

Upcoming Speakers

3/22 - **Dr. Spencer Romine**, Surgeon, The Orthopedic Institute, "Rotator Cuff Stuff"

3/29 - **Lori Brown**, Executive Director, Purchase Area Sexual Assault & Child Advocacy Center (PASAC), "Hope, Heal, Grow"

4/5 - **Joe Bell**, Vice President of Corporate Communications, The Cafaro Company, "Kentucky Oaks Mall Update"

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Birthdays

Anita Akin Lentz
March 18
Betty Higdon
March 19
Kyle P Katterjohn
March 22
Lanny King

GearTeeth

The Rotary Club of Paducah



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A POW's Story

March 15, 2017



Speaker: Captain Gary R. Sigler, United States Air Force (retired). Former POW during the Vietnam War. Father of fellow Rotarian Becky Straley. Capt. Sigler was introduced by Rotarian Joni Goodman.

Topic: Captain Sigler's experience as a POW.

Top Ten Takeaways for Rotarians:

-Capt. Sigler is a native of Colorado and a graduate of Colorado State University. He and his wife Pam have two children and seven grandchildren. After serving in the USAF, he ran a family farm and later was an insurance executive.

-In the Air Force, Capt. Sigler served in the 11th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron stationed in Udorn, Thailand in 1966. Among the medals awarded to Captain Sigler are: POW Medal, 2 Purple Hearts, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Legion of Merit, and 9 Air Medals.



-While on a reconnaissance mission over Hanoi on April 29, 1967, his 92nd airborne mission, a surface to air missile struck his aircraft. His co-pilot and commander, Major Mark Stephensen, died in the attack. Captain Sigler, badly burned from flames inside the cockpit, ejected. The force of the ejection knocked him unconscious. When he awoke, he was on the ground suffering from burns and several broken vertebrae. Despite the pain, he grabbed his survival kit and tried to run for safety. Two days later, he was captured by the Viet Cong. The date was May 1, 1967... his daughter Becky's first birthday.

-Part of Capt. Sigler's Air Force training was Survival School. The training taught airmen how to survive bring a POW. The lessons taught were to survive by "bending before you break." "When I left Survival School, I had the strangest feeling that I would one day have to use that training," he said.

-Captain Sigler was missing for three years before he was reported as being captured and held in a POW camp. He said various forms of torture were performed on the POW's. Cubans were even brought in to teach Viet Cong how to torture and interrogate Americans, as they were considered better at that skill.

-The Captain recalled how reading poetry and science fiction as a child enabled him to relate stories to others, thus offering them mental stimulation during endless days of isolation from the outside world. He said part of survival meant practicing something "physical, mental and spiritual" each day to avoid the deterioration of those human traits.

-Food fed to POW's consisted of a diet of (often worm-infested) bowls of rice, and soup with greens that were more like weeds.

-Capt. Sigler said a pivotal, positive moment came November 1, 1970 when Special Operations Forces raided the Son Tay POW Camp to extract the captured soldiers. The mission was highly criticized when it was learned that the prisoners had been moved from Son Tay weeks earlier. Sigler said the mission may have failed, but learning of it gave them hope for future efforts. Moving the POW's to other facilities also allowed them

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 April 07
Maurie McGarvey
 April 07
Laurie Latham
 April 09
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 April 13

to be with other groups of captured soldiers which also improved morale.

-Soon after, peace talks resulted in the release of many POW's. The first to be released were the injured and sick. The remainder were released in the order in which they were captured. Dressed in black civilian pants and a grey jacket, Captain Sigler and fellow POW's were released from the POW Camp, saluted by Officers, then whisked to facilities to recover from their injuries. Capt. Sigler was flown to Scott Air Force Base near St. Louis. He continued to serve as an Air Force pilot in Colorado until his retirement from the military in 1974.



-A number of articles written about Captain Sigler's POW experience are available online.

Following Captain Sigler's presentation, Cheryl Bendick of the Paducah Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution made a special presentation to him in recognition of his service.

Announcements

March 15, 2017

Quilt Show! - It is time! Sign-up sheets for this year's Rotary Antique Quilt Show will be available at each meeting until show time. This year's show runs April 25-29 at the Cherry Civic Center. For more information, contact Rotarian Randy Bridges.

Charitable Donations - Checks were awarded to two agencies this week. Daniel Roe accepted the check on behalf of the Lincoln Heritage Chapter of the **Boy Scouts of America**. A check to the **Oscar Cross Boys and Girls Club** of Paducah was accepted by Bjarne Hansen. Hansen said the center currently hosts 130-150 young people per day.

Guests

March 15, 2017

Cheryl Bendick – guest of Tom Grassham
 Malcolm Jones – guest of Clay Howerton
 Tim Straley, Zibby Straley, Gigi Straley, Lexie Straley, Ellen Harlow, Curt Harlow and Jake Harlow- guests of Becky Straley
 Ross Whittaker – guest of Dee Dee Whittaker
 Tammy Bohannon and Tony Bohannon – guests of Mike Muscarella
 Carson Clark – guest of Brad Clark
 Randy Fox – Rotary Assistant Governor from Rotary Club of Marshall County
 Claire Kelly and Darby Moffatt – student guests from Paducah Tilghman High
 Zach Althouse, Barton Christmas, Alex Bohannon – student guests from McCracken County
 Lauren Tashjian – student guest from St Mary High