

# The Thunder Gazette

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August, 2025

## PLEASE NOTE

### OUR NEXT MEMBERSHIP

### MEETING WILL BE HELD ON

Sunday

August 24, 2025

2:00 p.m.

August meeting and Chapter picnic will be on Sunday August 24, 2025. The location will be, Veterans Park of the Lake Metro Parks system. The address is 5730 Hopkins Rd. Mentor, Ohio 44060. The easiest way to find Veterans Park is: travel east on either I90 or Route 2. In Mentor at Route 615 travel north. You will pass Mentor High School and the Civic Center. Approximately 1-2 miles past the Civic Center the Park will be on your left. (Route 615 is also known as Center Street). Bring a dish to share.

To be a member in good standing, one must:

- a. Attend at least 3 meetings & 3 events per year;
- b. Pay the annual membership dues of \$40/yr;
- c. Abide by the Membership Patch rules;
- d. Remain loyal to Rolling Thunder® in word, deed and action;
- e. Conduct him/herself in a professional and courteous manner at all times.

Nominations will begin in July at the membership meeting for the positions of president (currently held by Lew Ballard), secretary (currently held by Cheryl Pilny), and 3 board positions (Bill Street, Ted Pilny & Dan Hubbard). Nominations will be taken at the July and August meetings.

To be eligible for the position of chapter president, a member must have held a chapter executive officer position or been a member of the Board of Directors

for 12 months prior to being nominated. To be nominated and/or elected for any other officer position, a Chapter member must be a member in good standing for a period of one (1) year or longer. The person must be a full member at the time of the nomination and have earned their patches. The member must also have attended six (6) meetings prior to nominations in the past twelve (12) months. You must be present at time of nomination to accept the nomination. Elections will be held at the September membership meeting. If you have someone in mind to nominate for any of these positions, please discuss with that person before nominating them.

President:	Lew Ballard (Accepted)
Secretary:	Cheryl Pilny (Accepted)
Board Member:	Bill Street (Accepted)
	Ted Pilny (Accepted)
	Dan Hubbard (Accepted)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, August 22, 2025 - Chair of Honor dedication at Perry High School. The address is 1 Success Blvd Perry, Ohio 44081. This will be a very short ceremony as this is a game night. Be on site at 06:00 PM at the main gate.

Saturday, August 23, 2025 - Macedonia Walmart - 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. (Setup starting at 9:00 a.m.)

Sunday, August 24, 2025 - 2:00 p.m. Membership meeting/chapter picnic at Veterans Park in Mentor, OH. Bring a dish to share.

Friday, August 29, 2025 - Harvey High School Chair of Honor dedication.

Friday, September 5, 2025 - Chardon High School Chair of Honor Dedication.

**CHAPTER OFFICERS, BOARD MEMBERS  
AND PLATOON LEADERS**

**PRESIDENT** LEW BALLARD 440-725-8157

**VICE-PRES** PAUL WIGET 440-476-3656

**SECRETARY** CHERYL PILNY 440-543-8468

**TREASURER** CHUCK KETTLER (Interim)

**CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**  
CHUCK KETTLER 330-636-5315

**BOARD MEMBERS**

BILL STREET 440-537-0955

JIM ROSSI 216-218-1692

MIKE NEILAN 440-241-2655

TED PILNY 216-346-6407

DAN HUBBARD 216-741-3992

(ALTERNATE) TED ROOD

**CHAPLAIN** DAN MCGINNIS 330-618-1720

**RUN COORDINATOR** OPEN

**MEMBERSHIP** OPEN

**QUARTERMASTER**  
DAN HUBBARD 216-741-3992

**ASST. QUARTERMASTER** OPEN

**SARGENT AT ARMS**  
TIM EXTON 216-789-9272

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**PLATOON LEADERS:**  
#1 MIKE NEILAN 440-241-2655

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#3 RUSS TUBBS 440-391-3833

#4 DAN MCGINNIS 330-618-1720

**STATE LIAISON** IRA "SHREK" SKEEBY 937-541-5927

**WE CARE**

**GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**  
CHUCK KETTLER 330-636-5315

**VA VISITS -** OPEN

**EVENTS CHAIR** OPEN

**PUBLIC RELATIONS** CHUCK KETTLER 330-636-5315

**EDUCATION CHAIR** DAN MCGINNIS 330-618-1720

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**Check us out on Facebook: Rolling Thunder  
Chapter1 Ohio**

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

THE MAJOR FUNCTION OF ROLLING THUNDER® INC. IS TO PUBLICIZE THE POW-MIA ISSUE: TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC THAT MANY AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR WERE LEFT BEHIND AFTER ALL PREVIOUS WARS, AND TO HELP CORRECT THE PAST AND TO PROTECT FUTURE VETERANS FROM BEING LEFT BEHIND SHOULD THEY BECOME PRISONERS OF WAR-MISSING IN ACTION. WE ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO HELPING AMERICAN VETERANS FROM ALL WARS.

ROLLING THUNDER®, INC. IS A NON -PROFIT ORGANIZATION AND EVERYONE DONATES HIS OR HER TIME BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE IN THE POW-MIA ISSUE.

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The advocacy group Rolling Thunder®, Inc. / Rolling Thunder® Charities, Inc. supports U.S. Military Active Duty, Veterans, Prisoners Of War, and Personnel Missing In Action from past wars.

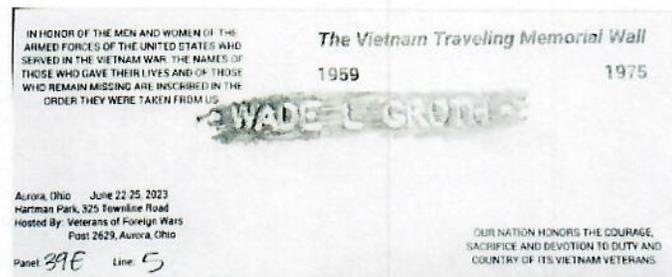
**Our Adopted MIA/POW - Wade Groth**



## GROTH, WADE LAWRENCE

Name: Wade Lawrence Groth  
Rank/Branch: E4/US Army  
Unit: 50th Medical Detachment, 43rd Medical Group, 44th Medical Brigade  
Date of Birth: 14 May 1947  
Home City of Record: Greenville MI (joined Army in Cleveland OH)  
Date of Loss: 12 February 1968  
Country of Loss: South Vietnam  
Loss Coordinates: 121721N 1074713E (ZU030600)  
Status (in 1973): Missing In Action  
Category: 4  
Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: UH1H  
Refno: 1046

Other Personnel In Incident: Harry W. Brown, Alan W. Gunn, Jerry L. Roe (all missing)



***We seek accountability - the return of living POW's and when that is not possible - the repatriation of their remains. We further advocate the same for all MIA.***

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**Government Affairs -**

***With the new Congress being in session, new bills need to be introduced. Stay tuned.***

**"UNTIL THEY ALL COME HOME"**

**Remember: You are the voice of our POW and MIAs.**

***I was prepared to fight, prepared to die. But I was not prepared for my country to leave me behind.***

While there's no guarantee that applying pressure from elected officials or veteran organizations will automatically generate instant results, it can be a valuable approach to ensure the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) remains focused on specific cases and to potentially gain updates or information that might otherwise be less readily available.

Here's why and how involving these groups can be helpful:

**Elevated Awareness:** Involving a Senator, Governor, Congressman, or a VFW or American Legion Post can bring higher-level attention to the case within the DPAA, potentially prompting a review of the case's status and actions taken to date.

**Congressional Inquiries and Oversight:** Elected officials have the ability to submit official inquiries to federal agencies on behalf of constituents, notes the University of Denver and Security Clearance Jobs reports. This can lead to the DPAA providing a more comprehensive response than might be received through a standard inquiry.

**Advocacy and Support:** Veteran organizations like the VFW and American Legion are dedicated to advocating for veterans and their families, including those affected by POW/MIA cases. They often have established relationships with the DPAA and can offer support and guidance to families seeking information or action on a case.

**Navigating Bureaucracy:** These individuals and organizations may be able to help families navigate the DPAA's processes and protocols, ensuring all necessary information is provided and proper channels are followed.

## **Important considerations**

**DPAA's Priorities:** The DPAA operates with a sense of urgency, prioritizing cases based on factors such as the risk of losing evidence due to environmental or geopolitical factors, and the age of the immediate family members involved.

**Geopolitics:** In cases involving certain countries, such as North Korea, geopolitical factors can significantly impact the DPAA's ability to operate and obtain information or access to sites.

**Information Availability:** The DPAA is committed to providing the fullest possible accounting for missing personnel, according to the agency. They maintain case files and work to declassify and release documents as appropriate. While it's important to understand the DPAA's mission and process, seeking assistance from elected officials and veteran organizations can certainly be a constructive step for families and individuals striving to achieve resolution after decades of waiting.

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## **Remains Identified**

### **WWII**

U.S. Army Air Forces Sgt. Henry L. Younge  
U.S. Army 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Wilburn R. Saunders  
U.S. Army Capt. Willibald C. Bianchi  
U.S. Army Pvt. Alfred T. Langevin  
U.S. Army Air Forces SSgt Gustave Secunda  
U.S. Army Lt.Col. Louis E. Roemer  
U.S. Army Air Forces Tec 5 Edwin E. Ross  
U.S. Army Cpl William H. Diekmann  
U.S. Army Air Forces SSgt Robert A. Keuchel  
U.S. Army Pfc John A. Walko  
U.S. Army Air Forces SSgt Stephen J. Fatur  
U.S. Army Air Forces Pvt Kenneth L. Kramer  
U.S. Army Air Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Woody T. Owen  
U.S. Army Pfc Lawrence R. Beard  
U.S. Army Air Forces 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Gerald J. Melofchik

### **Korean War**

U.S. Army Cpl. Marvin Silvester Patton  
U.S. Army Pfc. Walter Paul Pytak  
U.S. Army Sfc Jack Benton Baker  
U.S. Army Cpl Donald J. Birmingham  
U.S. Army Cpl George Thomas Hill  
U.S. Army Sgt Ray Johnson  
U.S. Army Cpl Lonnie Fields

### **Viet Nam War**

U.S. Air Force MSgt James Henry Calfee

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In 1967, twenty-year-old Doug Hegdahl was serving aboard the USS Canberra when a freak accident threw him overboard into the Gulf of Tonkin. He was captured by North Vietnamese forces and imprisoned at the notorious Hanoi Hilton Prison, known as the Hanoi Hilton. Believing him to be harmless and unintelligent, his captors dubbed him "The Incredibly Stupid One." But behind the act, Hegdahl was anything but foolish.

He played the role to perfection. Pretending to be illiterate and clueless, he often hummed "Old MacDonald Had a Farm" instead of speaking clearly. What the guards never suspected was that Hegdahl was using the melody of that very song to memorise critical information. Over time, he committed to memory the names, ranks, and capture details of 256 fellow American prisoners, all without writing anything down.

Hegdahl gained unusual freedom around the prison compound, and he used it to his advantage. He sabotaged enemy trucks by dumping dirt into their fuel tanks, and he remained alert, observant, and quietly defiant. His fellow prisoners, recognizing his extraordinary memory, helped him collect vital intelligence that could be used once someone escaped or was released.

In 1969, Hegdahl was selected for early release. Though most POWs resisted early freedom to avoid being used for propaganda, his commanding officer urged him to accept it—believing he could do more good by bringing his intelligence home. When he returned, officials were stunned by the accuracy and volume of the information he carried in his mind. His efforts helped confirm the identities and fates of numerous missing servicemen.

Doug Hegdahl's story is one of extraordinary bravery, patience, and cunning. His quiet defiance, masked by simplicity, became one of the most powerful acts of resistance from inside a prison camp.

Fun Fact: Years later, Hegdahl would publicly recite the entire list of POWs he memorised, singing their names to the tune of "Old MacDonald" just as he did while imprisoned.

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### Chaplain's Corner

(submitted by Dan McGinnis)

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all they strength: this is the first commandment, And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love they neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:30-31

#### Inspiration

Jesus replaced the multitude of laws and commandments we'd received in the beginning with the two mentioned in this verse. But, if you

pay attention closely, you will realize all the commandments are summed up in these two commandments. The Christian life is about loving God in our actions our thoughts and our words. It is also about treating every person we encounter with love, free of prejudice and resentment.

#### Prayer

Dear God, I ask that you help me abide by the commandments, applying your word in my life so that my love for You will be evident to everyone around me, in truth and sincerity. I also ask that you help me love every person around me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.



Our busy lives can make it hard to keep up with loved ones and friends. Make the time today to pick up the phone and check on a buddy. You never know the positive impact one call can make



The Veterans Crisis Line is here for you 24/7.

Dial 988 then Press 1, chat at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat), or text 838255 for immediate support.