

**INTRODUCTION OF
SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKER
JOEL D. SOLLEDER**

Good Afternoon:

Perhaps you noticed when you entered the cemetery today, the striking monument that stands to the left of the entrance. It depicts a man in rags surrounded by barbed wire. It's called "The Liberation Moment." That monument commemorates Prisoners of War of all America's conflicts. It's a very inspiring sight, and, if you didn't see the monument coming in, I hope you'll stop by for a moment before you leave the cemetery.

We have with us, today, members of the American Ex-Prisoners Of War, who are responsible for erecting that monument. Some were held prisoner in Europe during World War Two, and some were held in the Pacific Theater. Gentlemen, would you please stand and be recognized?

(Applause)

Thank you!

As you can imagine, each of those men has a story to tell. Our guest speaker, today – Joel Sollender – certainly does. We recently learned about Mr. Sollender, and felt he could tell one of the stories of those Americans who were held captive in wartime. And to help us remember them, and their great sacrifices, on this Memorial Day weekend.

Joel Sollender enlisted in the United States Army in April, 1943, at the age of 18, from his home in New York City. By that time, the German Army had conquered most of western Europe, and our traditional ally – England – was on the defensive and struggling to hold on. It would be more than a year before the Allied army would invade occupied France on D-Day, June 7, 1944.

Private Sollender – not yet 20 years old – arrived in France in October 1944, and was assigned as first scout with the Second Platoon of the 3-hundred-46th Regiment, 87th “Golden Acorn” Division of General George Patton’s Third Army. Patton’s troops were deployed along the Siegfried Line in Northern France, on the border with Germany.

Private Sollender joined his regiment just as the Third Army was advancing across the Saar River, where it clashed with the enemy at the start of the German Ardennes Offensive. In a series of battles called the Lorraine Campaign, the Third Army sustained 55-thousand combat casualties, including 6-thousand 6-hundred killed, and 36-thousand wounded.

12-thousand soldiers were missing in action – among them Private Sollender, who was captured on December 11, 1944, by a German tank crew.

He will tell you more about that experience, and his time as a Prisoner of War, in a moment, but suffice it to say, we are very lucky to have Joel Sollender with us here today as our special guest.

For his service, however, Private – later Corporal – Sollender was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster signifying multiple wounds, the Prisoner of War Medal, and the Combat Infantry Badge.

After the War, Joel Sollender graduated with honors from N-Y-U with a bachelor's degree in Accounting. He became a Certified Public Accountant in 1947.

For four years, he was a staff auditor with the accounting firm of Ernst and Whinney.

In the years following, he served in accounting and financial positions with United Merchants and Manufacturers of New York, rising to senior vice president and member of the Board of Directors. Later, he joined Earthworm, Incorporated – a company that provides recycling programs for businesses – where he was executive vice president and chief financial officer.

After retiring to San Diego in 1992, Mr. Sollender was selected in 1994 by the U-S State Department to serve as a volunteer senior consultant to restructure a major textile complex in Kazakhstan.

Mr. Sollender has been very active in civic life in San Diego, serving in various financial roles with the San Diego Museum of Art, the Old Globe Theater, and the San Diego Youth Symphony.

Joel Sollender and his wife, Dorothy, live in Poway. They had two sons – the late Jeffrey D. Sollender, a venture capitalist; and Jonathan L. Sollender, a plastic surgeon – and they have six grandchildren.

It is my honor to introduce Joel Sollender.
Please welcome our guest speaker.

Mr. Sollender.....