



YOU ARE NEVER ALONE

An E-Mail **SITUATION REPORT (SITREP) OF THE PUTNAM COUNTY VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY**

Hope everyone is well. It seems as if this new year is zooming by. Perhaps it is just me who knows? I want to take the opportunity to introduce a new Guardian Revival Program called Guardian Homefront. It is being created and run by Megan Castellano who was the heart & energy behind Dwyer Vet2Vet that is now part of GR. Look for good things from this new program. There is also an article in this Sitrep that should let you see the importance of a program like this. It tells the story of why GR Families need our love, support and help. Karl

WHAT WE DO

Through our events & resources, we foster your **resilience**, support your **health & wellness**, and promote **community** to ensure that you don't feel alone in your journey.

Looking for community & connection? Need information & resources? Seeking self-care or nourishing your own identity? **We're here to help.**



EMPATHIZE

We understand the unique experience of the family environment around a guardian



EDUCATE

Support & training about health & wellness — for yourself, your guardian, and your family



ENGAGE

Fun experiences for quality time & building connection as couples, families, and a community

JOIN

RESOURCES

EVENTS



On a sunny afternoon in July, hundreds of people looked on as a 737 touched down at the Spokane International airport. Sitting in a shuttle bus on the tarmac, surrounded by family and friends, Linda Chauvin watched the scene unfold with a mix of grief and exhilaration. "The excitement was actually so palpable. We see this beautiful big bird come down and land, and then they open that cargo door and there was the honor guard, and then that coffin there," she recalls with a sob. "I mean, he was finally home after 78 years."

For Chauvin, who lives in Fry's Spring, that moment on the tarmac was the culmination of decades of work and a lifetime of wondering what really happened to her father, Eugene Chauvin, a WWII pilot who'd been missing in action since his plane was shot down over Belgium on September 17, 1944. (The Chauvin family name was originally spelled with a C. Gene Chauvin said he wanted to legally change it to Chauvin when he got back from the war, and Linda honored that wish when she changed the spelling of her last name in 1971). This month, Chauvin returned to the site of the crash and to a memorial to the missing in the Netherlands, where she affixed a stone rosette next to her father's name. The symbol shows that Gene Chauvin has been found, thanks in large part to his daughter's stubborn streak. It's a trait she likely inherited from him.

Over 20 years, Chauvin took multiple trips to the farm in Retie, Bel-

gium, where her father's plane had crashed. She pushed for the U.S. military to conduct several archaeological digs at the site, and finally on March 3 of this year, she received a call from Fort Knox that DNA testing had confirmed the human remains unearthed at the site last year were her father's. "I let out a scream. I burst into tears," says Chauvin.

Chauvin has hazy memories of her father, whom she last saw when she was a toddler in the early 1940s growing up in Washington state. She recalls attending a movie with him and losing her shoe during the show. "I remember when he would hold me while wearing his uniform. Everything was uncomfortable against my body," she says. Family members described Gene Chauvin as determined, athletic, and always seeking ways to improve himself.

"Everybody, including my mother, said he had a very quick temper, but that he was also always quick to apologize," Chauvin says. "And he was good-natured and witty as well." One of nine children, Chauvin and five of his brothers served their country during WWII. Gene enlisted in the National Guard at 18 in 1936, and married Linda's mother in 1940. Linda was born the following year, and in 1943, a year before his death, he enlisted in the Army Air Borne division. He deployed for Europe and never came home. Linda Chauvin says her childhood after his death was plagued by longing.

"There was always this hollow feeling. And I think I just always felt like I didn't belong to anybody," Chauvin says. In high school, she read everything she could about the war. "When I would find out somebody had known him, I would question them, give them the third-degree."

It wasn't until the arrival of the internet in the 1990s that she began her search for her father in earnest. She started by posting a request for information about his mission on a WWII message board. "I got all these hits from people that I later realized were all serious researchers and historians, and one of them was a man in Ohio," she says. "He wrote back, 'I think I may be able to help you.'"

That man told her about Pathfinders, the pilots who flew ahead of Allied



airborne invasions marking the way for planes carrying paratroopers that followed. Chauvin had been the pilot of one

of six planes flying ahead of a massive airborne mission, Operation Market-Garden, which aimed to create an Allied route into Germany. The man suggested she get in touch with Charles Faith, another airborne soldier who'd been aboard her father's plane when it crashed.

"When I called him and I said, 'I'm the daughter of your pilot in Operation Market-Garden.' Oh, my God. He let out a cry," she said. "Gene was a wonderful pilot and a wonderful man," he told her. On a subsequent trip to Texas, Faith described her father's final moments as the plane flew toward Eindhoven in Holland. "It was picked off by anti-aircraft artillery that were located near Retie, Belgium," she says.

"Smoke was billowing out from the cockpit and the jump light was on," Faith told her. As jump master, Faith was the first out. In all, six of the men aboard were able to jump; the remaining nine perished. On the ground, Faith evaded capture and was sheltered from the Nazis by a Belgian family.

"All of his life he wondered about me because he knew Gene had a wife and daughter. And he welcomed me as if I was his own daughter," Chauvin says.

When Chauvin met Faith, he had already been back to the Belgian town where the crash had occurred. Faith had located other people who knew more, including a relative of another paratrooper who'd died aboard the plane and a Dutch woman whose father had painstakingly documented WWII crash sites across Europe.

"She is the one who went over to Belgium and found the crash site. She was like a bloodhound. She inherited all of her father's records," Chauvin says.

In 2000, Chauvin, a Pathfinder historian, and the family who live at the crash site began working as a team to establish a Pathfinders memorial at the site. After securing support from the local government, that memorial became a reality in 2001. The descendants of the family at the crash site hosted Chauvin, Faith, and other relatives of men on the plane for the dedication of the Pathfinder memorial marking the spot Gene Chauvin and eight other U.S. soldiers lost their lives.

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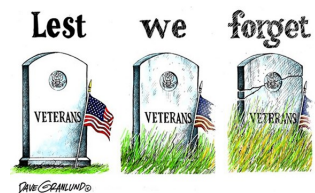
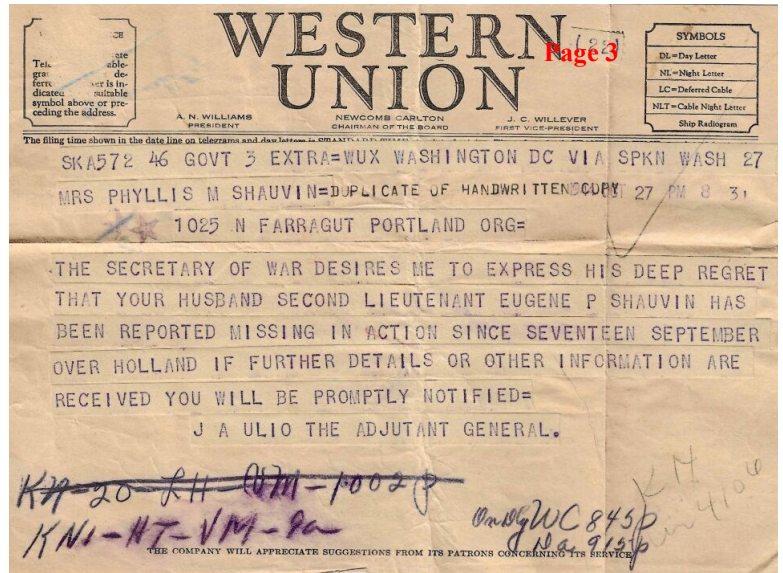
Chauvin, accompanied by her mother, two of her surviving uncles, cousins, and her new Belgian friends went to the site for the dedication and stood in the field where the plane went down. "Everybody started yelling at me ... pointing up to a tree," she recalls. "There was this big, light-colored bird sitting there watching." As she moved around, she says, the bird kept watching her. The field had been plowed many times, and the owner of the property assured her no remnants of the plane would be found. But as darkness fell and the group walked across the field, the owner tripped on something. A big piece of steel. Part of the plane. "To me, that bird embodies the souls of those people who died on that plane and that they wanted to be found," she says. Chauvin began pushing for an excavation of the site, and a team from the Army's Central I.D. Lab in Hawaii, now part of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency first sent a team in 2002. In 2003, Chauvin participated in an archaeological dig of the site. "It was a big honor to be able to do that," she says. "But all of a sudden, the colonel in charge, the archaeologist, just said, 'Okay, we're done.'" Chauvin says that team never excavated two temporary graves where the crew and paratroopers' remains had been buried after the crash. Eight of the fallen men's remains had been identified and repatriated but not Chauvin's. At a 2015 event in Norfolk for families of MIA soldiers, Chauvin presented her investigative files and made another request for an excavation of the grave sites. The case was reopened, and Chauvin says it would be years and multiple frustrating setbacks before any more action was taken. Finally, in spring of 2021, the excavation happened. After overcoming pandemic-related travel restrictions with the help of Belgian citizens and diplomats, Chauvin moved into an RV next to the crash site. A team of 24 people worked for 70 days. "They got there in April, and you can't believe what all they did," she says. After the digging was complete, Chauvin returned to the excavation site with the

Belgian family and received another sign. "This big white bird flew down out of nowhere, and it flew over that rectangle that had been a big excavation unit. It flew about 18 inches off the ground, back and forth, like in a grid. ... It was like it was healing that area. And then it flew off. We were dumbfounded." Six months later, Chauvin got the news she'd been waiting her whole life to hear: She'd found her father.

After Gene Chauvin's remains were repatriated in July, Chauvin held the long-delayed funeral in his hometown of Spokane. Well over 100 people attended, many of them military members there to honor one of their own, missing for 78 years. A C-47 flew overhead, and TV cameras captured the moments before 2nd Lt. Eugene Chauvin was finally laid to rest in an American cemetery alongside members of his family. "It was really something to see," says Chauvin. Now 81, Chauvin says the search for her father gave her the answers she'd long sought—and a lot more. "I have new friends and much, much closer relationships with cousins," she says. Her search for her father also led her to romance with a Belgian historian whose expertise in WWII history brought him to Retie during her visits. "He's been here to Charlottesville twice. And then I met him in Dallas in June, and we flew out to Seattle. He's met all my family. We've been to Spokane, and he just fell in love with it out there," she says.

Her mother died last fall at age 99, months before the positive identification of her spouse was made, but Chauvin had shared that remains had been found. And Chauvin says she's comforted by the idea that her father is now truly at peace. "Several people have said to me, 'Linda, he would be so proud of you,'" she says. "I bet he is."

Courtesy Stuart | September 21, 2022 C-Ville





WITH NO NAME ON THE MARQUEE

A ONE MAN, ONE ACT PLAY

Vietnam Veteran and Silver Star recipient Karl Rohde shares his experience 'in theater' in Vietnam. The performance will feature live music from the 1960-70s played by the Encore Guardian Band.

WHEN:

Fri, March 28 @ 6 PM ET &
Sun, March 30 @ 2 PM ET

WHERE:

Beacon Veterans Memorial Building
413 Main St, Beacon, NY 12508

SCAN TO RSVP



or email us at encore@guardianrevival.org

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February 18, 2025

Dear Veteran:


Thank you for your service to our nation! I am proud to be once again hosting a free trip to Albany for Vietnam Veterans from the 40th Senate District on **Wednesday, March 26**. Space is limited and will be allotted on a first-come first-serve basis.

Veterans on this excursion will have a tour of the New York State Capitol and attend a session of the State Senate to witness the passage of a Resolution recognizing Vietnam Veterans Day (March 29). My team will provide free breakfast and lunch to attendees.

Free transportation will be provided to and from Albany by coach bus from the **Yorktown Heights V.F.W. Post 8328** located at **257 Veterans Road, Yorktown Heights, NY 10598**. Free parking will be available. Included is a flyer with additional information about this event.

For more details or to RSVP, please call my District Office at **(914) 241-4600** or email David Zeiger at **zeiger@nysenate.gov**.

Sincerely,



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**NEW YORK
STATE SENATOR
PETE HARCKHAM**



Albany Trip For

Vietnam Veterans



Wednesday, March 26

**Senator Harckham invites Vietnam Veterans from the
40th Senate District to a free trip to Albany.**

Schedule of the day includes:

- Tour of the New York State Capitol
- Passage of a NYS Senate Resolution recognizing Vietnam Veterans Day (March 29)
- Free Breakfast and Lunch provided by Senator Harckham

FREE TRANSPORTATION WILL BE PROVIDED TO AND FROM ALBANY

SPACE IS LIMITED
To RSVP, please call (914) 241-4600
or email zeiger@nysenate.gov