

Veterans Day is a meaningful observance throughout America. Nowhere did Veterans Day 2022 have more meaning than in the small Maine town of New Vineyard. That is when Army Air Forces Sergeant Zelwood Gravlin returned home for burial 79 years after he perished in the skies over German-controlled Romania during World War II.

Sergeant Gravlin was a gunner on the B-24 Liberator bomber "Four Eyes" that was shot down on August 1, 1943, during Operation Tidal Wave that targeted the Romanian oil refineries that fueled the Nazi war machine. Fifty-one of the 177 B-24s on that harrowing raid did not return.

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency began exhuming unknown remains associated with Operation Tidal Wave in 2017. One set of remains, which were first interred in a Romanian cemetery and then at an American Military Cemetery in Belgium, were positively identified as Sergeant Gravlin's in July.

This remarkable event underscores the commitment of the American people that the men and women who serve our country will always be honored and, no matter how many years pass, they will never be forgotten. May God bless our veterans and may God bless America.

I ask unanimous consent that the "Bangor Daily News" story by Emily Burnham be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Bangor Daily News]

THESE 4 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS FROM MAINE SET THEMSELVES APART WITH THEIR BRAVERY

(By Emily Burnham)

More than 100 Mainers have been awarded the Medal of Honor, the U.S. government's highest honor for military members. Of those Mainers, each one has an amazing story of bravery and valor, each important to know and be inspired by.

These are the stories of four of those courageous Mainers, who distinguished themselves on the battlefield for the sake of their fellow soldiers and their country—and in some cases made the ultimate sacrifice.

ANDREW J. TOZIER

Of the Mainers awarded Medals of Honor for their bravery during the Civil War, few have a post-war story that's nearly as remarkable as the story of their battlefield gallantry, but Andrew Tozier is one such person.

Born in Monmouth, Tozier escaped an abusive father to first become a sailor. At age 23, not long after the Civil War began, he enlisted in the 2nd Maine Infantry Regiment. He was injured and captured at the Battle of Gaines Mill in Virginia in 1862, but after being released by Confederate forces he joined Company I of the 20th Maine in 1863.

At Gettysburg, he was the color bearer for his regiment, and on Little Round Top he defended his fellow soldiers alone, a feat of bravery for which, decades later, his commander, Brig. Gen. Joshua Chamberlain, recommended he be awarded the Medal of Honor—and he was, in 1898, when he was 60.

After the war, Tozier spent nearly five years as a criminal, stealing cattle and other

property in towns across Maine. He had a powerful ally when he was finally arrested: Chamberlain, who by then was Maine's governor. Chamberlain pardoned Tozier, and invited him to live at his house in an effort to get Tozier to clean up his act. Tozier spent the rest of his life working as a fisherman, dairy farmer and factory worker.

Tozier was portrayed by Maine actor Herb Mitchell in the movie "Gettysburg," and his story was told in the song "Ballad of the 20th Maine" by Maine band the Ghost of Paul Revere.

EDWARD DAHLGREN, CARIBOU

Aroostook County native Edward Dahlgren lived most of his life quietly in the town of Blaine, working as a seed potato inspector for the state. But during World War II, he was personally responsible for keeping an American platoon out of danger during an enemy counterattack in Oberhoffen, France, and capturing about 40 German soldiers during the skirmish on Feb. 11, 1945—just a few months before the war ended in Europe.

That action earned him the Medal of Honor, presented to him by President Harry S. Truman. When he was awarded it, he was the only living Maine Medal of Honor winner after the Civil War. Lt. Dahlgren lived in Maine for the rest of his life, and a hall at the former Loring Air Force Base was named for him, as was a street in Caribou. He died in 2006 at age 90.

CHARLES LORING, PORTLAND

Few military members serve in two wars—let alone distinguish themselves in both the way Portland native Charles Loring did. A few years after graduating from Cheverus High School, in 1942, Loring enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force and received training as a fighter pilot. He would spend the next two years flying missions in both North America and, eventually, on the European front. By December 1944, he'd flown 55 combat missions.

On Dec. 24, 1944, Loring was shot down in Belgium, and spent the next six months as a Nazi prisoner of war. He was liberated three days before the war in Europe ended on May 8, 1945.

Loring's actions that garnered him the Medal of Honor came seven years later when, after years training other pilots, he returned to combat duty in July 1952 as a jet fighter pilot during the Korean War. On Nov. 22 of that year, while leading a flight patrol near the 38th parallel, Loring spotted Chinese artillery that was pinning down American ground troops nearby. The Chinese crews fired on Loring's aircraft and damaged it, but rather than abort the mission, Loring turned off his radio and dive bombed the artillery, eliminating the threat. He died on impact, and his body was never found.

On May 9, 1954, Loring's widow received the Medal of Honor from President Dwight Eisenhower. On the same day, it was announced that the newly built Air Force base in Limestone would be named for him—Loring Air Force Base, which operated until 1994.

GARY GORDON, LINCOLN

Master Sgt. Gary Gordon, a native of Lincoln and graduate of Mattanawcook Academy, joined the Army straight out of high school, eventually joining the elite 1st Special Forces Operational Detachment-Delta, or Delta Force.

In 1993, he was posted as part of a peace-keeping mission in Mogadishu, Somalia, and on Oct. 3 of that year went in with his fellow sniper Randy Shughart to protect the crews of two Black Hawk helicopters that had been shot down by Somali gunfire during the Battle of Mogadishu, made famous by the book and film "Black Hawk Down."

During the battle, Gordon urged his superiors to let him get on the ground to protect the crew of the downed helicopters from Somali soldiers. Shughart and Gordon alone pulled the crew from the helicopters and defended their position until they ran out of ammunition. Both died defending their fellow soldiers.

Gordon and Shughart were awarded the Medal of Honor, the first awardees since the war in Vietnam. Gordon's widow, Carmen, was presented with the medal in 1994 by President Bill Clinton, and in 1996, the USNS *Gordon* was named for him. Last year, a statue of Gordon was unveiled in his hometown of Lincoln, and this year, Maine lawmakers advocated for naming a Maine-built Navy destroyer after him.

VETERANS DAY

Mr. TUBERVILLE. Mr. President, in 1945, a World War II veteran named Raymond Weeks from Birmingham, AL, recognized the need for a day to honor all veterans. He led the petition to then-Army Chief of Staff Dwight Eisenhower for a national veterans day and organized the first veterans day parade in Birmingham on November 11, 1947.

In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed a bill officially establishing "Veterans Day." President Eisenhower said, "Let us solemnly remember the sacrifices of all those who fought so valiantly on the seas, in the air, and on foreign shores, to preserve our heritage of freedom."

It is fitting that the "Father of Veterans Day" was an Alabamian, symbolizing a longstanding tradition among our residents to recognize and show appreciation for our veterans and service-members. Every year, we continue this tradition of pausing to recognize our veterans—past and present.

Veterans Day reminds us that freedom is a sacred gift, and it is not free. Some endured unthinkable battles and hardships so that we can live in peace. Most have relinquished their autonomy, moving themselves and their families across the country and around the world, with little to no notice, spending holidays and major life events separated from loved ones.

And all joined willing to lay down life and limb for their country. Alabama is home to more than 400,000 of these heroes, and today, I will be recognizing seven of them for their sacrifices to make our country safer. They embody what it means to be a member of our Armed Forces—but also what it means to be an American. Their service did not end when their time in the military did; they are investing in their communities even after taking off their uniforms. Each of them chose to use their experiences to uplift those around them. If you ask them about their heroic actions or how they have contributed to making a difference in others' lives, they will humbly tell you it has been their honor to do so.

I am proud to recognize their military service and the unique ways they are investing in our communities, like SGT Chris Amacker of Slapout, AL, a

gun truck commander in the Army's 465th Transportation Unit, where he moved ammo and equipment during the Iraq war. He faithfully carried out his duty, traveling more miles for his unit than any other driver during his time. His military service was cut short after suffering brain and spinal injuries following an explosive attack on his unit.

Sergeant Amacker spent more than a year in an Arkansas rehabilitation facility, relearning how to walk and talk. But you wouldn't guess that Sergeant Amacker had been through so much from his positive outlook and passion for helping others lead meaningful lives. He considers himself blessed to be alive and doesn't regret his decision to join the Army.

Today, Sergeant Amacker is actively involved in his community and several veterans' organizations, including the American Legion in Middlebrook. He supports other veterans coping with service-connected issues like PTSD by listening to their struggles and connecting them with other veterans to help break down isolation barriers. He also helps them find jobs to ease their transition to civilian life.

Sergeant Amacker is a devoted dad, cheering on his children at soccer games and in the band. He is described by someone in the community as "a one-in-a-million man who will do anything to help anyone, particularly a fellow service person."

There is no more commendable action than using skills learned in the military to help others succeed, like Officer Eric Prewitt from Havana, AL, does, day in and day out. A graduate of Hale County High School, Officer Prewitt enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1992, where he served as a yeoman second class. During his time in the military, he served as administrative support for military officers in assignments, with Active-Duty assignments in Guam, Australia, and the Philippines.

Officer Prewitt felt led to return to west Alabama after his time in the military and use his skills to assist veterans wishing to use their GI Bill benefits. In 2005, he became the Veterans Affairs officer and diversity training liaison at Shelton State Community College in Tuscaloosa, AL.

When speaking about his job, Officer Prewitt shared how the military invested in him and that he wants to continue investing in our servicemembers and veterans. His role is a huge benefit to not just west Alabama but our entire State.

He helps nearly 400 veterans and their dependents annually to get the assistance they need while attending college. Officer Prewitt's efforts have helped increase the veteran student population retention rate and make it possible for them to achieve their educational goals. Additionally, his office leads his community in making sure veterans do not feel alone or forgotten, including participating in "Operation We Remember" to raise awareness about veteran suicide.

Some servicemembers were not well received upon their return to American soil. They fought a thankless war without feeling supported, but still fought out of devotion for their country. This was the case for combat LTC Jeff Wishik of Madison, AL. Born in Montgomery, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army through Marion Military Institute's early commissioning program.

He deployed to Vietnam with the 101st Airborne Division, directed to find and engage enemy forces. In one particularly intense engagement with the North Vietnamese, Wishik charged through an onslaught of bullets to take command of the injured front element and order the wounded troops to safety. His quick action and leadership allowed the unit to move the wounded out of the conflict zone.

While scouting for a landing zone for a helicopter to evacuate them, Lieutenant Wishik was struck by numerous enemy attacks, including one explosion that blew him into the air, knocked him unconscious, and killed all but three in his scouting group.

After he and the two other soldiers realized they were outnumbered and unable to turn back, they spent the night pretending to be dead to avoid being captured by the enemy. He recalls enemy troops walking within inches of them and unknowingly stepping on them as they tried to remain quiet despite their serious injuries.

During the night, a North Vietnamese soldier discovered Lieutenant Wishik, looking for his food rations. Lieutenant Wishik used his last bit of strength to take out the enemy before passing out again, saving himself and the remaining two soldiers from his scouting group. He spent time recovering in multiple medical facilities before returning to Vietnam as a pilot for a second combat tour.

He received many awards for his courageous actions, including the Distinguished Service Cross, Bronze Medal, and a Purple Heart. He went to work for Lockheed Martin for 24 years following his retirement from the military in 1988 and has devoted his time throughout the years volunteering in various organizations, including the Semper Fi Community Task Force of North Alabama and as compliance lead in support of Madison County's Veterans Court.

Lieutenant Wishik's wise reminder to Americans based on his experience is that, "You may not agree with the politics of the country, but you don't take it out on American servicemembers."

The call to serve may "run in the family," where, for some veterans, the lessons and values learned in military service are worth passing on generation to generation. This is the case for SGT Janet Pray of Geneva, AL, who served in the U.S. Army from 1989–2003.

Sergeant Pray grew up in a military family, and after graduating from Alabama State University with a degree in social work, she decided to enlist. Her

first assignment was in Germany, driving a 5-ton truck back and forth from the airfield to refuel aircraft.

Upon returning to the States, the Army selected Sergeant Pray for a professional leadership development course. For a while, she moved around, serving at Fort Campbell and Fort Hood before being sent to Korea, reaching the rank of staff sergeant. Her final tour of duty was in Germany during the Iraq war, where she prepared her unit for deployment as part of the 19th Support Group.

After retiring from the Army, Sergeant Pray continued supporting the Department of Defense in various roles, including as an administrative assistant at Ft. Rucker. Her love for education and empowering the next generation prompted her to become a substitute teacher and aide for the Geneva City Schools System.

Her encouragement and tenacious spirit has touched the lives of countless students and teachers. Though she retired from teaching earlier this year, Sergeant Pray's influence lives on in her four grandchildren. One of her grandsons is currently on track to become an officer in the military after he graduates college. Sergeant Pray says the military taught her to lead by example and be responsible for her own actions—lessons she continues to pass on. People like Sergeant Pray keep the American dream alive by inspiring others to take advantage of opportunities our country has to offer and leading by example.

For veterans like 100-year-old George Hamilton of Pleasant Grove, the idea of "service" has no age limit. The World War II Navy veteran participates in different events around Jefferson County to share his story and is active in his local congregation at Bethel Baptist Church. Mission work is a huge part of his life. He has been on 11 trips to Nicaragua and is planning to go again soon.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, then-19-year-old Mr. Hamilton chose to enlist in the Navy. He served as a radarman second class aboard the USS *King*, helping protect the west coast and the North Pacific around the Aleutian Islands.

Mr. Hamilton says his only regret about his time with the Navy is not signing up sooner. He reflects fondly on his service, but also on how united Americans were during World War II, with a huge desire to do whatever was necessary to defeat our common enemy and defend our way of life. Mr. Hamilton continues to remind us of our country's potential when we are united, saying, "If we could get that feeling back in our country today, we could get out of this situation we're in without fail."

Many heroes gave our country some of the best years of their lives so that we could freely enjoy ours. One such hero is SGT Lonnie Phillips of Pell City, AL. The two-time Purple Heart recipient left home when he was just 17

years old to join the Marines, serving in the Vietnam war for 1 year and 11 months.

During his time in Vietnam, Sergeant Phillips survived two attacks but sustained life-changing injuries. He tearfully recalled losing most of his buddies when his unit came under gunfire while patrolling through a rice field. Sergeant Phillips woke up in the back of a medical vehicle with multiple injuries, including a severe blow to his left leg that required the removal of most of his calf. Decades later, he still has shrapnel in his hip, a painful reminder of the cost of freedom.

Sergeant Phillips says he doesn't regret his service because he hopes it will keep today's youth from facing the same hardship. He gives his time in the military credit for teaching him discipline and the sacred value of life.

Now, Sergeant Phillips takes pride in raising honeybees and growing fresh produce for the St. Clair County community. But he doesn't see himself as a hero—just a man who did what his country asked of him during a difficult point in history. His humility and devotion are an inspiration to us all.

The sacrifices made by our servicemembers are often overlooked or taken for granted by those of us who benefit from them. Even during the Korean war, often referred to as the "Forgotten War," there were men and women who willingly answered the call to serve—not for fame or recognition, but to keep our country safe from evil, like Sergeant Dave Jensen of Foley, who enlisted in the U.S. Air Force at 19 years old.

His job was to help assess aerial photography used for enemy surveillance. His first overseas assignment was in North Africa supporting those who flew along the Russian lines before doing stints in Alaska, Hawaii, and Guam. After honorably discharging, Sergeant Jensen made another commendable decision to enter public education, teaching the art of woodworking and mechanics during his 30 years as a shop instructor. Sergeant Jensen is an example of someone who knew the importance of his role to the overall mission and honorably carried out his part.

These veterans—Chris Amacker, Eric Prewitt, Jeff Wishik, Janet Pray, George Hamilton, Lonnie Phillips, and Dave Jensen—are all heroes. Our country is safer because of their efforts, and Alabama's communities are better off because of their service and continued service. Their sacrifices—whether loss of mobility, time spent away from family, postwar trauma, or the most vibrant years of their youth—demonstrate America's strength to the world. President Ronald Reagan summed it up best when he said, "Veterans know better than anyone else the price of freedom, for they've suffered the scars of war. We can offer them no better tribute than to protect what they have won for us."

I hope we will remember the price of freedom and those who have paid it. To

all of our veterans, thank you for your sacrifice and endeavors to ensure America remains the country of freedom and opportunity for generations to come.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

REMEMBERING LORETTA LYNN

• Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, over the years, country music has evolved from its humble roots into a celebration of extremes. Most modern artists like to draw their listeners into one of two states: perfect happiness or pure agony. But country music's legacy lies somewhere in the middle, where life tests our mettle and deals both joy and sorrow, all too often in unequal measure. It is the realm of the courageously unlucky and the quietly brokenhearted and the source of the world's most complex and affecting storytelling. It is that world that Loretta Lynn invited us to experience from the time she was a young woman until the day she died.

Her resume is one of the most impressive in all entertainment: 46 solo studio albums, more than 50 Top Ten hits, member of the Grand Ole Opry, Country Music Hall of Famer, and the Country Music Association's first female Entertainer of the Year. But Loretta was much more than the sum of her accolades.

She grew up poor and uneducated in the coal-mining hills of Kentucky. She was a wife at 15, a mother at 16, and moved thousands of miles away from home at an age when most teenagers today would just start dreaming about escaping from their parents. When she wasn't busy raising her children, she sang and played songs on a \$17 Sears guitar.

If Nashville is a 10-year town, then I suppose Loretta Lynn must have considered herself lucky at last, she only had to wait 7 months from the time of her first record pressing to the moment she first stepped onstage at the Grand Ole Opry. Still, at 28, she had seen more than enough to know that there was no hiding in a spotlight, so she sang about her life and found a voice that was once assertive and disruptive. She blazed trails in music and television by being herself, using humor to blunt the edge that hard living and having little agency well into womanhood had given her writing.

On October 4 of this year, we lost our coal miner's daughter to a far better place. I will be forever grateful to her for her absolute belief in the power of storytelling. I hope her memory will inspire future generations of young women in music to do the bravest thing an artist can do and share their joy, pain, confusion, and hope in its most authentic form.●

TRIBUTE TO RUTH SKIDMORE

• Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, on behalf of myself and Mr. HAGERTY, I

ask unanimous consent that the following remarks be printed in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to honor Ms. Ruth Skidmore of Oak Ridge, TN.

By the end of the Second World War, there were almost 30,000 Army nurses on Active Duty. These brave healers served on the home front and across oceans, caring for the wounded, and bringing hope to thousands of American and Allied servicemembers.

On November 2, 1943, a young lady named Ruth Skidmore joined their ranks and helped guide her compatriots on the frontlines through one of the darkest and most violent periods in American history. On October 13, 2022, Ruth celebrated her 100th birthday, and it felt appropriate that we should in turn celebrate not only her service to this country but her enduring legacy of service to her community.

Ruth Skidmore was born 100 years ago in Fort Wayne, IN, the sixth of seven children. She held an afterschool job at the one-room schoolhouse across the street from her home, cleaning chalkboards and erasers for 10 cents a day. Following her father's advice, Ruth deposited her earnings in a savings account—a responsible decision indeed. Unfortunately, she lost all \$13 of her savings in the crash of '29.

To this day, Ruth is still mad at Herbert Hoover.

She is a graduate of Hanover College, where she was crowned May Queen in her senior year. After college, Ruth contracted an eye infection and moved in with her uncle, who was an Army doctor. He suggested that she move to Arizona, believing that the dry air would aid in her healing. As it turns out, this piece of advice would change the course of Ruth's life. She moved to Tucson and signed up for Army Cadet School. The war was on, and everyone had a role to play. After the war Ruth moved to Oak Ridge, TN; after a short stint in Fort Lauderdale, FL, she returned to the Volunteer State to work as an industrial nurse at the Y-12 National Security Complex.

Over the years Ruth took on the duties of a wife and a mother, but she never stopped serving her community. While raising her family, Ruth worked part-time as a nurse and especially enjoyed her 2 years working in Appalachia.

Today, Ruth lives in Oak Ridge, where she indulges her green thumb and a love of music. She has always had a large garden and, as she puts it, was growing organic vegetables before it was cool. At the age of 60, Ruth threw herself into music lessons and developed no small talent on both the guitar and the piano. She regularly dazzles her friends and neighbors as part of a veterans' band.

Ruth, what a life you have lived. On behalf of all Tennesseans and our colleagues in the U.S. Senate, we wish you a very happy birthday and as much joy and love as one person could hope for in the coming year.●