

Where Is James Kelly Patterson?

Captain Eugene "Red" McDaniel, USN (Ret.) '63

The hostile action in Vietnam has been over for twenty-three years, but for all of us the memories of that war linger. James Kelly Patterson '63, my Classmate, was my bombardier-navigator, and not a day goes by that I don't think of him and wonder where he is today.

The last time I saw "Kelly," as he was known in our squadron, was 19 May 1967. That was the morning our A6A Intruder was blown out of the North Vietnamese sky by a surface-to-air missile. We both parachuted into the jungle some forty miles southwest of Hanoi. Kelly talked on his survival radio with squadron mates flying overhead for four days while he evaded capture. Then he was silent.

After my own capture and for the six years of my imprisonment, I tried in every way I could to get some information from my guards about Kelly. One of the guards led me to believe that he was alive and well. Kelly was a top-notch "BN" and all indications are that he survived those first few weeks. What happened to him? Why didn't he come home with us? Is he alive now? These are questions that are not just asked in the mellowness of old age. They are questions that continue to haunt me after years of trying to find out what happened to Kelly without success. For example, the Department of Defense officially stated that all of the POWs were released in 1973. If Kelly didn't return in Operation Homecoming, then he was officially dead. But over the years I have developed the profound belief that Kelly's story did not end in Vietnam; and it may not be yet. At least two of the returning POWs brought back pieces of information about Kelly. One had seen his name on an interrogation sheet, while another reported seeing his name scratched into a cell wall in a POW camp near the Chinese border.

Upon my return in 1973 I was glad to be alive and saddened at loss. But I soon began to have doubts that all of the non-returning POWs were dead. In the late 1970s information began to leak from behind the Iron and Bamboo curtains, and from U.S. intelligence files, that not all of us POWs had returned and some had been sighted in captivity after the war had ended. When the former Soviet Union began to crumble, reports began to surface that certain U.S. military pilots with "special talents" (bombardier-navigators like Kelly) were transferred by the Vietnamese to the USSR for clandestine uses as "payback" for war materiel provided to Vietnam. Close scrutiny of the list of non-returning POWs does indeed show an inordinately high percentage of electronic warfare officers among the missing.

The Vietnamese eventually returned Kelly's I.D. card, in pristine condition, to U.S. authorities in 1985, but the Vietnamese did not say how they came to have the card or what had happened to Kelly. Later U.S. authorities listed Kelly as a "discrepancy" case; no longer was he confirmed "dead." The Vietnamese, seeking more normalized diplomatic relations, needed to respond. They claimed that Kelly had died in captivity.

On 4 November 1991, the Moscow weekly newspaper *Kommersant* reported that an American "second" pilot shot down on 19 May 1967, over Vietnam was transported to Alma Ata, Kazakhstan (USSR) in September 1967. He reportedly was later moved to Sarichagansk, where he was said to be still living. The reporter stated that the pilot's name was either "Patkinson or Petterson."

An in-depth investigative report (Sauder and Sanders, *The Men We Left Behind*) was published in 1993 and supported the *Kommersant* report by documenting: 1) an interview by a Red Army officer on Australian television concerning the smuggling of a U.S. POW to the USSR in 1967; 2) testimony of General Jan Sejna, a top Warsaw Pact defector and long-time DIA employee who says he helped ship U.S. POWs from Vietnam to Russia; and 3) the discovery by Harvard researcher Steve Morris of a document in the Soviet archives purported to be a top-ranking Vietnamese officer's report of large numbers of U.S. POWs who were never acknowledged

to U.S. authorities. This report was followed in 1992 by the open admission of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger that the U.S. government was aware that not all of the POWs held at war's end had been accounted for.

Kelly's brother, Luck Patterson, continues to look for his brother. He contacted sixty-two scientists who resided in Kazakhstan. "If Kelly was interrogated in Sarichagansk," Luck reasoned, "the Soviets could have kept him to aid in their research." One of the responses that Luck received from his contacts was from a man who, at his own expense, published Kelly's picture in the local paper. The man requested anyone who recognized the picture to contact him. Shortly thereafter, a woman called to say the picture was that of an American who had visited her home with a relative and other Russian officers when she was a teenager and had given her a doll. "I'll never forget his face," she said. She stated that she was "100% certain" that the man in the picture was the same man who



Kelly and McDaniel, just before they were shotdown, celebrating the 75,000 landing on their ship

Continued on page 40

Continued from page 22

had given her the doll. She was later told by her relative that she was "not supposed to know" about the American.

As late as 28 February 1996, Hong Kong's Foreign Broadcast Information System reported: "Kazakh physicist Yevgeniy Kolomeyets of Almaty University last Friday said he had evidence that several POWs, including U.S. pilot James Kelly Patterson who was shot down over Vietnam in 1967, had worked on the Soviet anti-aircraft weapons firing range at Sariachagansk on the shores of Lake Balkash."

I, like so many of Kelly's family and classmates, am not willing to accept what has been offered to us as Kelly's fate. The fate of Stan Smiley '63, another of my Classmates, is a similar story. Some of those who did not return from Vietnam died in battle, and we brought them home. We shed tears with their loved ones, and buried our warriors, letting us all rest in peace. But in the case of those warriors who are still missing, when there are so many conflicting stories, when the governments hold valid secret information, there can be no peace for them nor their loved ones. We cannot have peace until we know what really happened to James Kelly Patterson.

Many have asked, "What can I do?" The answer is simple. Do not forget Kelly! Keep his name in your mind and on your lips. Focus the interest and concern of your representatives in Washington on the issue of America's missing men. But most of all do not forget Kelly and others like him. When they are forgotten, they are lost forever.

CAPTAIN EUGENE B. "RED" MCDANIEL '63



On 19 May 1967, while on his 81st combat mission over North Vietnam, Eugene B. "Red" McDaniel was shot down while flying his A-6 Intruder aircraft. He was listed as "missing in action" until 1970, when the Hanoi government acknowledged that he was being held prisoner. A POW for more than six years, McDaniel was released 4 March 1973, after the Vietnam cease-fire.

Red McDaniel was one of the most brutally tortured prisoners of the Vietnam War. This torture resulted from his active role in camp communications during an organized escape attempt by fellow prisoners. He is the author of *Scars and Stripes*, a book telling about his six years in a Communist prison.

When Red McDaniel returned home from Vietnam, he was awarded the Navy's highest award

for bravery, the Navy Cross. Among his other military decorations are two Silver Stars, the Legion of Merit with Combat "V", the Distinguished Flying Cross, three Bronze Stars with Combat "V", and two Purple Hearts for wounds received at the hands of the North Vietnamese torturers.

Captain McDaniel resumed active duty and served as Commanding Officer of NIAGARA FALLS, and Commanding Officer of the aircraft carrier, LEXINGTON. Under his command, LEXINGTON experienced no serious accidents while accomplishing more than 20,000 carrier landings.

Red McDaniel served as Director of Navy/Marine Corps Liaison to the U.S. House of Representatives from 1979 to 1981. In this capacity, Captain McDaniel worked daily with Congress on national defense planning, and provided legislators with information vital to the strategic development of Navy forces throughout the world. He retired from the Navy in 1982.

Today, Captain McDaniel is President of the American Defense Foundation and the American Defense Institute, non-profit organizations headquartered in Washington, DC. He founded American Defense Foundation (ADF) and American Defense Institute (ADI) to increase public awareness of the need for a strong national defense.

Continued from page 38

words of General Lejeune, the legendary Marine Corps Commandant. "You [must] never forget the power of example."

I could regale you with inspirational stories of integrity. There are many such anecdotes, but instead, let me leave you with a question, an ethical acid test, used by someone you know very well, Admiral Chuck Larson.

When confronted with moral questions, ask yourself: "Would I be proud to tell my family what I did today?" If you can answer "yes" to that question, you will stay on the right path.

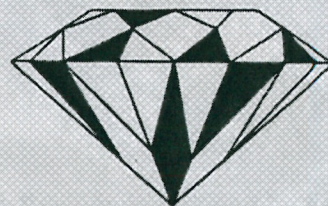
In a few moments, you will take the oath "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Nowhere in that sacred oath does it remind you that you must be competent; nowhere does it remind you that you must care deeply for the Sailors and Marines entrusted to your charge; and nowhere does it remind you that you must be a beacon of integrity.

Indeed, the framers of this oath no doubt presumed that, if you could "well and faithfully discharge the duties" of your office, that you would know these things. They presumed that, if you qualified to take this oath, you would already understand and live by President Wilson's admonition to the Class of 1916: Remember, in all things "yours is the honor of the United States" of America.

And America today, from this day forward, is fortunate because you, the Class of '96, bring to our Armed Forces your education, your high hopes, your vision, and your leadership skills. From this day forward, as you face the challenges of leadership, you will stand with the best and the bravest of the Navy and the Marine Corps. Be proud of where you have been, and be proud of where you are going.

God bless you, the Class of '96, and God bless this great institution, the United States Naval Academy.

Thank you.



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