



Official Newsletter of the Michigan Company of Military Historians & Collectors  
**October 12, 2016**

*“Definition of the US Naval Academy: the only place in the world where they take away the basic rights of man and give them back to you one by one as privileges; an institution where you get a \$50,000 education shoved up your ass a nickel at a time; a four year breaststroke through a pool of shit.” Robert Timberg USNA 1964.*

*“(Guerrilla War) must have a friendly population, not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by 2% active in a striking force, and 98% passively sympathetic.” Colonel T.E. Lawrence, 1929.*

*“The military value of a partisan’s work is not measured by the amount of property destroyed or the number of men killed or captured, but by the number he keeps watching out for him.” Colonel John S. Mosby, War Reminiscences, 1887*

*“In peace we concentrate so much on tactics that we are apt to forget that it is merely the handmaiden of strategy.” Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart, Thoughts on War, 1944*

**Our October 12 speaker will be Fern O’Beshaw and her topic is Medal(s) of Honor**

***MEETINGS** take place the second Monday of every month at the **Riverfront Hotel Grand Rapids** 270 Ann St NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504 (616) 363-9001. Socializing begins at 6:00 (1800 hrs), dinner at 7:00 (1900 hrs), business meeting 7:15 (1915 hrs), and program at 8:00 (2000 hrs).*

GENERAL STAFF  
OFFICERS OF THE  
COMPANY

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- Executive Officer - Fern O’Beshaw
- Adjutant - Gregg Metternich
- Judge Advocate - Jay Stone
- Mess Officer - Mike Krushinsky
- Sgt-at-Arms - Richard Foster
- Editor Cannon Report - Kingman Davis
- Editor Emeritus - Jose Amoros
- Open Mess Chairman - Jay Stone
- Membership - Kinman Davis

**Company Notes**

- ◆ **Open Mess with Major Jack D. Segal USA (ret), November 12, 2016. Invitation and reservations on page 11 & 12.**
- ◆ **Company dues (\$40.00) Keep this organization active by submitting before the January 9th meeting.**

The editorial opinions and articles in *The Cannon Report* do not represent any official position of the Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors (MCMH&C) only the opinions of the editor. The MCMH&C is a non-partisan, non-ideological association. All members are welcome to submit material, letters, “For the Good of the Company items”, etc. Direct inquiries or comments to [kuziaks@me.com](mailto:kuziaks@me.com)

# Veterans (conclusion)

As WWII was being waged, Americans had two major concerns: winning the war; and the upcoming economic depression that would follow the war. This “Depression Psychosis,” a term coined by economist John Kenneth Galbraith, was a feeling that pervaded society. Fathers and mothers passed it on to their children, they were told not expect too much out of life. The conditions of the thirties would return and remain for good when the war ended and 16 million servicemen tried to join the work force. It was common wisdom and therefore true that the circumstances that arose after WWI would repeat themselves after WWII. Everyone expected veterans to be selling apples on the street. President Roosevelt shared that apprehension but he was too much a student of history to permit those events to repeat themselves. He started preparing for peace before America formally entered the war. A year before Pearl Harbor he signed the Selective Service Act that allowed, among other things and with certain limitations, returning veterans the right to retain their pre-induction jobs. By 1942 Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall was convinced by FDR to consider the problems of demobilization. Marshall did not forget the Bonus March nor the indifference and abysmal lack of planning that followed WWI.

Marshall’s selected subordinates did their peace-thinking quietly, but by 1943 many outside of government were writing about the peace after the war. Many Republicans, especially Congressman Bertrand W. Gerhart, a Californian, “were on guard to make certain FDR and his liberal friends did not use the postwar period to enact yet more New Deal social legislation, even if it was designed to help the veterans.” But the most egregious conservative, and welcomed by the Republicans, was the nominal Democratic Representative from Mississippi, chairman of the House Veterans Committee, John E. Rankin. As the new South was emerging and sending resourceful men to Washington who could put the past in its place and look to the future in a constructive way Rankin remained inflexibly dedicated to infusing, resuscitating, and retaining the bigotry pervading much of the country and especially in the South. An avowed segregationist he was clearly in a position to do great violence to any and all legislation aimed at helping veterans. He felt “any social legislation was communist inspired, organized and manipulated by Jews who were bitter, treasonous, and conspiratorial.” He saw himself as a great patriot and a conservative guardian of taxpayer funds that the government would use for nefarious purposes.

Early on Rankin believed that veterans benefits were a boon to the unmotivated. He saw the prospect of “exposing untutored veterans to the educational process as dangerous and unpatriotic for it would bring them in contact with college instructors” whom he saw “at best as excessively liberal and at worst the dupes and apologists of those ubiquitous Jews and communists.” He often said “I would rather send my child to a red schoolhouse than to a red school teacher.” Even worse was the idea of educating blacks who he felt were largely incapable of benefitting from the process. Rankin had found a sympathetic ear in none other than the president of the University of Chicago and former Dean of the Yale Law School, Robert M. Hutchins. Who believed that “colleges and universities would find themselves converted into educational hobo jungles. And veterans unable to get work and equally unable to resist putting pressure on those institutions would find themselves educational hoboes.”

Supporting FDR’s desire to establish benefits to see veterans through troublous time was an unlikely advocate in the form of the American Legion. The Legion had always been unreceptive to social programs but Harry W. Colmery, a former national commander of the Legion and former Republican national chairman knew that without proper planning soldiers would return to the savagely indifferent homecoming they had known after WWI. He and the Legion took it upon themselves to

write specific recommendations which outlined a broad program for veterans. The main purpose was to give the returning soldier a chance to reach the status he would have enjoyed if he had not served in the military. This prospect of a G.I. Bill was not greeted warmly on all fronts, and efforts were made to soften or reduce certain parts of the bill. Many conservative forces led by Gerhart and Rankin wanted to narrow the scope of the educational benefits of the bill and even eliminate certain veterans from receiving any benefits. They were afraid that “giving so many veterans benefits would decrease for the sweatshoppers an ample supply of cheap labor.” As reported in an editorial from **The Nation**, May 6, 1944, “the guarantee of \$15 a week unemployment insurance for 52 weeks would automatically put a floor under wages. The task of driving down wages will be especially difficult for Rankin and his kind if Negro as well as white soldiers have this protection, and thus it becomes impossible to use cheap Negro labor to beat down the wages of white.” Prior to the vote, Democratic Missouri Senator Bennett Champ Clark attacked Rankin and his conservative Republicans as “so unwilling to let Negro troops have the unemployment insurance to which they are entitled that they would be willing to withhold deserved benefits from all our troops.” **The Nation** continued: “the animosity toward the Negro is calculated to deprive all soldiers of unemployment benefits and thus ensure a large supply of labor at distress wages. White soldiers as well as black have a common interest in fighting this rancorous expression of all that is most vicious in our national life.”

Despite the attempts to weaken the bill, on June 22, 1944 Roosevelt signed the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act. This single piece of legislation emerged as the most enlightened and significant piece of social legislation ever written in this country, and it produced a generation of well-educated professionals, businessmen, and homeowners who became the basis for a greatly strengthened American middle class. The \$50 billion spent in the years after the war returned dividends far exceeding its initial cost. Roosevelt wanted results and not confrontation and in order to appease Rankin and his conservatives to support the bill he agreed to allow the individual states to administer the programs instead of the federal government. Thus, although a majority of veterans received benefits from the bill, many from the South, including whites and blacks, never achieved all the advantages given to the veterans from other regions. This one concession allowed some states to reduce veteran care to a post-WWI level and made the administration of the federal program a political plum for many elected officials in those states; a problem that continues to this day. One of the largest issues in contention was the definition of a war related injury. The awarding of The Purple Heart was the first criterion in determining eligibility, no Purple Heart, no medical benefits. Up to 2009 the Pentagon decided that it would not give the Purple Heart to war veterans who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorders because it was not a physical wound, shedding blood was the objective, but they would still allow treatment to continue at selected VA hospitals in states having the appropriate facilities.

In academia and amongst the clergy, many wondered if given the way returning soldiers were treated in the past, could the G.I.s handle their military service without doing damage to themselves or to the country. J. Gordon Chamberlin, Methodist pastor and educator “worried about the loss of old-fashioned virtue and suggested that veterans of the war might spread their sinful ways to civilians who had not been contaminated by the war.” He predicted that “the end of the war will surely bring a slump of morals and morale. The grass may cover war’s scars on earth; but the spirits of men, once blighted by war, will pass on that blight.” In 1944 Professor Willard Waller of Columbia University wrote a sentiment that still resonates today: “our traditional policy has been to neglect our veterans for a period of years after the end of a major war. During this period of neglect, uninjured veterans take up the broken threads of their lives as best they can, struggle against discouragements to compete successfully, force their way into economic, social and political life, while the injured, the maimed, gassed, tubercular, and mentally unbalanced contrive to live by such little jobs as their conditions

permit, learn to beg on the streets, and become paupers, steal and are sent to prison, or else just starve and are forgotten together with their widows and dependents. Then, after some years, the veterans suddenly emerge as a powerful political force. Still burning with resentment over their wrongs, they see to it that ample provision is made for the unfortunate veterans. But it is too late then to do justice, too late to help many who have died or been ruined beyond hope of reclamation.”

The notion that the soldier had somehow become a different sort of person who could return to the civilian life he left behind only with great and difficult effort was repeated in the press and books (this attitude was shared by many after Vietnam). It wasn't only that the soldier might have been wounded in battle or emotionally damaged but also by what he had seen and done. Soldiers were perceived almost as members of a monolith. They would think alike, vote alike and act in certain prescribed patterns. Experts wrote in late 1943 that “if the Presidential election were being held at this time, the outcome would...be determined by the soldier vote. That vexed the Republicans, who already suspected that the soldiers were radical Democrats.” Much like their response to the post-WWI immigration of Europeans of questionable ancestry that led to the passage of the abominable Immigration Act of 1924. Many in government were so afraid of this apparent bloc of voters that legislation was enacted enabling states to prohibit the “Army and Navy from distributing any news or books containing political argument or propaganda of any kind designed or calculated to affect the result of (a Federal) election.” Such a preposterous law deserved to be obeyed in a preposterous manner, and the military did not miss the spirit of the thing. The Army banned **The Republic** of Plato, a harmless biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Charles A. Beard's dialogues on American constitutional government.

To counter such unsubstantiated pessimism Willard Waller of Columbia University wrote that “the ordinary soldier only wanted his girl, his job and a little home. The returning G.I. would return as he left: friendly, generous, easy-going, brave, and as a citizen soldier of America.” But the situation was not all rosy in the states. Even though America had not been bombed and its citizens had been denied little, some of their neighbors had been killed or wounded. Combat deaths were 292,131, non-combat deaths totaled 115,185 with another 670,846 wounded. On the home front, the factories making armaments lost nearly 300,000 workers to fatal accidents and another million were permanently disabled. Sacrifices had been made by men and women no matter where they served.

An interesting afterword to veteran benefits reveals two items. First was inclusion of women into the benefit program. Several hurdles had to be overcome. Women who had served in the military, excluding nurses, were declared by the Government as not having been in the military. It took over 30 years after the conclusion of WWII for the fact to be acknowledged that if you experienced military service you were entitled to status as a veteran. And even then the benefits allowed did not proscribe treatments specific to females. Their prostates could be examined but no provision was made for gynecological examinations whatsoever. To this day it continues to be a work in progress where applicants are still dependent upon the various states to perform the federal determinations. Veterans still have yet to be treated as an asset that should receive care for injuries incurred while serving. But the feeling persists in many quarters that it is the role of government to limit its liability in treating injuries that have been determined to be combat related. It took many years for agent orange to be considered an affliction suffered while in a combat zone and thus covered by government benefits. Both political parties have been remiss in providing adequate care for veterans. But I found the most disturbing pronouncement made by a past president who claimed to support the military while his Director of the Budget, David Stockman was working to cut military pensions and medical benefits. We tend to forget that building a strong military requires us to set aside funds for the care and maintenance of those who serve. Unfortunately veteran care is not a defense industry but an expense that can be cut.

# Hello Girls

Hello Girls was the colloquial name for American bilingual female switchboard operators in World War I, formally known as the Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit. During World War I, these switchboard operators were sworn into the U.S. Army Signal Corps. The history of the "Hello Girls" begins in late 1917, when General Pershing's appeal for bilingual telephone-switchboard operators was published in newspapers throughout the United States. It was called an "Emergency Appeal" and specifically requested that women, who held the position of switchboard operators exclusively in the new Bell Telephone Company, be sworn into the U.S. Army Signal Corps. Pershing wanted women to be sworn into the Army as an emergency need, because, he stated, women have the patience and perseverance to do long, arduous detailed work. He had found that the men in the Signal Corps had difficulty operating the switchboards and for this reason he wanted them to be in the field, constantly stringing the wire necessary for communication from the trenches to the A.E.F headquarters at Chaumont. It would be the first time in the history of warfare that soldiers in the front-lines were connected to the General command. Over 7,000 women applied, but only 450 were accepted.

These women were to be subjected to all Army regulations, including Court-Martial, as well as another ten rules designed to assure their moral character. After training, the women purchased their Army regulation uniform complete with "U.S." crests, Signal Corps insignia, and dog tags. Arm patches designating positions were issued. In the spring of 1918, the first thirty-three operators were on their way to Europe. They were issued gas masks and steel helmets. The operators voices were a welcome sound to the men who used the Signal Corps telephone system. Married women were accepted, if not married to anyone serving overseas -- they were there to work. For this reason it was expected they be twenty-five years old. There were, however, few among the 700 volunteers throughout the Bell Telephone system who spoke French. In selecting the first 300, the age requirement and even the switchboard training was waived; most notably for two sisters, Louise and Raymonde LeBreton. They had moved from France to the United States, when their widowed mother had married an American, they were 18 and 20. From Marine City, Michigan, a 19-year-old American of French-Canadian origin named Oleda Joure also volunteered. She had been trained by Bell Telephone to train women to operate switchboards when she was 16 and what was at that time a rare high-school graduate.

Oleda had played piano for dance-bands throughout the thumb district of Michigan. For six years, since the age of thirteen, she could play all the popular music from the WWI period.. While sailing "Over There" on the S.S. Olympic, which had been placed in quarantine at Southampton, England for two weeks because of the Spanish Influenza pandemic, she entertained the troops. When she was asked by the Red Cross official to accept a position touring camps and hospitals to entertain, she replied that she was in the Army under orders for the duration of the War.

She was assigned to General Pershing's American Expeditionary Force Headquarters. Her service extended a year after the Armistice in order to operate the telephones for the arrangements to return the troops home; there was no question but that she was there under orders for the duration. Oleda, and all the U.S. Army Signal Corps operators, stood inspection in the soldiers' ranks, for General Pershing's visiting dignitaries. She remembered President Wilson, Marechal Foch and the Prince of Wales. During one leave, which was given on pass exactly the same way as to any soldier, Oleda travelled to Bordeaux to meet her brother Wallace who was a member of the Army's Barber Shop quartet which travelled through France entertaining the troops.

When she returned to civilian life, Oleda Joure continued her dual-career as a training supervisor for Bell Telephone in Michigan and professional piano-player with dance bands, until 1933, when she married Athanasius A. Christides. Her tie to France was renewed when Chris was sent to Paris in the 1950s for 8 years as the U. S. Treasury Representative to the new Common Market and Interpol. When the couple visited the cafes in St. Germain des Pres, French neighbors often requested that Oleda play the old WWI songs, that had united the Allies in spirit for the long, hard battles of 1918.

However, when the Hello Girls had returned to the United States and applied for their honorable discharges, they were told they could not have been sworn into the Army, because U.S. Army regulations stated that only "males" were sworn in, and nothing was said about "persons," as U.S. Navy regulations had. "Yeomanettes" who served in the Navy during WWI, were therefore considered veterans, but not the U.S. Army Signal Corps women, who had also served over there. From 1930 to 1978, the "Hello Girls," led by Merle Egan-Anderson of Helena, Montana, introduced bills into Congress, which had actually given Citations for Bravery to ten of the women who had operated the switchboards behind the front-lines during the battle of St. Mihiel. The building they were in had caught fire from the bombardment and they had been ordered to leave the switchboards. They believed the order for their safety to have been in consideration of their sex and so continued to operate until the fire was so threatening that GHQ threatened court martial if they did not leave their posts. They were back in an hour after the fire was put out.

Seattle lawyer, Mark Hough, volunteered his services to Merle Anderson, in 1976, and Oleda's daughter, Michelle Christides, then Assistant Professor of Western Civilization at California State University, Sonoma. The Hutchins School of Liberal Studies at CSU researched the historical information on the Hello Girls' and their contribution to victory. They had also received help from several in Congress who introduced a bill that gave them recognition of their status on the 60th

anniversary of the Armistice, as the first women veterans of the U. S. Army.

For the seventy women still alive, there was nation-wide coverage in the newspapers, but their story still has not been told in the history books. Each remaining "Hello Girl" was visited by a general in the U. S. Army and presented with the long sought Honorable Discharge in a ceremony at their home.



# WASPS

The Women Air Force Service Pilots (actually "Women's Army Service Pilots" or WASP) was a paramilitary aviation organization. The WASP's predecessors, the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) and the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) were organized separately in September 1942. They were the pioneering organizations of civilian female pilots, employed to fly military aircraft under the direction of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II. The WFTD and WAFS were merged on August 5, 1943, to create the paramilitary WASP organization. The female pilots of the WASP ended up numbering 1,074, each freeing a male pilot for combat service and duties. They flew over 60 million miles in every type of military aircraft. The WASPs were finally granted veteran status in 1977, and given the Congressional Gold Medal in 2009.

When a call went out for women pilots to train and and fly for the US Army Air Corps, 25,000 applications were received. Those who met the qualifications for training numbered only 1,830. Ultimately, 1,074 would graduate from the program earning their silver wings. Initially, trainees had to have 200 flying hours and be between the ages of 21 and 35. They also had to be American citizens, high school graduates, and able to pass the written cadet exam, as well as an army physical. The first batch of applications was sent to 150 women, 130 of whom responded immediately. Thirty were selected for the first class and notified by telegram to report to a Houston, Texas airport at their own expense.

When they arrived at Houston Municipal Airport, Jacqueline Cochran (May 11, 1906 – August 9, 1980) was there to greet them. She was a pioneer in the field of American aviation, considered to be one of the most gifted racing pilots of her generation. She explained that their training was classified, that there would be no publicity and no glory, just hard work and that the future of women in military aviation depended on their success. The commanding officer, a male captain, not too pleased with his new assignment told the group: "If you think you're hot shots, I advise you to forget it. You are here to learn the way the Army flies." Up before dawn, the trainees spent nearly 12 hours a day at the airfield. Half their day was spent flying in very crowded airspaces doing stalls, spins, turns, take offs, and landings. While the other half of the day was spent in ground school studying navigation, flight training, physics, aerodynamics, electronics, mathematics, weather, military law, communications, meteorology, Morse code, and aircraft mechanics. By the time they graduated, the women had spent 560 hours in ground school and 210 hours in flight training.

They followed a strict military regimen; barracks were six to a room and one bathroom for 12 girls. They marched everywhere, did calisthenics, and ended their day with taps. They were ladies with a purpose, and took part in parades, infantry drills, barracks inspection, and oaths of allegiance just like the male cadets. While the first classes of the Women's Training Flying Detachment were making the best of the situation at Houston, Cochran was searching for a better location to conduct training. Trainees at Houston rode fifteen miles to and from the field in "Fifinella buses" (cattle trucks) before breakfast and after supper each day. They remained at the field the entire day dressed



in the same zoot suits which they donned before daybreak. "Cochran looked for a facility with centralized housing on base, classrooms, repair hangars, a dining hall, increased air space, a fenced perimeter and the availability of BT-13s and AT-6s for advanced training. Eventually she found exactly what she was looking for at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. By February 1943, the program had transitioned to Avenger Field. In the end, 18 classes would pass through the gates receiving training the Army way, before shipping off to other destinations throughout the country.

From 1942 through 1944 the Women Air force Service Pilots flew every type of aircraft the Army Air Force used during World War II, and were stationed at 120 bases across the United States flying over 60 million miles. In less than one year, the 35 WAFS/WASP stationed at New Castle Army Air Force Base in Delaware delivered 3,000 planes. During the last six months of 1944, the WASP ferried every P-47 produced by Republic Aviation in Long Island, New York.

By March 1944, Congress was considering legislation to militarize the WASP. A long time objective of both Cochran and Hap Arnold, the general who believed the WASP should be brought into the Army Air Forces under direct commission. As civilians, the WASP had no insurance, no burial and death benefits, no military rank, and no Veterans benefits. By contrast, women serving in other branches of the military including the WACs, WAVES, SPARS, and Marines had all these. Throughout the program, the WASP believed they would be granted military status. It never occurred to them they would end their service the same way they started – as civilians.

On June 21, 1944, a bill for the militarization of the WASP was defeated in Congress by only 19 votes. On October 3rd, Cochran sent a letter to all WASPs informing them of the program's pending deactivation. The War Department announced that the decision to disband the WASP was based on indications that by the end of the year there would be sufficient male pilots to fill flying assignments in the US and overseas.

One minute past midnight on December 20th, 1944, the WASPs were officially just women. They were supposed to be provided transportation home, or at least officially as close to home as possible. Some bases were grateful to have had them, sorry to see them go, and glad to be able to offer them transport. Others only saw them as far as the gates. The rest of the way would be up to the women. Deactivation of the WASP was costly for both the war effort and taxpayers. It deprived the Air Transport Command of about 200 expert ferrying pilots, tow target pilots, test pilots, and administrative pilots. It cost a million dollars to train men to do women's jobs, and it hampered the delivery of planes during the four to six months necessary to train men. It also prevented men who were being transferred to ferry duty from completing training for specialized combat missions. Women pilots had 18 months experience that could not be replaced and 50 percent of pursuit ferrying in the United States had been done by the WASP.

On December 7th, 1944, the last group of women pilots graduated from the program, class 44-10. General Arnold was present at Avenger Field for the ceremony. During his speech, Arnold said, "You and more than 900 of your sisters have shown that you can fly wingtip to wingtip with your brothers. If ever there was any doubt in anyone's mind that women can become skillful pilots, the WASP have dispelled that doubt. I want to stress how valuable I believe the whole WASP program has been for the country. We know that you can handle our greatest fighters, our heaviest bombers; we know that you are capable of ferrying, target towing, and test flying. So, on this last graduation day, I salute you and all WASP. We of the Army Air Force are proud of you; we will never forget our debt to you."

A sad part to this story is that there were several cases where obvious sabotage was discovered in planes being prepared to be flown by women. No one was ever investigated due to the misogynistic attitude of the period. What's disturbing is how many instances went undiscovered and losses over water were never investigated.



# IHTFP

Robert Timberg (USNA '64), a Marine combat veteran who became an author and journalist after his agonizing recovery from disfiguring scars inflicted by a land mine in Vietnam, died on Sept. 6, in Annapolis, Md. He was 76. The cause was respiratory failure, as disclosed by his son Craig, a reporter for *The Washington Post*.

Mr. Timberg's best-known book, "*The Nightingale's Song*," wove together the lives of five of his fellow Naval Academy graduates who went to war in Vietnam. They included Senator John McCain ('58), the Arizona Republican who endured torture by the North Vietnamese; Jim Webb ('68), a former Navy secretary and senator from Virginia; and three others who became enmeshed in the Iran-contra scandal during the Reagan administration in the 1980s: Lt. Col. Oliver L. North ('68) of the Marines and two former White House national security advisers, John M. Poindexter ('58) and Robert C. McFarlane ('59).

The scandal involved shipping arms to Tehran to win the freedom of hostages in Lebanon while using some of the proceeds to fund C.I.A.-backed rebels fighting the leftist government of Nicaragua. "They are secret sharers," Mr. Timberg wrote in his 1995 book, "men whose experiences at Annapolis and during the Vietnam War and its aftermath illuminate a generation, or a portion of a generation — of those who went." He added: "They shared a seemingly unassailable certainty. They believed in America," but their beliefs manifested themselves in different behaviors. Reviewing the book in *The New York Times*, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt wrote that Mr. Timberg had sought to "dramatize the sense of betrayal these men felt when America turned against the Vietnam War and spell out the tragic consequences of their feelings."



Mr. Timberg also wrote a memoir, "*Blue-Eyed Boy*," in which he recounted the explosion that destroyed his armored personnel carrier and disfigured his face when he was 26, just days before he was to return home on an extended leave. He underwent 35 reconstructive operations.

"I suspect there's something essentially human about what I fought my way through," Mr. Timberg wrote. "Somewhere buried in my memory, hidden beneath this terrible mask of scar tissue. I want to remember how I decided not to die. To not let my future die."

Robert Richard Timberg was born on June 16, 1940, in Miami Beach, the son of Samuel Timberg, a vaudevillian and composer, and the former Rosemarie Sinnott, a dancer. After they divorced, he was raised by his mother in Queens, got his diploma from Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan and, after attending St. John's University, graduated from the Naval Academy in 1964. He served with the First Marine Division in Vietnam starting in 1966 and left as a captain. After his discharge from the Marines, Mr. Timberg studied journalism and earned a master's degree in 1969 from Stanford University.

His wife had suggested that he consider becoming a newspaperman. "I said, 'You've got to be kidding, you know I've never had a word in print in my life, not even kindergarten or high school — nowhere,'" Mr. Timberg told NPR in 2014. "She said, 'Yeah, but you wrote good letters to me'" from Vietnam. He began his career at *The Evening Capital* in Annapolis before joining *The Baltimore Evening Sun* in 1973. After studying at Harvard under a Nieman fellowship, he returned to cover



Congress for *The Evening Sun's* sister paper, *The Sun*. He retired in 2005 as deputy Washington bureau chief. In “*Blue-Eyed Boy*,” Mr. Timberg invoked the “relief at having defied death and a kind of macho attitude” that a seriously injured serviceman like him feels. He added: “Those are honest emotions, but they are situational. The day ultimately comes when the attention diminishes, the good fellowship is no more because he is mostly alone, and he is faced with the chilling prospect of a lifetime of coping with what war has turned him into.”

IHTFP (I Hate This F\*\*king Place) is the title of the first part of *The Nightingale's Song*. It is the equivalent of a secret handshake between Annapolis men. It's so common that the actual words are superfluous. Midshipmen mean it when they

say it, if only for the moment. Old grads routinely fall back on it when nostalgia threatens to smother the enormous complexity of their feelings for a place where they had once been young and whole. The Academy is a place of tradition, pride and honor that over the years has turned out many of the nation's finest and most heroic combat leaders and public servants. The price is high: their youth, at times it seemed their soul, to work for a slogan—duty, honor, country. More was expected of them than of other young men. They were trained to shoulder a daunting responsibility, leading their men in combat, bravely, wisely, and with a minimum loss of life.

Timberg does an outstanding job documenting the life of five Midshipmen from the Academy, to Vietnam, and afterwards. Casting all five men as metaphors for a legion of well-meaning if ill-starred warriors. He probes the fault line between those who fought the war and those who used money, wit, and connections to avoid battle; illuminating the flip side of the Vietnam generation—those who went. He traces each one from Poindexter, number one in his class, to fellow classmate McCain, 889 out of 894. He writes of the shared experiences of Webb and North, both class of 1968 and their later meetings in the halls of government. There is a great deal of history presented both military and political and how a civilian staffed government operates with former military men as part of the decision making process alongside men who had studiously avoided any military obligations.

The actions of human behavior Timberg presents through many hours of interviews with all five subjects goes a long way to explain the happenings not only in Vietnam but also the Reagan Administration when Academy men respond to government actions from their different positions; those who work for the administration and those who are entrusted to represent the public. This book makes a significant contribution to recent history and is a fascinating chronicle of the human element behind all that history. It's a story of ambition and sacrifice and how good men can go bad and not-so-good men can skate away. He is brutally frank and wields his pen like a K-bar combat knife.

This is an amazing piece of work that will make you cry over the descriptions of bravery so bold and so big that you wonder how our country deserves such men who step up to the plate in times of trouble. It is about courage and cowardice, honor and betrayal, suffering and death, and the indomitability of the human spirit. The reader may not agree with all of Timberg's judgements in explaining the hubris and secrecy of the Reagan White House but he presents a gripping narration of the Iran-Contra affair and how five former naval and marine officers followed a tortuous path that culminated in the halls of Congress. Just as military after action reports at the company level often show more about a battle than the grand, official version, this book might well be assigned by college teachers as a poignant complement to the history of that era.

# OPEN MESS 2016

You are cordially invited to attend the 2014 Open Mess of the Michigan Company of Military Historians and Collectors. Join us for a unique social evening patterned after a traditional British regimental “Ladies Dining-In-Night,” with a bit of ceremony, a piper and a round of toasts, along with a great dinner, good company and an entertaining guest speaker.

**THE DATE:** Saturday, November 12, 2016

**THE PLACE:** Boulder Creek Golf Club  
5750 Brewer NE  
Belmont, Michigan 49306  
(616)363-1330

**THE TIME:** Cocktails at 6:00 PM  
Dinner at 7:00 PM

**THE PIPER:** Rev. Thomas Bradley

**THE DRESS:** Gentlemen: Suit or Jacket  
Ladies: Semi-Formal Attire

**THE SPEAKER: Jack D. Segal-Major-USA (ret.) and Consul-General of the USA (ret.)**

A reading of this year’s Open Mess guest presenter’s bio arguably makes him a candidate for a genuine ‘most interesting man in the world’. The guy in the beer commercial doesn’t hold a candle by comparison.

Jack’s military career began after being commissioned as an Army infantry officer upon completion of Infantry Officer Candidate School. During two tours of Vietnam Jack was awarded a Bronze Star and two Meritorious Service Medals. After Vietnam Jack’s Army career continued in Germany in various capacities.

In 1977, Jack resigned his Army commission and became a Foreign Services Officer with the U.S. diplomatic service. Eventually, Jack became involved in the Strategic

**2016 OPEN MESS RESERVATION FORM**

**THE COST: \$50.00 per person for reservation with payment received BY Monday, Nov.7  
Thereafter, it is \$60.00 per person. We do NOT cash the checks until after the  
event !**

**Please, there is no smoking in the dining room.**

**THE MENU: Boulder Creek Combo:  
6 ounce prime rib and 4 ounce herb seasoned grilled boneless chicken breast served  
with baked potato, salad and vegetable followed by dessert.**

**YES, I will be there. Enclosed is my payment of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_places. I will be  
accompanied by the following persons listed below. Please PRINT their names. This MUST be  
filled out.**

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Sorry, I cannot attend this year.

Please mail this completed form with check made out to MCMHC and send to:

Mr. Jay Stone  
7170 Belmont Ave NE  
Belmont, Michigan 49306

If you have any questions, please call Mike Khrushinsky at (616) 677-1785 or Jay Stone at (616)  
866-9047. Feel free to visit the MCMHC homepage at:

[www.thecannonreport.org](http://www.thecannonreport.org) where you can print off additional invitation and response forms.

**SEE YOU THERE**