precision bomb run scored a direct hit upon an enemy occupied house." The last part must be a lie; I jettisoned my bombs from about 4,500 feet the instant after the cockpit was enveloped in flame. I did prove it was possible for a blind pilot who could not locate the emergency canopy release to get out of a diving P-47 in less than 10 seconds—in time for a parachute to swing one time before striking the ground.

Jones' burns were far more serious than mine, but unfortunately 12 days MIA led to infections that kept me hospitalized for seven months. There were other similarities: Part of my clothing was burned off, and my parachute was also damaged. Fortunately that chute was in for repacking, where it was found eaten up with urine (I blamed it on one of the new guys who must have peed in his pants on his first mission.). I was wearing Squadron Commander Bob Barnum's chute that day.

Reading a little further in the March

issue I found "Tough Old Birds," [p. 54], where the only surviving fighters were P-47s. How that jogged my memory: Bobby Neilsen landing on my wing at a Spitfire base, with cylinders shot off, piston rods pounding the air, and wearing a blanket of oil. One single mission says it all. Bob Barnum was my element leader, with Woody Fears on his wing. Sam Durfee was my wingman. Barnum flew through a tree strafing a truck; Woody flew too low in a bomb run and turned his P-47 into Swiss cheese with his own bomb fragments; and Sam knocked off four inches of a prop blade strafing a tank. All came back unscathed, but the rumor was "Berry almost got three guys killed on the same mission."

Col. William F. Berry,
USAF (Ret.)
Marion, Ill.

Thanks To Fogleman

I was deployed to Dhahran, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 4404th Wing (Provisional) Base Supply, departing just two weeks before the bombing of Khobar Towers, where 19 were killed and numerous wounded. [*"Letters: Perspectives on Khobar Towers," February, p. 4*]. Shortly after finishing my first month there, I changed rooms in the supply dormitory, and my room was on the street side

where I had a great view overlooking the separating fence where kids played soccer, the locals walked and drove their vehicles, and lived in the housing designed just for them. Daily, there were cars and large trucks just over the wall, sometimes parking in the sand at the wall. ... The street that surrounded the dormitory compound was no more than three feet from the wall, and my dorm room was just another maybe 20 feet past that.

I just couldn't figure why there was no real barrier or better protection around this compound, so I went to the wing commander, then Brig. Gen. Terry Schwalier. I met with his SEA to explain my concern for our safety. The chief told me that they were not able to do anything to further enhance our safety and that the Saudi government would not allow the additional barrier between our dormitory area and the Dhahran local populace, but there would soon be security police patrolling the inside perimeter, plus there would be armed guards on the rooftops of the dorm units that overlooked that wall. In a sense, their hands were tied by the Saudi government. The [airmen] were killed not from a lack of concern on the general's part, but from the unwillingness of the Saudi government to allow the US to protect us. ...

I called back and spoke to the base supply master sergeant that got my dorm room and a chaplain I'd gotten most acquainted with during my stay and was appalled and thankful that I was not in that room. ... I find it most distressing that the good general lost a most deserved star, thus ending his career. I guess, since we (the US) could not call a rose a rose, one of our best had to take the fall. Politics and politicians, you just got to love 'em.

Thank you, General Fogleman, for wholeheartedly trying to set things straight for General Schwalier.

MSgt. William Martin,
USAF (Ret.)
Warsaw, Mo.

Correction

"Aerospace World: Could Boeing Tankers Be Built at Long Beach?" April, p. 19, reported that Boeing Chief Financial Officer James Bell said that 767 tankers would probably be built at the company's Long Beach, Calif., facility, where C-17s are now built. Bell actually said that Long Beach is a leading candidate among several locations to build the 767 if the company wins the tanker contract and if the Air Force actually shuts down the C-17 line.

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