



FALL 2021  
INAUGURAL issue  
Volume 1, Issue 1



*A final tribute to the Veterans of our Armed Services who gave their all.*

## MNC Support Foundation Honors 9/11 Heroes In Veterans Day 2021 Video Program

By Bill Heard

If then-Navy Lt. Christopher Ludmer of San Diego, Calif., had been in his usual office at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001, he would have been in the exact spot where American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the west wall of the Pentagon in Arlington, Va.

Assistant Fire Chief John Wood led a San Diego Fire Department Rescue Team for two weeks on the Twin Towers' rubble pile helping local first responders in their search, rescue, and victim recovery effort after the attack in New York City.

Ludmer and Wood's stories are featured in an online video sponsored by the Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation that commemorates the 20th Anniversary of 9/11 in memory of those killed in the terrorist attacks. It also honors the many heroes who responded to the tragedy.

The video will be available on the Support Foundation's website—[www.miramarcemetery.org](http://www.miramarcemetery.org)—beginning Wednesday, Nov. 10.

"There were so many acts of heroism, each leading to a sense of our nation's resilience that we would find a way to persevere," Army veteran Sallay Kim, President & CEO of the Support Foundation, says in her introduction of the video. "From the losses of that day grew a sense of pride in our country coming together in unity with the response."

On 9/11, Lt. Ludmer, a Navy lawyer, was in a staff meeting in tempo-



*Fire crews raced to put out the flames minutes after a jet struck the Pentagon .*

rary offices of the Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG). Someone shouted to turn on the TV, and he saw the World Trade Center's North Tower burning. Moments later, "as we watched in horror, we saw a second plane hit the South Tower.

"Then, I heard a terrible 'boom,'" says Ludmer. "At the same time, the room seemed to lurch slightly, like being rear-ended in a car...It felt like the building shifted somehow." American Flight 77 had just struck the west side of the Pentagon — right where the vacant JAG office was being renovated.

A "river of khaki, green, and blue uniforms" flowed out of the building

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### PLEASE HELP SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS

Your tax-deductible contribution to the **Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation** will help us continue efforts to honor our nation's veterans in their final resting place at Miramar National Cemetery, located in San Diego, Calif.

The Support Foundation's mission includes administering memorial trust funds, conducting commemorative ceremonies, enhancing and beautifying Miramar National Cemetery, and financing and erecting memorials to honor veterans' organizations.

Please consider making your tax-deductible contribution to the **Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation**, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

# Foundation Honors 9/11 Heroes in New Video Program

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as plumes of black smoke spiraled into the sky above the Pentagon. Helicopters whirled overhead, and fighter jets screamed by, their wings loaded with rockets—a combat air patrol over the nation’s capitol.

With the news that another attack on Washington was imminent, everyone took shelter in a natural depression on the grounds. No one was allowed to leave the area for the next 12 hours. After a short respite at home, Ludmer (left) was ordered back to his Pentagon office early the next morning.

“The usually spotless halls were covered in ash, cracking under my footsteps, and muffling the normally loud echoes,” he remembered. Part of the building was still in flames. “As I walked, I looked through the windows

into the inner courtyard. The grass was covered with white body bags.”

Six days after the Twin Towers were destroyed, Chief Wood (below) and his team got their first glimpse of the huge mound of crushed concrete, twisted steel, and dust-coated debris that were all that remained of the 1,360-foot, 110-story buildings. Wood had worked at the site of many disasters, including Hurricane Katrina on the U.S. Gulf Coast, and Hurricane Sandy on the New Jersey shore, but he had never seen anything like this.

“The sights, sounds and smell of the devastation were overwhelming. It is truly something a person never forgets,” Wood recalled. “We were able to recover many of our fellow humans, bringing closure to families that were devastated from the terrorist event.”

“I will never forget a country, and largely a world, that came together as a unified team,” he said. “I will never forget the sacrifices that our veterans and their families have made since that fateful day.”

“The National Cemetery Administration’s pledge to every veteran interred in our cemeteries is that you will never be forgotten,” said Greta L. Hamilton, director of the Fort Rosecrans and Miramar National Cemeteries and an Air Force veteran.

See the video online at: <https://miramarcemetery.org>



## President’s Update

This Veterans Day we continue to honor the heroism of all our Active Duty Service Members and veterans. Words can never truly express the gratitude we have for their every effort.

This is the 20th anniversary of 9/11. We honor veterans in service that day, the men and women who joined in response to that day, along with all our first responders who were in service on September 11, 2001.

There were so many acts of heroism, each leading to a sense of our Nation’s resilience, that we would find a way to persevere. From the loss of that day, grew a sense of pride in our country coming together in unity with its response. From those days came two decades worth of heroes:

The brave firefighters who climbed the steps at the World Trade Center to save others, never to see their loved ones again.

The group of strangers, passengers on United Flight 93, who learned of what occurred in New York City, and made it their last heroic act in life to stop terrorists from reaching their intended target, preventing the plane from killing untold numbers of people in the U. S. Capitol.

The military and civilian personnel who risked their lives to save those injured and still in danger after the strike at the Pentagon.

The search and rescue personnel who worked non-stop in the days, months and years after, helping to bring closure to those who lost their loved ones.

The young men and women who signed up to serve their country in the days immediately following.

The approximate 3 million service members who deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, and America’s Global War on Terrorism—ongoing through this past August.

While we will never forget the loved ones lost and the events of that fateful day, September 11th, 2001, reflecting upon a day and era within our history that changed our everyday existence, we will temper it with remembering the brave actions of our first responders, our veterans and their families, the courage and resilience displayed then and the two decades to follow.

Winston Churchill once said: “Never was so much owed by so many to so few.” These words resonate today and will continue to hold true for generations to come.



**C. Sallay Kim**  
MNCSF President & CEO

AT FINAL REST

## World War II Veterans of Key Pacific, Europe Battles Honored at Miramar

Two World War II veterans with remarkable backgrounds — a Marine officer who fought on Iwo Jima and an Army officer with a historic, American ancestry — now lie at rest among their fellow veterans at Miramar National Cemetery.

Retired Marine Col. Dave E. Severance, 102, was buried Sept. 15. As a young captain, he was commander of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945, when he ordered five of his Marines and a Navy Pharmacist's Mate to raise the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi. The famous flag-raising photograph inspired the Marine Corps statue that overlooks Washington, D.C., from Arlington, Va.

Former Army Lt. George E. Key, 96, was interred during a Sept. 24 ceremony. Key landed on the beaches of Normandy with a combat engineering regiment on D-Day, June 6, 1944, and he later fought in the bloody, bitter-cold Battle of the Bulge. Key is the great-great-grandson of Francis Scott Key, who wrote the lyrics to "The Star-Spangled Banner."

In 1943, Lt. Severance (right) deployed to the Pacific theater with the Paramarines and first saw combat in the jungles of Bougainville. He proved himself in battle, leading his cutoff platoon out of a Japanese ambush with minimal casualties.



Promoted to captain in April 1944, Severance was given command of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 28th Marine Regiment. On Feb. 19, 1945, he and the men of Company E landed on the black beaches of Iwo Jima, unknowing the impact their actions on that strategic island would have on Americans and the future Marine Corps.

At 10:20 a.m. on Feb. 23, 1945, one of Severance's platoons reached the summit of Mount Suribachi and raised a small American flag. "All the ships at sea started their sirens going, and troops were yelling and cheering," Severance said in a 2015 San Diego's NBC-7 interview. "You definitely could see that it is an American flag."

Company E fought at Iwo Jima for 36 days, and 80 percent of Severance's men were killed or wounded in action. The Marine Corps War Memorial was dedicated on Nov. 10, 1954.

During the 1996 Olympic torch run, Severance carried the torch from Arlington National Cemetery to the statue, *aka* the Iwo Jima Memorial. Severance retired in 1968 while serving as assistant director of personnel at Headquarters, Marine Corps. He died Aug. 2, 2021, at his home in La Jolla, Calif., at age 102.

Lt. Key (left) was carrying a combat pack, hand grenades, two bandoliers of ammunition, a gas mask and his M-1 rifle when he stumbled ashore in the face of deadly enemy fire on a Normandy beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. He was wet to the bone from the waves that almost drowned him.



A combat engineer, Key was in the first wave of soldiers and "struggled to find a foothold against the German position dug in heavily-fortified concrete bunkers above them," according to a profile in the book, *WWII Heroes: 100 Portraits and Biographies of WWII Veterans*.

As U.S. forces pushed the Germans into retreat across France, Key's platoon encountered scattered German resistance from snipers, hidden machine gun nests and enemy soldiers lurking in dug-in positions. As platoon commander, Key told interviewers: "It's a hard thing to do to send a guy on a patrol when you don't know if he's going to come back or not...but you have to send some-

body. It weighs on your conscience."

Years later, Key was recalled for service during the Korean War. He later worked to honor the American flag and his ancestor's memory by organizing a fundraising project to help the Smithsonian Institution restore a giant, 15-star U.S. flag that had flown over Baltimore's Fort McHenry during the War of 1812.

After retirement, he relocated to San Clemente, Calif., where he lived until he died peacefully in his sleep on Dec. 31, 2020.

### SUPPORT FOUNDATION

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#### Mission of MNCSF

Formed in 2006 to persuade the Department of Veterans Affairs to build a new cemetery to serve the San Diego, Calif., region, the Support Foundation has a diverse Board that includes nine members, most of whom are Armed Forces veterans and which meets monthly.

The Foundation conducts annual fundraising campaigns to finance veterans' memorial activities and cemetery enhancement projects. Over the years, donations helped construct the "Avenue of Flags" that since 2012 have lined the avenue from the main gate and the Veterans Tribute Tower & Carillon dedicated in 2016.

The current project is the Armed Forces Memorial Amphitheater.

The Support Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charity. It is registered with the State of California Department of Justice Registry of Charitable Trusts as the "Support Foundation for Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery at Miramar."

Tax ID is #65-1277308.





## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

One of my most favorite movies is *Saving Private Ryan*. The story is based on the Niland Brothers. The story is an excellent example of what families during war-time are called upon to bear.

In the most dramatic scene, not one word is spoken. The actions of the characters in this opening scene, speak volumes of families' sacrifices. The movie opens with a Blue Star Flag hung in the window, being gently stirred by the wind.

The flag displays four stars, an indication that there are four members of the family serving the country. We see the mother of the four military members washing dishes. You get a sense that she feels something is wrong even before she notices a car speeding toward the house.

She goes outside to meet the visitors, realizing who they are and what they are there for. You could almost sense she is asking which one of her boys is it: Edward, Preston, Bob or Fritz? She collapses, and we know the news is grave.

For any member of the military who puts on the uniform, there is the possibility the nation may call upon you to make the ultimate sacrifice: to lay down your life in defense of your country. No other profession demands that. I am grateful for your commitment to defend that which we hold dear.

To all Veterans and your family members, Thank You for the sacrifice. This is the National Cemetery's pledge to every Veteran interred in our cemeteries: You will never be forgotten.

In addition, my staff and I would like to honor the men and women who perished 20 years ago in three acts of terrorism on September 11, 2001, and also the families and loved ones of the nearly 3,000 individuals who were killed...and the First Responders who answered the call on that fateful day: Lest We Forget.

**Greta L. Hamilton**

Director, Fort Rosecrans and  
Miramar National Cemeteries

## UDT/SEAL Monument Dedicated

Navy Special Operations veterans and guests gathered at Miramar National Cemetery to dedicate a first-in-the-nation monument to the men and women who sacrificed their lives in service to their country as members of Underwater Demotion Team, SEAL team and support units.

Featured speaker Capt. (SEAL) Todd Perry (below), former commander of the Center for SEAL and Special Warfare Combatant Craft Crew, paid tribute to those killed and wounded in combat and during special operations, to SEAL veterans and to their loved ones for support during their deployments.

"Our SEAL codes should inspire young prospective SEALs who will become the new guard and replacements for those who came before them," said veteran Navy SEAL Chief Mike Meoli, who spearheaded the effort to place the monument at Miramar and served as the master-of-ceremony.

Meoli, Perry, Tom Rice of Coronado, Calif., and Navy Warrant Officer (SEAL) Lance Cummings, representing the National Navy SEAL Museum in Fort Pierce, Fla., and

unveiled the black marble monument. Rice, a veteran of the 101st Airborne Division who parachuted into Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, celebrated his 100th birthday on Aug. 15 with a parachute jump over his Coronado hometown.

Greta L. Hamilton, director of Fort Rosecrans and Miramar National Cemeteries, welcomed the guests and noted that Miramar is the resting place for a number of notable veterans who served in conflicts from the Civil War, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and more recent conflicts.

The monument, which joins memorials to other military units along the Cemetery's Memorial Walk, commemorates the UDT and SEAL team members who were killed in America's conflicts since World War II. An inscription on the monument reads:

*In times of war and uncertainty,  
there is a special breed of U.S.  
Navy warriors who are called to  
instantly respond from the sea,  
from the air and on land. This  
monument is dedicated to U.S.  
Navy UDT/SEAL Teams. No sky  
too high, no sea too rough, no  
enemy too tough.*



Emblazoned on the monument are the UDT trident, anchor and pistol badge and the SEAL trident, anchor, pistol and eagle badge. "This memorial is primarily dedicated to our active duty teammates killed in action or training," Perry said. "It's about remembrance, resilience and rejuvenation. While we will never forget our losses, we know that our fallen would want us to be strong."

Your donations help sustain the Support Foundation's work

## CEMETERY EVENTS:

### Ex-POWs Mark 10th Anniversary of Statue in Remembrance

The American Ex-Prisoners of War (AXPOW), San Diego Chapter 1, gathered at Miramar National Cemetery on September 9 to honor America's former prisoners of war and commemorate the tenth anniversary of the installation of the POW statue entitled "The Liberation Moment."

The ceremony was open to the public.

Sculptor Richard Becker of Poway, Calif., (at right) created the statue and was the featured speaker at the ceremony.

The POW statue depicts the exhilaration of an emaciated prisoner of war emerging from captivity. A symbolic eagle soars from the broken fence and barbed wire surrounding the prisoner. Embedded in the statue's base are the seals of the nation's five armed services.

The base also serves as a time capsule, containing narratives provided by San Diego-area former prisoners of war. The time capsule will be opened in 2045, marking the 100 year after the end of World War II.

Becker was joined at the podium by Greta L. Hamilton, the director of Miramar National Cemetery, and members of the chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War, an Arlington, Texas-based nonprofit veterans' service organization.

Most members of AXPOW were imprisoned during World War II, but American prisoners also were held in captivity during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. One member of the San Diego chapter was held in captivity as a child in a Japanese prison camp in the Philippines from 1942 to 1945.



### Carillon rings again at Miramar Cemetery



After being knocked out for several months by an electrical problem, the Veterans Tribute Tower & Carillon bell resumed its hourly calls and patriotic repertoire throughout the day.

The Veterans Tribute Tower & Carillon was financed and erected by the Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation for the benefit of veterans, their families and visitors to the cemetery. It is unlike any other carillon at a VA-operated cemetery.

The 30-foot-tall Tribute Tower honors veterans of all U.S. military services and is dedicated to soldiers of the U.S. 15th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division, who fought in the June 1953 Battle of Outpost Harry during the Korean War.

Here is the daily music schedule:

0700	National Anthem
0830	U.S. Marine Corps Hymn
1210	Amazing Grace
1430	Patriotic random selections
1510	America the Beautiful
1610	Eternal Father Strong To Save (Navy Hymn)
1710	God Bless America
2000	Bugle Taps

## In Memoriam

**Stu Hedley**, a 20-year-old who survived the sinking of the battleship USS *West Virginia* (BB-48) in Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, died Aug. 4, 2021, at 99. He was a victim of COVID-19.

A past president of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, Hedley (at right) estimated he told the story of the "Day of Infamy" to more than 200,000 people, many of them schoolchildren. He was respected in San Diego and nationwide as a voice of his generation.

Fewer than 100 Pearl Harbor survivors remain alive today. Hedley, who enlisted in 1940 and retired in 1960 as a Navy chief petty officer, was laid to





## Donations Sought for Planned Amphitheater Seating, Landscaping

The Support Foundation is currently working with the Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Cemetery Administration, and the Miramar National Cemetery leadership to build the “Armed Forces Memorial Amphitheater.”

The goal of this project is to provide permanent guest seating and new landscaping for what now is the Flag Assembly Area. The Support Foundation must raise \$600,000 for construction of the Amphitheater and the VA-required perpetual maintenance fund.

No government funds will be used for this project.

Please consider a donation to help us reach the Support Foundation’s goal.



### Wreaths Across America comes to MNC

Dec. 18 is National Wreaths Across America Day.

Help Miramar National Cemetery honor local heroes! Sponsor a wreath today to be placed on a veteran's grave this December at Miramar National Cemetery. Visit WAA’s web link for Miramar at:

<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/CA0452>



### HOW TO REACH US

#### Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation

6906 Miramar Road, Ste. C-142  
San Diego, CA 92121

Online: <https://miramarcemetery.org/contact/>



## MNCSF 6th Annual Virtual Gala

By Sallay Kim, President & CEO

The Support Foundation Board was honored to host our 6th annual Virtual Gala this past July, an online fundraising event that encourages donors to participate from the comfort of home without the hassle of attending a dress-up party.

This year, our fundraising efforts focused on raising funds for the proposed construction of the Armed Forces Memorial Amphitheater, along with supporting other programs to enhance the beautiful grounds of Miramar National Cemetery.

Thanks to you, our continued donor supporters, our month-long Gala raised more than \$50,000 toward the Amphitheater project. We are extremely grateful for your kind generosity!

At this time, we are halfway to our goal of \$600,000 and continue actively fundraising to make the Amphitheater a reality.

By visiting [www.miramarcemetery.org](http://www.miramarcemetery.org) and clicking on the **DONATE NOW** box, you can make a meaningful contribution toward projects that honor our veterans, active duty members and their families.

The Support Foundation looks forward to receiving your contribution as a means of continuing to make Miramar National Cemetery a shrine to the sacrifices of our veterans and their families.

The Miramar National Cemetery Support Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) public charity. All donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable by law. **Tax ID #65-1277308**

You will receive a personal acknowledgment from the Support Foundation for your contributions. We thank you for your interest in these important veteran-oriented projects.