

## POW/MIA DAY

If any good came out the Vietnam Conflict, surprisingly it was that POWs were accepted as Heroes. Probably the most notable was John McCain who was a prisoner of war in the infamous North Vietnam prison call the Hanoi Hilton He was so severely beaten that he lost most of his physical strength and was impaired the rest of his life. Experts agree that POWs are still widely misunderstood. Part of the problem, it is difficult to tell the real stories of those who have suffered at the hands of their captors. Some of us in this room remember Jane Fonda's visit to the Hanoi Hilton in 1972. During the sixties and seventies, she was a very outspoken critic of our involvement in the war. During her visit she met with some prisoners. According to Colonel Carrigan the Commandant of the USAF Survival School, a prisoner of war for 6 years, he and 5 others were paraded before Miss Fonda. When she asked him if he was sorry for bombing babies, he spat at her and was dragged away and severely beaten with a wooden baton causing lifelong double vision. The other five had earlier secreted a tiny piece of paper with their social security number on it. As Miss Fonda shook their hand, they palmed her their pieces of paper and to their shock after the camera was turned off, she immediately handed the papers to the officer in charge. 3 men died from the subsequent beatings.

Prisoners of War and the missing in action represents a significant part of our military history. Including WWII there was a staggering total of approximately 140,000 out of which 81,936 are still missing. In 1979 Congress passed a resolution designating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

Understanding the statistics and numbers related to these brave service members provides insight into their sacrifices and it also highlights the on-going efforts to account for whereabouts. Each of these numbers represents an individual, a father, a son, a brother, and a husband who left their homes to serve and protect. POW/MIA Day is crucial to reflect on the collective sacrifices made by these service members. 362 individuals are still missing from North Dakota.

The NDVLC urges a numinous yes as we feel this is vitally important as very few of those who experienced imprisonment and torture in past wars are still with us today. If memory serves me the last living POW from North Dakota Vern Huber a Korean POW passed way a couple years ago. He was from Mandan

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## Loren H. Torkelson

Rank, Service

**Lieutenant Colonel O-5, U.S. Air Force**

Veteran of:

**U.S. Marine Corps Reserve 1961-1962**

**U.S. Air Force Reserve 1962-1963**

**U.S. Air Force 1963-1984**

**Cold War 1961-1984**

**Vietnam War 1966-1973 (POW)**

Tribute:

Loren Torkelson was born on May 22, 1941, in Minot, North Dakota. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve on March 3, 1961, and transferred to the U.S. Air Force Reserve on September 27, 1962. He was commissioned a 2d Lt in the Air Force through the Air Force ROTC Program at the University of North Dakota on August 10, 1963, and went on active duty beginning November 23, 1963. Lt Torkelson next completed Undergraduate Pilot Training, earning his pilot wings at Laughlin AFB, Texas, in October 1964, followed by F-4 Phantom II Combat Crew Training and Pilot Systems Operator Training from November 1964 to April 1965. His first assignment was as an F-4 pilot with the 389th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, from April 1965 to April 1966, and then deployed with the 389th to Phan Rang AB and then DaNang AB, South Vietnam, from April 1966 until he was forced to eject over North Vietnam and was taken as a Prisoner of War on April 29, 1967. After spending 2,137 days in captivity, Capt Torkelson was released during Operation Homecoming on March 4, 1973. He was briefly hospitalized to recover from his injuries at Travis AFB, California, and then completed pilot requalification training in December 1973, and F-4 Combat Crew Training in May 1974. Maj Torkelson then served as an F-4 pilot and instructor pilot with the 311th Tactical Fighter Training Squadron of the 58th Tactical Fighter Training Wing at Luke AFB, Arizona, from May 1974 to August 1976, followed by an Air Force Institute of Technology assignment to attend the University of North Dakota School of Law from August 1976 to May 1979. LtCol Torkelson completed the Judge Advocate Staff Officer Course in September 1979, and then served as an Air Force JAG Officer and Assistant Staff Judge Advocate for the Air Force Tactical Fighter Weapons Center and with the 554th Combat Support Group at Nellis AFB, Nevada, from September 1979 until his retirement from the Air Force on October 1, 1984. Loren Torkelson died on September 17, 1995, and was buried at the Concordia Cemetery in Crosby, North Dakota.

His 1st (of 2) Silver Star Citation reads:

First Lieutenant Loren H. Torkelson distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an F4C Aircraft Commander over North Vietnam on 29 April 1967. On that date, while under intense and accurate fire from unfriendly forces, Lieutenant Torkelson demonstrated cool courage, undaunted determination, and superior skill in pressing home devastating air attacks against hostile positions. Persevering in the face of danger, he relentlessly and effectively aided in neutralizing the hostile forces. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Lieutenant Torkelson has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



# U.S. Unaccounted-For from the Vietnam War

Reported for: North Dakota

Prisoners of War, Missing in Action and Killed in Action/Body not Recovered

Total Unaccounted

Service	Country of Casualty	Name	Loss Rank	Status	Date of Incident	Home of Record
USA	S.Vietnam	BERDAHL, DAVID DONALD	E3	BB	1972/01/20	MINOT, ND
USAF	S.Vietnam	BOND, RONALD DALE	O4	BB	1968/03/11	FARGO, ND
USAF	N.Vietnam	CUSHMAN, CLIFTON EMMET	O3	XX	1966/09/25	GRAND FORKS, ND
USAF	N.Vietnam	FOWLER, JAMES ALAN	O4	XX	1972/06/06	BISMARCK, ND
USAF	S.Vietnam	GREENLEY, JON ALFRED	O2	BB	1966/01/07	FARGO, ND
USAF	Laos	POTTER, WILLIAM TOD	O2	XX	1968/02/05	GRAND FORKS, ND
USAF	N.Vietnam	STEEN, MARTIN W	O3	XX	1966/05/31	GRAND FORKS, ND
USA	S.Vietnam	ZUBKE, DELAND DWIGHT	E5	XX	1971/03/01	GRASSY BUTTE, ND

**Report Total:**

Total BB - Killed in Action, Body Not Recovered:	3
Total KK - Died in Captivity, Remains Not Returned:	0
Total MM - Missing (Civilians Only):	0
Total PP - Prisoner (Civilians Only):	0
Total XX - Presumptive Finding of Death:	5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8</b>

End of Report

**Status Codes:** AR - AWOL/Deserter/Collaborator Returned  
 BB - Killed In Action, Body Not Recovered  
 BR - Body Recovered  
 EE - Escapee

KK - Died In Captivity, Remains Not Returned  
 KR - Died In Captivity, Remains Returned  
 MM - Missing (Civilians Only)  
 NR - Remains Returned/Remains Recovered

PP - Prisoner (Civilians Only)  
 RR - POW Returnee  
 XX - Presumptive Finding of Death

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