

COMMEMORATE VETERANS DAY IN THE COMPANY OF HEROES

LAS SAMAH ALBISON AUDITORIUM



AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER

26TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES

NOVEMBER 2-4, 2023 • WASHINGTON, D.C.

LOCATIONS OF EVENTS:

The Wounded Warrior Experience

The National Archives
701 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20408
Business Casual

AVC Conference Speaker Sessions

The Omni Shoreham Hotel
Palladian Ballroom
2500 Calvert St., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Business Casual

“An Evening Reception Honoring Our Veterans”

Friday Evening Reception
The Royal Norwegian Embassy
3401 Massachusetts Ave,
Washington, DC 20007
Business Attire

AMERICAN VALOR: A Salute to Our Heroes

The Omni Shoreham Hotel
Regency Ballroom
2500 Calvert St., NW
Washington, DC 20008
Black Tie Attire

Watch **The Wounded Warrior Experience**

Saturday, November 18 at 4:30 PM EST:



Watch **AMERICAN VALOR:**

A Salute to Our Heroes

on ABC/NBC/CBS/Fox Nationwide

check local listings



and worldwide on American Forces Network



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:
TIMES & TOPICS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

THE WOUNDED WARRIOR EXPERIENCE

PRESENTED BY:



Thursday, November 2

William G. McGowan Theater - The National Archives

Bus transportation available from The Omni Shoreham Hotel to The National Archives - Departing at 5:15 PM

6:00 PM - Opening Address:

The Leadership of George Washington & the American Founders

Featuring:

- **Dr. Matthew Spalding** – VP of Washington Operations and Dean of the Van Andel Graduate School of Government at Hillsdale College. Author of *A Sacred Union of Citizens: Washington's Farewell Address & the American Character*.

6:30 PM - "The Wounded Warrior Experience"

Presented by Boeing and Wounded Warrior Project

Topics and Panelists Include:

Adaptive Sports & Invictus Games 2023:

Kelly Elmlinger – U.S. Army veteran of more than 20 years of service, a 2020 Paralympian and 2024 Paris Olympic Games Qualifier, World Ranked #1 PTS4 Women's Category, 2021 and '23 World Triathlon Para Champion.

James Herrera – Wounded Warrior Project Vice President for Physical Health and Wellness. He has served as national team coach for USA Cycling BMX, and was selected as the US Olympic Committee's Coach of the Year for cycling.

Michael Murphy - Ten-year U.S. Army veteran, wounded during an airfield accident that left him with a Traumatic Brain Injury and 80% blind. Competitor in the Warrior Games and Invictus Games in an array of sports, from weightlifting to whitewater kayaking.

Mental Health Services & Suicide Prevention:

Tony Kurta – Graduate of the USNA with 32 years on active duty as a Navy Surface Warfare Officer. Prior to joining Leidos Health, performed the duties of both Under Secretary and Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness in the Department of Defense.

Brendan Quisenberry – U.S. Army veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq, serving with the 82nd Airborne, 101st Airborne, and the 7th Special Forces Group, currently representing the Transcend Foundation, focusing on mental health and hormonal deficiencies often faced by veterans.

Lyndsay Tkach – Mental and Brain Health Services Director at Wounded Warrior Project, responsible for the oversight of the Mental & Brain Health Triage team, the Veterans Wellness Alliance Connectors, & the Suicide Prevention Training Team.

Serving Our Heroes: Addressing the Underserved Needs of our Women Veterans:

Tracy Farrell – Army Veteran of more than 22 years, WWP Vice President for Program Partnerships and Operations, overseeing the Independence Program, Community Partnerships and Investments.

Kirsten Laha-Walsh – Navy Veteran, WWP Government Affairs Specialist and lead researcher on WWP 2023 Women Warriors Report.

Tonya Oxendine – Army Veteran (30 years of service), deployed to Afghanistan. Her passion is to help others out of the quicksand of PTS through fitness and nutrition, and by sharing her own story.

David Riggins - Army Veteran, Comcast VetNet co-lead for membership, mentor for Hire Our Heroes Fellowship, as well as The Urban Technology Project & ambassador for Travis Manion Foundation.

Hosted by **Jennifer Griffin**, National Security Correspondent, Fox News Channel

7:45-9:30 PM - Exclusive Private Reception in the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom

With private access to our nation's Founding Documents, including the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.



This program will be filmed for television broadcast nationwide, Saturday November 18 at 4:30 PM ET on Fox Business Network.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 3

SPEAKER SESSIONS AT THE OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL – PALLADIAN BALLROOM

8:30 AM - THE GREATEST GENERATION: AMERICANS IN WORLD WAR II

Featuring: **George Arnstein** - Born in Stuttgart, Germany, he served as a gunner and radio operator with the 76th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop (Mechanized), fighting through the Battle of the Bulge into Germany, until meeting the Red Army at war's end.

Ralph Graham - B-17 radio operator of 33 missions over Europe. In a mission during the Battle of the Bulge, his plane was reported shot down - however, it survived, returning to base and earning a nickname of the 'Ghost Plane.'

Emmanuel 'Manny' Mandel - A boy in Hungary, Mandel and his family were among a group of Jews that Adolf Eichmann – one of the chief organizers of the Holocaust – offered to trade for Allied materiel. When negotiations broke down, they were diverted to Bergen-Belsen Camp – the notorious camp where Anne Frank died. He survived, making it to Switzerland and eventually the U.S.

Harry Miller - A tank crewman in the 740th Tank Battalion, saw action in the Battle of the Bulge before fighting into Germany across the Siegfried Line and taking part in the capture of Cologne. Assigned to the 39th Infantry at the end of the war, orders included searching for senior Nazi leadership in the Alps. He would go on to serve in the Korean and Vietnam Wars, retiring a Senior Master Sergeant in the Air Force.

Moderated by **Colonel Robert Patrick**, previous Director of the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

9:15 AM - LEGENDS OF WWII: HEROES OF THE AIR

Featuring: **Ed Cottrell** – Veteran of 65 missions flying the P-47 Thunderbolt with the 48th Fighter Group, 493rd Fighter Squadron over France, Belgium and Germany in 1944 and 45.

Lt. Col. George Hardy – Combat pilot of 21 missions over Germany with the Red Tails; later flew 45 combat missions in Korea and 70 combat missions in Vietnam.

Lt. Col. James H. Harvey, III – Pilot with the 332nd Fighter Group, flying on the Tuskegee team that won the military's first 'Top Gun' style competition in 1949. The first African American jet fighter pilot to fly in combat, decorated in Korea.

Colonel Joe Peterburs – P-51 'ace' pilot, scoring his final victory over a famed German ace. Shortly after Peterburs was himself shot down and captured. He soon escaped, connecting with the advancing Russian Red Army, and fighting alongside them at the end of the war.

Moderated by **Colonel Robert Patrick**.



10:00 AM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

Featuring: **Admiral Michael Mullen** – 17th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

10:35 AM - BREAK

10:45 AM - IA DRANG: THE FIRST BATTLE

Veterans of the epic Battle of Ia Drang, the first major battle between American and North Vietnamese forces at LZ X-Ray and LZ Albany, as told in the famed memoir, *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*.

Featuring: **Colonel Robert Edwards** - Company C Commander, 1/7 Cavalry at LZ X-Ray.

Lt. Colonel George Forrest - Company A Commander, 1/5 Cavalry at LZ Albany.

Colonel John Herren - Company B Commander, 1/7 Cavalry at LZ X-Ray.

Colonel Ramon 'Tony' Nadal - Company A Commander, 1/7 Cavalry at LZ X-Ray.

Sergeant First Class Clyde 'Earnie' Savage - 2nd Platoon, B Company, 1/7 Cavalry, assumed command of the platoon after it was cut off early in the fighting, recipient of the Distinguished Service Cross.

Moderated by **Colonel Tom Vossler**, who taught military history, strategy, and leadership at the U.S. Army War College and is a former director of the U.S. Army Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, PA, author of several books, and documentary film consultant.

11:30 AM - SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES: THE U.S. NAVY SEALS

Featuring: **Chris Alvarez** - U.S. Navy SEAL with 12 years of service, deployed to the CENTCOM and SOUTHCOM, and BUD/s Instructor at the premier Combat Dive School in US Special Operations. After transitioning to the civilian sector, has worked as an actor with credits including *The Terminal List* (Amazon Studios), *For All Mankind* (Apple TV+), *General Hospital* (ABC).

Thomas 'Drago' Dzieran - Born in Poland under Communist rule, immigrated to the U.S. in 1984 and became a citizen in 1991. As a Navy SEAL, he performed more than 100 combat direct action missions while deployed to Iraq in 2003, 2004, and 2005.

Kaj Larsen - Five-year active duty Navy SEAL officer, currently SEAL reserve officer assigned to U.S. Special Operations Command. An award-winning filmmaker and correspondent, previously hosting the Emmy-winning series VICE on HBO, and produces documentaries on conflict and national security issues. A two-time national champion open-water swimmer, & placed third in the Escape from Alcatraz duathlon.

Dr. Dan Luna - Retired U.S. Navy SEAL, who served honorably for 20 years. Graduated with BUD/S Class 228, served at SEAL Team One and Naval Special Warfare Development Group. EdD in Organizational Leadership from USC Rossier School of Education, and keynote on Pre-Traumatic Coaching and Leading in Extremis.

(Panelists continued...)

Ethan Nagel - Marine Corps Infantryman and Scout Sniper, veteran of multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recipient of the Silver Star and Purple Heart.



Moderated by **Chris Wyllie**, Navy SEAL BUD/s Class 217 and Executive Director of the LT Michael P. Murphy Navy SEAL Museum.

Visit the Omni Shoreham's Empire Room, former site of the hotel's swimming pool, where on November 18, 1942 the U.S. Navy conducted testing on underwater breathing equipment - spawning the beginnings of the U.S. Navy SEALs.

12:15 PM - BREAK FOR LUNCH

1:15 PM - WORLD WAR II: THE BATTLE FOR EUROPE

Featuring: **Robert 'Boots' Chouinard** – Landing on Omaha Beach on D+5, he served with the 128th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Gun Battalion across France, later sent to secure the Bridge at Remagen, eventually advancing into Germany.

Lockered 'Bud' Gahs – Combat infantryman in the 42nd Infantry 'Rainbow' Division, participated in the liberation of Dachau.

Jack Moran – U.S. Army veteran of the 87th Division at the Battle of the Bulge, participated in the liberation of Buchenwald.

Jack Myers - Anti-tank gunner serving with the 104th Infantry Division, advancing from Holland to Aachen before joining Patton's Army at the Battle of the Bulge, decorated with the Bronze Star.

Robert Shipe – BAR man with the 97th Infantry Division, trained for combat in the Pacific but shipped to Europe at the outbreak of the Battle of the Bulge, fighting for 42 days straight on the front lines into Germany.

Moderated by **Andrew Biggio**, USMC rifleman, author of *The Rifle: Combat Stories from America's Last WWII Veterans, Told through an M1 Garand* and the recently published *The Rifle 2: Back to the Battlefield*.

2:00 PM - WORLD WAR II: THE PACIFIC

Featuring: **Charles Brooking** – U.S. Navy PT boat machine gunner in the Pacific Theater, seeing action at Guadalcanal and the Solomons.

Arthur Grabiner - United States Navy veteran of attack transport USS Laurens, launching amphibious assaults/invasions and combating Japanese kamikaze suicide aircraft attacks during the Battle of Okinawa and Invasion of Lingayan Gulf in northern Luzon in the Philippines.

Robert Hartline - U.S. Marine Corps aviator piloting the F6F Hellcat with VMA-223 in the Pacific Theater.

Lewis 'Pat' Patteson – U.S. Navy bomber pilot, veteran of three tours of duty in the Aleutian Campaign flying bombing and recon missions, and attacking Japanese submarines.

Additional participants TBA

Moderated by **Andrew Biggio**.

2:45 PM - SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001

Stories of valor, honor, and sacrifice from the darkest day in modern history.

Featuring: **Ron DiFrancesco** - Manager at Euro Brokers on the 84th floor of the South Tower, he descended down the stairwell through fire and smoke, and is the last-known person to have exited the South Tower before its collapse.

Niels Jorgensen - A lifelong firefighter and 9/11 first responder with his unit at the World Trade Center, he is also a 20-year Army veteran. Niels is perhaps best known as one of the real-life firefighters and regulars on the award-winning show *Rescue Me*, starring Denis Leary.

Major Heather Penney - Among the first women to apply to become an Air Force fighter pilot, served two tours of duty in Iraq. Noted for her mission serving with the DC National Guard on September 11, 2001, where she and Marc H. Sasseville flew to intercept the hijacked United Flight 93 before it could reach the terrorists' target of Washington, DC.

Giovanni Renteria - At 9:03 AM, September 11th, 2001, while outside on break from his job at Morgan Stanley in the South Tower of the World Trade Center, he watched as the first plane hit the building.

Susan Rescorla - Wife of Cyril 'Rick' Rescorla, decorated with the Silver Star and Purple Heart at the Battle of Ia Drang in Vietnam, his photo gracing the cover of the acclaimed memoir, *We Were Soldiers Once...and Young*. On September 11th, 2001, as head of corporate security for Morgan Stanley in the Twin Towers, Rescorla would save the lives of 2,700 employees before being killed in the building's collapse.

Moderated by **Jarrett Brant**, U.S. Naval Academy Graduate & USMC infantry officer and **Shahriar "Sha" Chowdhury**, previously serving as an officer in the U.S. Army Field Artillery Branch & Platoon Leader and Battery Executive Officer with the 1st Armored Division while deployed to Iraq, both representing Wells Fargo Financial Advisers.



3:30 PM - CAPSTONE REMARKS: SMALL UNIT COMBAT LEADERSHIP

Featuring: **Colonel Ramon 'Tony' Nadal** - USMA Class of 1958, A Company Commander, 1/7 Cavalry at the Battle of Ia Drang, November 1965.

Sessions conclude at 4:00 PM.

EXCLUSIVE EVENT – FRIDAY EVENING

HONORING OUR VETERANS: A SPECIAL RECEPTION AT THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

- HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR ANNIKEN KRUTNES - 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM (BUS TRANSPORT FROM OMNI SHOREHAM AT 6:15 PM).

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

SPEAKER SESSIONS AT THE OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL – PALLADIAN BALLROOM

8:30 AM - THE LONGEST DAY: D-DAY

Featuring: **Carl Felton** – U.S. Navy sailor assigned to the British ship, HMS Ceres, where he directed traffic onto Omaha Beach on D-Day.

Henry Langrehr – Paratrooper of the famed 82nd Airborne Division, parachuting into Saint Mere Eglise. After fighting through the hedgerows of Normandy, he was captured and held POW before making an epic escape near the end of the war.

Jake Larson – U.S. Army veteran of the 34th Infantry Division, landing in the first wave at Omaha Beach on D-Day, serving through the Battle of the Bulge and the end of the war.

George Mullins – Veteran of the 327th Glider Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division, landing near Utah Beach and fighting to liberate Carentan. He would see action in Operation Market Garden in Holland, at the Siege of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge, eventually joining the 101st as they took Hitler's Eagle's Nest at Berchtesgaden.

Ray Wallace - 507th PIR, 82nd Airborne, jumped into Normandy on June 6, 1944, after fending off the Germans for a month, his unit was captured and he spent the remainder of the war as a POW.

Moderated by **Andrew Biggio**, USMC rifleman, author of *The Rifle: Combat Stories from America's Last WWII Veterans, Told through an M1 Garand*.

9:10 AM - MASTERS OF THE AIR: THE BOMBER BOYS OF THE U.S. 8TH AIR FORCE

The story soon to be told in the forthcoming miniseries from Tom Hanks & Steven Spielberg on Apple TV+.

Featuring: **John Clark** – B-17 co-pilot with the 100th Bomb Group – the 'Bloody Hundredth' based at Thorpe Abbots in England. While serving, he met his future wife – Marie Mountain – a pilot with the WASPs, the first female pilots in American military history.

Paul 'Bud' Haedike – Bombardier flying missions over Europe in the B-17, his bomber downed by German AA in his very first mission. Would go on to fly 22 missions.

Melvin Hurwitz - Radio operator and waist gunner aboard 'Organized Confusion,' a B-17 bomber with the 863rd Bomb Squadron of the 493rd Bomb Group in the 8th Air Force. A veteran of several combat missions, his favorite were the 'Chowhound Missions,' where food was dropped to starving Dutch men and women impacted by the war.

Melvin Jenner – Radio operator and aerial gunner veteran of 31 missions on the B-17 Flying Fortress, including six missions over Berlin. His final mission aboard the B-17 was a reconnaissance mission over the beaches of Normandy, June 6, 1944.

John 'Lucky' Luckadoo – Pilot and co-pilot with the 100th Bomb Group in the 8th Air Force – known as the 'Bloody Hundredth' – he flew 25 missions over Europe.

Roland Martin - B-17 pilot with the 525th Bombardment Squadron, 379th Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force flying the B-17 bomber, the "Iron Maiden." Shot down over Germany on his 10th mission, he avoided detection for two weeks before being captured and held at Stalag Luft I. Liberated when his German guards abandoned the camp, he walked through a slave labor camp nearby, witnessing its horror first hand.

Lester Schrenk - B-17 turret gunner aboard "Pot o' Gold", shot down over Germany on February 22, 1944. Surviving his parachute jump, he was taken prisoner and held at Stalag Luft IV. With the Russian Army approaching from the east in 1945, he was forced on a death march to the west, until liberated at war's end.

Moderated by **Colonel Robert Patrick**, previous Director of the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

10:00 AM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

Featuring: **The Honorable Chuck Hagel** – 24th United States Secretary of Defense, former U.S. Senator, and decorated veteran of Vietnam.

10:30 AM - BREAK

10:40 AM - THE CHOSIN FEW: THE EPIC BATTLE OF CHOSIN RESERVOIR

The most harrowing battle of the Korean War, and the U.S. Marine Corps' most legendary stand.

Featuring: **Pat Finn** - Nineteen years old when he landed in Korea with Item Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. The night of November 27th, 1950, his position was overrun by the attacking Chinese soldiers, the Marines engaging in hand-to-hand combat. When fighting ended on Hill 1520, only 20 of 250 Marines were still standing, the rest wounded, missing, or dead.

Robert Harbula – Landed at Incheon and fought at the Battle of Seoul, serving on a machine gun squad at Chosin Reservoir. Assigned to "Task Force Drysdale," he fought in hand to hand combat after his weapon froze. Wounded, after returning to his unit he found only 67 of the original 255 still fit to serve.

John Levi – A Native American of the Cheyenne & Arapaho Tribes, would go on to serve as a Navy Corpsman with the U.S. Marines in the Korean War, fighting at Chosin Reservoir.

Johnny Johnson – 1st Marine Division sergeant, landing at Pusan and immediately joining the desperate fight to hold onto the perimeter. He would join the landing at Inchon, then fight with the Marines at Chosin Reservoir.

Moderated by **Ethan Nagel**, Marine Corps Infantryman and Scout Sniper, veteran of multiple tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, and recipient of the Silver Star and Purple Heart.

11:25 AM - THE WOMEN WHO FOUGHT TO BRING THEM HOME

The wives of the Vietnam Prisoners of War and Missing in Action who led the effort to raise awareness to their plight.

Featuring: Candy Ellis – Married to Navy Lt. Chuck Parish, who was reported missing in action during a mission in 1968, their son, Hunter, only three weeks old at the time. She met with North Vietnamese diplomats, traveled to the United Nations and walked the halls of Congress to make the fate of her husband and the POWs & MIAs a national priority.

Marty Halyburton – Wife of then-LTJG Porter Halyburton and mother to a six-month old daughter, she was told that her husband had been KIA in a mission in 1965. One and a half years later, she learned that he survived, was a POW, and dedicated herself to his cause.

Andrea Rander – Married to Army intelligence officer Donald Rander when he was captured in the Battle of Hue, she became a highly visible force in raising awareness of the POW cause, meeting the North Vietnamese delegation in Paris, and taking the cause directly to President Nixon at the White House.

With honored guest:

CDR Porter Halyburton – U.S. naval aviator and veteran of 76 missions over Vietnam, shot down in 1965 and held prisoner until 1973. Awarded the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, three Bronze Stars, and three Purple Hearts.

Moderated by **Taylor Baldwin Kiland**, former U.S. naval officer, author of *Unwavering: The Wives Who Fought to Ensure that No Man is Left Behind*, *Lessons from the Hanoi Hilton: Six Characteristics of High-Performance Teams*, and *Open Doors: Vietnam POWs Thirty Years Later*.

12:10 PM - BREAK FOR LUNCH

1:15 PM - WITNESS TO HISTORY

Veterans who have played roles in some of the memorable and epic moments in American history and culture.

Featuring: Roy Gleason – A real life ‘Moonlight Graham,’ playing for the World Series-winning 1963 Los Angeles Dodgers, seeing one at-bat, and getting one hit. Drafted to Vietnam and wounded in combat ending his career, the only man in history to have a perfect batting average, a World Series ring, and a Purple Heart.

Frank ‘Walleye’ Weisser – U.S. Navy F-18 combat pilot and veteran of the famed Blue Angels, served as Tom Cruise’s pilot during filming of the smash-hit, *Top Gun: Maverick*.

2:10 PM - KEYNOTE REMARKS

Featuring: General Richard B. Myers – 15th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Honorary Chairman of the American Veterans Center.

2:40 PM - BAND OF BROTHERS

With the recent passing of the last veterans of Easy Company, actors of the iconic series join to salute their memory.

Featuring: Michael Cudlitz – Portrayed SSgt. Denver ‘Bull’ Randleman

James Madio – Portrayed T-4 Frank Perconte

Ross McCall – Portrayed T-5 Joseph Liebgott

Neal McDonough - Portrayed Lieutenant Lynn ‘Buck’ Compton

Matthew Settle - Portrayed Captain Ronald Spiers

Additional participants TBA

Moderated by **Andrew Biggio**, USMC rifleman, author of *The Rifle: Combat Stories from America’s Last WWII Veterans, Told Through an M1 Garand* and the recently published *The Rifle 2: Back to the Battlefield*.

Sessions conclude at 3:40 PM.



5:00 PM - AMERICAN VALOR: OPENING RECEPTION AND RED CARPET - Omni Shoreham Hotel - Ambassador Ballroom

7:00 PM - AMERICAN VALOR: A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES - GALA & SHOW - Omni Shoreham - Regency Ballroom

THE AMERICAN VETERANS CENTER'S
AMERICAN VALOR
A SALUTE TO OUR HEROES



PRESENTED BY:

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