

Honoring Vietnam veterans

This month, March 2023, marks the 50th anniversary of Vietnam Prisoners of War (POWs) returning home. Thanks to the Vietnam Veterans of America, Niagara County Chapter No. 268, we have a terrific exhibit in the rotunda of the Niagara County Courthouse honoring our POWs and all those who served in Vietnam. The exhibit specifically highlights Gen. George E. "Bud" Day and Master Sgt. John T. Anderson, two former residents of Niagara County who were captured by North Vietnam and held as prisoners for over five years.

I want to share their respective stories of heroism and perseverance.

Gen. Day joined the U.S. Marine Corp in 1942 and served in the Pacific during WWII. Before going to Vietnam, he served as an Air Force adviser to the 107th Tactical Fighter Squadron in Niagara Falls.

On Aug. 26, 1967, then-Col. Day was forced to eject from his F-100F aircraft over North Vietnam when it was hit by ground

fire. His right arm was broken in three places, and his left knee was badly sprained. He was immediately captured by hostile forces and taken to a prison camp where he was interrogated and severely tortured. After causing the guards to relax their vigilance, Col. Day escaped into the jungle and began the trek toward South Vietnam.

Despite injuries inflicted by fragments of a bomb, he continued southward surviving only on a few berries and uncooked frogs. He successfully evaded enemy patrols and reached the Ben Hai River, where he encountered U.S. artillery barrages. With the aid of a bamboo log float, Col. Day swam across the river and entered the demilitarized zone.

Due to delirium, he lost his sense of direction and wandered aimlessly for several days. After

NIAGARA COUNTY LEGISLATURE



Becky Wydysh
Chairwoman

several unsuccessful attempts to signal U.S. aircraft, he was ambushed and recaptured by the Viet Cong, sustaining gunshot wounds to his left hand and thigh. He was returned to the prison from which he had escaped and later was moved to Hanoi. Col. Day served five years and three months in captivity.

Col. Day, after serving in three wars, became the most highly decorated aviator in American history. His decorations include the Congressional Medal of Honor presented to him on March 26, 1968, by President Gerald R. Ford. Col. Day died on July 27, 2013, and is buried in the National Cemetery in Pensacola, Florida. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of brigadier general on March 27, 2018.

Master Sgt. Anderson enlisted in the Army National Guard at his hometown of Niagara Falls, New York, on May 16, 1947, at age 16. He went on active duty with the U.S. Army on Dec. 31, 1947, ultimately serving as a broadcast specialist.

On Feb. 2, 1968, Sgt. Ander-

son was serving as the non-commissioned officer in charge of Detachment No. 5, American Forces Television Station, Hue, South Vietnam. That day, the enemy attempted an armed attack as part of the "Tet Offensive."

Sgt. Anderson, without hesitancy, courageously took an uncovered position in the quarter's living room. Armed with a shotgun, he defended this position for more than 16 hours against several enemy attempts to gain entry into the house. During this period, he was severely wounded by enemy grenade fire and was under constant exposure to enemy small arms fire.

Throughout the ensuing battle, Sgt. Anderson was instrumental in warding off several enemy attempts to overrun the detachment's position. His position was later overrun and he was held as a prisoner of war until his release on March 5, 1973, after spending five years and one month in captivity in very harsh conditions.

Sgt. Anderson was awarded two Silver Stars for his heroic actions.

While in captivity, Sgt. Anderson was able to make three escape attempts. In his first, he made it about a mile, then passed out because of his wounds. The second time he managed to get farther, but walked into the middle of an enemy military camp. The last time, he was nearly beaten to death with bamboo clubs by women in a North Vietnamese village.

March 29 is officially recognized as National Vietnam War Veterans Day, and that date is particularly significant because it is the day North Vietnam released the last of its acknowledged POWs in 1973. Unfortunately, our Vietnam vets did not return home to welcome parades and public gratitude. Rather, they were often met with disdain, hostility, even spat upon. As we recognize this 50th anniversary of the release of POWs, let us all be sure to thank our Vietnam vets and all of our members of armed services for their efforts and sacrifices for our country.

Niagara River Region Chamber of Commerce growing business, community through Workforce Leadership Academy

This year, the Chamber of Commerce board has taken a look at what positive economic growth means for our members and region. One of the topics that was brought up multiple times through surveys and discussions with members is regarding the workforce.

It's no surprise that many

of our businesses are lacking employees for a number of reasons. As a tourist community, we visibly see it in the hospitality segment of our membership.

Earlier this year, I applied for the Aspen Institute Workforce Leadership Academy for Buffalo and Niagara Falls. This is a program that partners the New

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Jennifer Pauly
President

York Association for Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) with the Aspen Institute (an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, D.C.) and local stakeholders.

As a fellow in the program, I will attend multiple daylong sessions per month, beginning

this week through November, for a 10-month fellowship. The academy will strengthen my ability in my role at the Chamber to develop and sustain strategies, collaborate more deeply with employers and other strategic partner organizations, and expand the number and quality of leaders who advance opportunities for workers while meeting the talent needs of employers.

The goals of the academy are to:

- √ Expand and deepen professional networks and partnerships;
- √ Strengthen organizational and systems leadership skills;
- √ Apply a race and equity lens to assess and improve workforce services and strategies;
- √ Apply systems change framework to fellows' work;
- √ Deepen understanding of effective strategies and programs; and
- √ Provide a forum to work collaboratively to identify local and regional systems-based challenges and create shared solutions

es and create shared solutions NYATEP has partnered with the Aspen Institute to offer this Workforce Leadership Academy because a high-capacity, responsive, agile workforce ecosystem is critical for a region's sustainable, equitable economic growth. By investing in leaders' knowledge, skills and relationships, the Workforce Leadership Academy is well positioned to build nimble collaboration that is crucial to the success of the region. Since 2014, the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program has worked with local organizations to deliver 14 Workforce Leadership Academies in 11 cities with over 200 participants.

I am honored that the Chamber board has supported the application process for the academy and provided letters of reference for me to be a part of the program. Workforce development is an area that our Chamber has identified as an integral part of strengthening the economic outlook for the region.

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