



Friendship
BAPTIST
CHURCH

VOLUME 13, ISSUE 1

Inside this Issue:

Wingman

On a pleasant afternoon in 1995, Kenneth Schechter stands at attention during a solemn ceremony held aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Constellation* while in port in San Diego, CA, but his thoughts are wandering. It is a bittersweet day for Schechter as he recalls images from over 40 years past on a carrier, much like this one. Schechter's memory transports him back to a time when he was a young Ensign, not long out of flight school. He can still recall the images of his wingman and best friend, then Lieutenant Junior Grade Howard Thayer as they shook hands and each then climbed aboard their A-1 "Skyraider" aircraft.



Ken Schechter (right) reunited with Howard Thayer (c. 1960)

On this cool March morning in 1952, the Fighter Squadron 194 "Yellow Devils" assigned to the aircraft carrier *USS Valley Forge* had been given a mission to bomb a marshalling yard and railroad tracks in Wongsang-Ni, North Korea. Only eight aircraft were scheduled for the mission and Schechter was listed as "standby." When one of the planes had to be dropped because of a mechanical issue, Schechter moved his aircraft into position to replace it. This was to be his 27th bombing mission and he was eager to get airborne. While flying to the bombing site, he acclimated to his position in the formation and was comforted by the fact that Howard Thayer was also on the mission.

The planes began their bomb run at 1200 feet as anti-aircraft shells began exploding all

Colonel Steve Martin

around them. Suddenly, an anti-aircraft shell exploded, blowing away the canopy in Schechter's cockpit. Instinctively, he pulled back on the stick to gain altitude and then he passed out. When Schechter regained consciousness, his plane was climbing, and 200-mph wind was buffeting him. The pain to his face and head was searing. Then he began to realize the degree to which he was injured. Calling out over the radio, "I'm blind! For God's sake, help me! I'm blind."

When Howard Thayer heard the call on the radio, he immediately tried to locate the pilot in distress. He saw Schechter's Skyraider climbing towards a heavy cloud bank at 10,000 feet. If the plane made it into the cloud bank, he would be out of view and potentially lost. Thayer called over the radio: "Plane in trouble, rock your wings. Plane in trouble, rock your wings." Schechter snapped out of his semi-conscious state and rocked his wings. Thayer, now knowing that the pilot could hear his commands told him to "lower your pitch altitude." When the plane leveled out, Thayer recognized his friend Schechter, and with the canopy gone he could see his face was severely bleeding with blood in the cockpit and tracing down the side of the plane in the slipstream. Viewing the damage, Thayer was amazed that Schechter was still alive.

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MILITARY TERMS, ABBREVIATIONS, AND ACRONYMS

objective area: a geographical area, defined by competent authority, within which is located an objective to be captured or reached by the military forces (a.k.a. "OA")

obstacle belt: a brigade-level command and control measure, normally given graphically, to show where within an obstacle zone the ground tactical commander plans to limit friendly obstacle employment and focus the defense

office hours: euphemism referring to any Non-Judicial Punishment under Article 15 of the UCMJ

Pray for our Military Family:

- ◆ **Chaplain Brian Palmer and Family** - US Army, serving the Lord in Hawaii
- ◆ **Merry Dare Goodwin** - US Navy, serving aboard the *USS Decatur*
- ◆ **Justin & Kimberly Reece** - US Air Force, stationed at Pensacola NAS
- ◆ **Timothy & Hope Robinson** - USMC, stationed at Camp Lejeune, NC
- ◆ **Sgt Aaron David de Serres** - USMC, deployed in the Middle East
- ◆ **2nd Lt Matthew Parker** - active duty at USSTRATCOM



Wingman

Thayer began talking to his friend and giving him flight commands to keep the aircraft level and flying back toward safety. With the canopy gone, the engine noise and the sound of the wind whipping through the cockpit made it difficult for Schechter to hear via the radio. At times, Thayer was yelling to make sure his voice carried over the noise. Occasionally, Schechter would lose consciousness for a moment which revealed to Thayer that returning to the carrier would have to come off the table in their limited list of options. First, he had Schechter release his bombs to lighten the load on the aircraft. Thayer then suggested that Schechter bail out over the Sea of Japan where hopefully a destroyer could quickly retrieve him and get him immediate medical attention. Schechter declined that option remembering that a fellow member of their squadron had recently died after bailing out over the Sea of Japan - his survival equipment proved inadequate in the icy waters. With Schechter still drifting in and out of consciousness, Thayer decided to try and reach a nearby Marine base



Schechter boaring his A-1 Skyraider (c. 1950)

30 miles behind the front. The base had a 2000-foot runway nicknamed the "Jersey Bounce" because it was a rutted dirt landing strip that ended with a "rough landing" even in the best of conditions. At this point, it was the only available option.

Thayer stayed lined up with Schechter's wing, trying to keep him alert by talking to him. As they approached the dirt landing strip, they discussed the landing over the radio. Although Thayer thought Schechter should lower his landing gear, the wounded pilot felt that his chances were better if he performed a belly landing on such a short and rough landing strip. Thayer talked Schechter through each maneuver as Schechter brought the plane in to land. "We're heading straight," said Thayer. "Hundred yards to runway. You're 50 feet off the ground. You're level. You're OK. You're over the runway. Twenty feet. Kill a little. You're setting down. OK, OK, OK. Cut!" As the plane skidded to a halt, Schechter was pulled from the damaged aircraft and shortly thereafter transported by helicopter to a medical facility. Schechter was blind in both eyes for a short period of time, but forever lost sight in his right eye

which ended both his military and aviation career. Other than for his loss of eyesight in one eye, Schechter completely recovered from his harrowing ordeal.

The aviation feat performed by both Kenneth Schechter and Howard Thayer is singularly distinctive in the history of military aviation. The story was re-enacted in the 1954 film, "Men of the Fighting Lady," although Hollywood took somewhat liberal license with the storyline. Aviators who perform feats of this extraordinary nature normally have awards given to them. However, the paperwork for Schechter and Thayer had been lost in "the system" shortly after the events of that cool March morning. At the time, there were other pressing issues, and as time passed, thoughts of any military awards were long forgotten. Tragically, Howard Thayer died in a military plane crash in 1961. As Schechter approached his mid-sixties, he began to think about his military career. He had told his story to journalists and authors. Each would ask about what type of military award he and Thayer had received. He contacted his congressman U.S. Rep Carlos Moorhead who pursued the issue through military channels until Kenneth Schechter was finally awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

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Five Things Spouses Should Do in the New Year (Part 1)

article by Kristen Smith

Editor's Note: We're adapting this two-part feature from a "SpouseBuzz" article by military spouse and author Kristen Smith.

Every January, the magazine covers and talk shows are jammed with tips and tricks for making this the year those New Year's resolutions finally stick.

But maybe we're going about it all wrong. Instead of aiming for radical life changes or checking something off the to-do list, we could make the choice to explore new experiences. As military spouses, it is easy to get so caught up in handling the curve balls that our life inevitably throws that we forget to enjoy the place we're in right now.

1. Set Goals You Want to (and Can!) Reach.

While the beginning of the year is the traditional time to make resolutions about life changes, they don't have the best track record for getting done. This New Year, resolve to act. Instead of saying you want to lose 30 pounds before next Thanksgiving, set a goal for getting to the gym at least

twice a week. The goal is in the action instead of the result, giving you a much better chance of sticking with it.

2. Discover and Learn Something New

Long after we've finished with school, there are distinct benefits to intentionally learning something new. Perhaps you have always been interested in the history of Australia? Make this the year you read a book and learn about it. Or, take a class on graphic design or creative

writing at the local college. According to Gary Marcus, cognitive psychologist, "research suggests that the greater sense of purpose and personal growth associated with [learning something new] correlates with lower cortisol levels, better immune function and more efficient sleep." I'm pretty sure every single one of us could stand to be better rested.

"Before you know it, five Januaries have passed us by, and we're still dragging our feet. This year, DO. DO something."



3. Cross an Item Off Your Bucket List

Every January starts off with a clean slate, and, usually, a long list of goals and desires we want to check off, but never get around to actually doing. Before you know it, five Januaries have passed us by, and we're still dragging our feet. This year, DO. DO something. DO something you've been putting off because you didn't have time, or money or courage.

Now, I'm not encouraging you to run off to the Caribbean to become a dolphin trainer like the heroine in that book you read in 4th grade. But, if you've always loved marine life perhaps there is an opportunity closer to home through a local college or an aquarium's community outreach program. It could be as simple as cooking classes or playing tennis in a local adult league. Small regrets about not following through with something weigh us down. This year, cross something off the "I wish I'd done" list.

CONTINUED NEXT MONTH

Editor's Note: This is the second installment of our multi-part series on financial matters from a military perspective.

Many people associate estate planning with the distribution of their assets at their death. However, it is equally important to prepare for your potential incapacity when you are unable to make your own decisions due to an accident, health concerns, etc. This type of planning involves deciding who you want to make decision on your behalf if you are unable to do so.

Incapacity planning involves the following estate planning documents:

- **Durable Power of Attorney:** Appoint someone to act on your behalf, known as an Agent or Attorney-in-fact. This individual will be able to perform financial and



legally binding transactions on your behalf.

- **Advance Healthcare Directives** - these include the following:

» **Health Care Power of Attorney:** Appoint someone as your agent to make medical decisions for you any time you are unable to make your own treatment decisions, not just end of life.

» **Living Will:** Decide what type of life sustaining medical treatment you receive when there is no hope of your recovery.

- **Revocable Living Trust (RLT):** Transfer assets to the trust while continuing to manage the assets yourself, as trustee. In your trust document, you will appoint a successor trustee to act on your behalf if you become incapacitated.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss your estate and incapacity planning goals, contact your local financial planner or visit your local financial institution or credit union branch.

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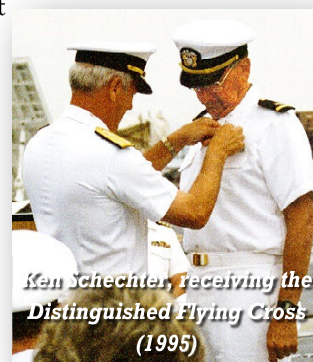
Wingman

Standing on the deck of the *USS Constellation* in 1995 (*far right*), Kenneth Schechter was officially awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for an act of heroism and extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. During his acceptance speech, Schechter addressed Howard Thayer's three adult children who were present for the ceremony: "I hope you will see this ceremony as your ceremony, because that's certainly the way I feel about it." In 2009, Howard Thayer was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his heroic and extraordinary actions on that cool March morning in 1952.

There is a brotherhood that develops between those who face danger together. William Shakespeare aptly wrote: "We few. We happy few. We band of brothers, for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother" (Henry V). As one soldier looks out for another, a strong bond of brotherhood is formed that is deep and enduring. In combat aviation, the term "wingman" refers to the pilot at your side who is guarding your blind spot and able to help you in moments of great danger. A wingman is a friend who runs to your side in trouble rather than turning away to personal safety; a wingman is concerned that you return

home safely; a wingman exposes themselves to great danger to ensure you survive; and a wingman will themselves die rather than allow you to falter in combat. There is no closer friend in battle.

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US Army Units Explained (Part 1)

Editor's Note: Have you ever wondered how many squads are

in a platoon? This month we begin a multi-part series on the various units in the US Army, what they mean, and how they're put together.

If you don't have a connection to the U.S. Army, the size of Army units can be difficult to grasp and therefore, the human scale of war. While figures are flexible and can vary by war and assignment (armored, artillery, cavalry, ranger), here are some explanations about how the U.S. Army is organized.

U.S. ARMY

The U.S. Army is made up of its active regular Army and two reserve components: the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve. Since the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army has

been all-volunteer— meaning no one is drafted—and as always, everyone receives a salary.

Military Leaders in Vietnam

The three commanders of the U.S. forces during the Vietnam War were:
Gen. William Westmoreland (1964-1968)
Gen. Creighton Abrams (1968-1972)
Gen. Frederick Weyand, (1972-1973)

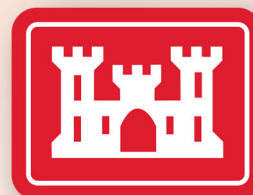
FIELD ARMY

A field army is the U.S. Army's largest unit structure (50,000 and more soldiers). The last use of a field army was in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm, which took place in Iraq, Kuwait, and outlying areas of Saudi Arabia. A four-star general commands a field army. The five-star rank of general has only been issued in times of war and the last to hold it was Gen-

eral Omar Bradley, who died in 1981. The other five-star generals in the history of the U.S. Army were Generals Marshall, MacArthur, Eisenhower, and Arnold.

CORPS

The corps is treated as an operational unit of employment by the U.S. Army and can be comprised of 20,000-45,000 soldiers. Corps are commanded by the rank of Lieutenant General (LTG), a three-star general. (*At right: insignia of the US Army Corps of Engineers.*)



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JANUARY BIRTHDAYS:

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- Ethan Stewart - 11
- Dan Reece - 13
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THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY

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10 Jan 1738 - Birth of American Revolutionary War hero Ethan Allen, commander of the Green Mountain Boys. At the outbreak of the war in 1775, Allen led the expedition that captured Fort Ticonderoga (the first American colonial victory of the war). He

was said to be a staunch patriot who did not know the meaning of fear. Washington said of Allen, "There is an original something about him that commands attention."

17 Jan 1991 - The first Persian Gulf War began as Coalition planes

(led by the United States) struck targets in Iraq and Kuwait. Later that evening, US Patriot missiles were launched against incoming enemy Scud missiles from Iraq, marking the first time in history that a ballistic missile was shot down by another missile.

Wingman

Proverbs 18:24 tells us: *One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother* (NIV). A clear Biblical promise that is found throughout both the Old and New Testament is that we are not to be afraid and that God will never forsake us. Of all the promises in the Bible, none can be more deeply personal and comforting than the words of Hebrews 13:5: *for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you"* (ESV). Even when we are in our most desperate situations, we are reminded in the 23rd Psalm: *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me.*

When trouble comes our way, Jesus is by our side. Indeed, Jesus is that friend that "sticketh closer than a brother." Jesus has a personal stake in us making it safely to the home He has prepared for us: *And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come*

again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:3). Jesus sacrificed Himself and died on the cross to save us from our sins and eternal death. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16). Jesus not only gave Himself that we would have life, but that we would have life "more abundantly." Jesus Christ is our wingman who not only guards us and protects us but gave Himself for us.

If you are in a period of your life where the present seems unsure and the future looks bleak, you are probably not alone in that thinking. This past year was brutal. But I have good news for you! There is a Friend, a Wingman, that sticks closer than a brother who will guide you along the dark corridors into a glorious future. I can hear the echoes of Isaiah as he speaks the very words of God Himself: *So*

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do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand... For I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you (Isaiah 41:10, 13, NIV).

And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them (Isaiah 42:16, ESV).

What promises we have that we can rely on as we start a new year! To experience God's promises, you must place your trust in God and allow Him to guide your path. He wants to be your wingman, your Savior and that Friend that sticks closer than a brother. Trust Him as you venture into an uncertain future!

Quote of the Month: *"Guard zealously your right to serve in the Armed Forces, for without them, there will be no other rights to guard."*

John F. Kennedy



Yellow Ribbon Ministry (YRM) Prayer Notes, Event Announcements

Please pray for Missionaries Brian and Ivey Palmer now serving in Hawaii. Their son Nathaniel is in his freshman at Liberty University (Albert & Becky Watkins' son-in-law & daughter). Remember Merry Dare Price-Goodwin serving aboard the USS Decatur (Dale & Dixie Ulmer's granddaughter; Rachel Vradenburgh's niece). Pray for Justin & Kimberly Reece (Dan & Becky Reece's son & daughter-in-law) stationed at Seymour-Johnson AFB, and Sgt Aaron David de Serres (USMC, deployed to the Middle East). Please keep 2nd Lt. Matthew Parker (Joe & Dianna Perez's nephew, stationed at USSTRATCOM) and Nathaniel Salyer (Don & Sharon Woodard's grandson) at Camp Lejeune, NC in your prayers. Please keep our country in your prayers, that the Lord will give wisdom to our new leaders coming into Washington D.C. this month. Pray that they will be receptive to the Word of God

and seek His counsel for the decisions that impact us all. Please pray for a peaceful transition of power. If you know of anyone who is a Veteran that I've missed in the Prayer Notes, please let me know so that I can add them to our prayer list.

~ Colonel Martin

Coming Up Next Month:

- **The Dollar Discourse** (Part 3): The Power of Compounding
- US Army Units Explained: Part 2
- Five Things Spouses Should do in the New Year (Conclusion)



The Brian Palmer Family

