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Prisoner 1573 Shares His Story

World War II veteran recounts his time as a German POW and the covert government plan to free him.

By Aaron Stern
The Connection

T he edge of the German POW camp Oflag 64 was a place of constant activity from the summer of 1943 into the winter of 1945. One building served as a makeshift chapel for the American military officers interned at the camp by the German army, and another building was the site of constant rehearsals for a ragtag theater company. Nearby a ball field buzzed with imprisoned officers trying to outhit and outpitch one another in spirited baseball games cheered on by their comrades-in-arms.

It was there, along the sidelines of those games, that perhaps the Germans would have noticed what was going on. Those onlookers. They cheered vigorously, yet if one looked closer it might have been seen that their pantlegs, curiously plump as they approached the field, were loose against their gaunt bodies as they turned and walked away from the dusty field. They walked to the nearby latrine and when they walked back to the ball field their pants again bulged ever so slightly.

Wilbur “Bill” Sharpe often was one of those onlookers.

Inside their trousers were false pantlegs of burlap, closed at the bottom with a string, and stuffed with the dirt dug from a secret tunnel that led beneath the latrine towards the perimeter fence of Oflag 64. Sharpe and others would cheer their baseball-playing mates, jump up and down, and surreptitiously loose the strings at the bottom of their pants and shake their legs empty of dirt onto the ratty field.

“Six or eight guys can move an awful lot of dirt in a short time that way,” Sharpe said.

SHARPE SPENT 19 months at Oflag 64 in Schubin, Poland. Captured in North Africa with the other members of the U.S. Army’s 17th Field Artillery Battalion on Valentine’s Day, 1943 at the Païd Pass, Battle of Kasserine, 2nd Lieutenant Sharpe and his fellow soldiers were able to destroy their weapons before being taken by the forces of the so-called “Desert Fox,” legendary German General Erwin Rommel.

After nearly two years as a German POW in World War II Bill Sharpe served as an artillery officer in the Korean War before returning home and working in retail for the next 50 years. He and his wife of 63 years, Mary Sharpe, now live in the Ashby Ponds Retirement Living facility in Ashburn.

They were transported briefly to a POW camp filled with British officers captured at the 1940 Battle of Dunkirk, then to Oflag 64, a camp for commissioned officers that, by the standards set forth by the Geneva Conventions, was far less brutal than POW camps for enlisted men.

The officers there were not permitted to perform manual labor and they had books to read. They had enough musical instruments to form a 16-piece band, enough equipment for their baseball games, and through agreements between the Red Cross and the YMCA, officers at such camps were able to send and receive mail from home, said Sharpe. They didn’t eat much — meals consisted of watery soup and sour bread and by the time he was liberated Sharpe weighed just 96 lbs., far shy of the 150 lbs. he was captured with — but care packages from the Red Cross rationed between bunkmates to make them last longer got them through.

“If it weren’t for the Red Cross I wouldn’t be here today.” — Wilbur Blaine “Bill” Sharpe

Wilbur Blaine “Bill” Sharpe was Prisoner 1573 when he was held by the Germans during World War II at Oflag 64, a prison camp for commissioned officers. Now an Ashburn resident, Sharpe will be featured in an upcoming television documentary about a covert U.S. government operation that smuggled equipment into such camps to help POWs plan and execute escapes.

“Fox,” legendary German General Erwin Rommel.

“He got us. We were captured by the best,” said Sharpe. “He was a genius.”

They began the covert mission by sending a letter to the German Red Cross addressed to a German prisoner with Sharpe’s last name that Sharpe had never heard of or even heard of. The letter, it turned out, wasn’t for Sharpe at all, but for one of the higher-ranking imprisoned officers, and it wasn’t from a long lost relative either. It was from a covert government operation called MIS-X.

According to correspondence between Sharpe and the producer of an upcoming National Geographic Channel documentary, MIS-X was an ultra-secretive U.S. Intelligence subgroup that funneled information and equipment to the prism of dirt onto the ratty field.

“If it weren’t for the Red Cross I wouldn’t be here today.” — Wilbur Blaine “Bill” Sharpe

See Sharing. Page 9

Targeting Gangs

Federal, state and local officials meet with residents.

By Tom Christensen
The Connection

Concerns about the continued presence of gang violence in Sterling brought residents to Del. Tom Rust’s (86th District) town hall meeting at Park View High School on July 1.

A panel of speakers addressed the crowd, including Rust, U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-10), Board of Supervisors Chairman Scott Yor, Supervisor Eugene Delgaudio, and Gang Response Intervention Team (GRIT) Coordinator Ed Ryan. Each member of the panel discussed the past and present action taken to combat gang violence, as well as several future measures to be employed.

Rust opened the meeting, stating, “There is a rising concern in gangs and gang activities. We don’t expect to solve all these problems, but we want to continue the dialogue.”

Wolf was the next to speak: “This area is doing better than any other area.” He next gave an outline of the legislation and action taken in response to the increase in gang violence in Sterling, adding “This is not the time to let up on the gas.” Wolf highlighted the recent procurement of $3 million for a regional task force that targets gangs in Northern Virginia and a piece of legislation that would provide $35 million in funding for a nationwide gang initiative led by the FBI and the ATF. “No one in this area should live in fear of gang violence,” he said.

Rust continued to outline the history of gang-related laws in Virginia, including laws enacted in 2004 that raised the bail for gang members and raised the penalties for gang-related graffiti.

York discussed countywide efforts in fighting gang violence, and assured the crowd that, even though the county has experience many recent budget cuts, law enforcement would not be sacrificed. “We’ve been able to continue the dialogue.”

See Meeting. Page 6
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Send announcements to loudoun@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday, two weeks prior to event; photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit www.connectionnewspapers.com.

OTHER ITEMS

Loudoun Therapeutic Riding Foundation is seeking dedicated volunteers to help with carriage driving program on Monday afternoons at Morven Park. Email khefar@lrf.org with inquiries or 703-771-2689.

SATURDAY/JULY 18

Workshop for Expectant Parents. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Experts and professionals from the labor and delivery field will present programs such as anesthesia during labor, newborn information, management of labor, newborn care and car seat safety. At the Birthing Inn at Inova Loudoun Hospital. Call 703-777-2694.

Household Hazardous Waste Disposal. 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. At Heritage High School, 520 Evergreen Mill Road, Leesburg. Visit www.loudoun.gov/hhw or call the Office of Solid Waste Management at 703-777-0187.

TUESDAY/JULY 21

MOMS Club Meet and Greet. 11 a.m. MOMS Club of Ashburn Village holds member’s meet and greet for at-home mothers (including those who work out of their home or part-time). Visit http://avmomsclub.50webs.com/ or email ashburnmomclub@yahoo.com.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 22

Library Board of Trustees Meeting. 7:30 p.m. At Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Road, Ashburn. Go to http://library.loudoun.gov.

MONDAY/JULY 27

Working it out for Homeowners Symposium, 1-3 p.m. Special guest Congressman Frank Wolf. The Dulles Area Association of Realtors is planning a symposium Working it out for Homeowners with Banks and Realtors to foster a greater understanding of the mortgage options for troubled homeowners and challenges arising from complicated real property transactions such as short sales. At George Washington University, Campus Building 1, 20101 Academic Way, Ashburn. Visit www.dullesarea.com.

SATURDAY/AUG. 15

4th Annual Sterling Street Fair 2009: KidsSpritz! Hosted by Palmercare Chiropractic, 46169 Westlake Drive, Sterling. If you are a dance troop, cheer team, step team, martial arts groups or any activity group and are looking for a chance to perform, sign up now. Contact Felicia Owens-Smith of Celebrations Made Simple at 703-401-5318 or by emailing felicia@celebrationsmadesimple.com.

TUESDAY/AUG. 18

MOMS Club Meet and Greet. 11 a.m. MOMS Club of Ashburn Village holds member’s meet and greet for at-home mothers (including those who work out of their home or part-time). Visit http://avmomsclub.50webs.com/ or email ashburnmomclub@yahoo.com.
Meeting Focuses on Gang Violence

From Page 3

keep the sheriff in whole with the budget,” York said.

York also gave an update on the county’s plans to open a sheriff substation in the Sterling area. One of the county’s biggest responses to the rise in gang violence, the substation will open in February 2010 with a full staff, York said.

PLANS TO RENOVATE homes in Sterling are also under way thanks to a $2 million grant award by the Virginia Department of Housing. According to York, the grant will be used to offer incentives to the buyers of blighted homes.

Following York, Delgaudio commented on the seriousness of the gang violence in the Sterling area, pointing out that the FBI and drug enforcement officers have been involved with fighting gang violence in Loudoun.

The panel ended with GRIT coordinator Ed Ryan, who focused on the ways in which GRIT has been working to prevent future gang participation. “This is not an issue we can arrest our way out of,” Ryan said. Stating that 80 percent of gang members would leave a gang if they were given the opportunity, Ryan said that GRIT has begun to target younger aged youths to give them a positive view of the law and prevent them from joining gangs when they are older.

Ryan also remained adamant that, despite the rise in gang violence, Loudoun County is still a secure environment. “Loudoun County is a very safe place to live and I want to keep it that way,” he said.

When the panelists finished their opening remarks, the microphone was turned to the crowded auditorium. Several citizens rose to speak, providing the panel and the audience with questions, comments, and concerns.

A NUMBER OF SPEAKERS wondered about the current state of gangs in Loudoun County, particularly the number of active gang members. When Jerry Monligner asked if the amount of gang activity in Sterling was going up or down, Captain Ricky Frye of the Loudoun County Sheriff’s Office, who was on hand to answer questions, said that gang activity in Sterling was in fact decreased, responding, “(Sterling) is a bright spot. Rarely a night goes by when are gang unit is not present.”

Stone Bridge High School teacher Bill Wilkin asked how many young people were actually involved in gangs in the area. Frye said that about 100-150 active gang members existed in eastern Loudoun, according to gang unit estimations.

However, Ryan pointed out, this number did not include “wannabe” and “gonnabe” gang members, or those who only emulate the styles and attitudes of gang members and are at risk of becoming involved with gang activity. Such youth are of particular interest because many gangs are starting to recruit members at a young age, he said.

Howard Manos, a Sterling resident for more than 37 years, asked if law enforcement officers were doing enough to let gang members know of their presence and of the consequences of gang activity. Wolf assured him that officials are acting so that gang members know they are being followed. Frye reiterated, “We do what we can to let these folks know,” adding that he hopes the new substation will send a clearer message to gang members.

Gang member recognition was another topic that came up among those who spoke. When one woman from Herndon asked if there were any noticeable signs or symbols that citizens should look for in possible gang members, Ryan concurred, stating that people often rely too heavily on symbols and dress styles in order to look for in possible gang members, Ryan concurred, stating that people often rely too heavily on symbols and dress styles in order to identify gang members or those who only emulate the styles of a suspicious person.

Cascades resident Cathy McNickle gave similar advice, stating that people often rely too heavily on symbols. Ryan concurred, stating that a change in a young person’s behavior can be a situation looks potentially dangerous. York also remained adamant that, despite the rise in gang violence, the substation will open in February 2010 with a full staff, York said.

York responded that Prince William County’s financial differences prevent it from being a good model for Loudoun County. He also stated, “nothing has happened,” in Prince William County in response to current gang issues.

McNickle reiterated Stone’s idea following the meeting, stating, “Prince William County has gone through a lot of what Loudoun County has gone through. My one recommendation ... is to reach across the aisle regionally.”

Stone said that, “an absolute lack of confidence,” in Loudoun’s officials existed within Sterling’s residences when it comes to gang violence. Stating that better leadership and more political will are needed to alleviate Loudoun’s gang issues, Stone said, “If the situation is dire enough a United States congressman to get the FBI and a gang task force involved, why weren’t the rest of the [Loudoun Board of Supervisors] there?”
WEDNESDAY/JULY 15
Ritzya, The Drama Coach. 7 p.m. For teens to test your improv skills against other teens. Drama coach offers tips and techniques to help you think fast and funny. At Cascades Library, 21030 Whitfield Pl., Potomac Falls.

THURSDAY/JULY 16
Explore Europe: How do you say? Children ages 6-12 are invited to explore different continents through games and activities. Register online at library.loudoun.gov or phone 703-438-9500.

JULY 16-17
Live, Love, Serve: Loudoun County Youth Extend Hands of Service. 10:30-12:30 p.m. Loudoun Youth Leadership and Toni Braithwaite, leaders from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints sisterhood, will create plaster tables, fences, paint, clean the grounds, museum, etc. At The Heritage Farm Museum of Loudoun County- Olney. Friday, July 17, volunteers will disperse across Loudoun County to serve at 13 different community organizations including The Good Shepherd Alliance, Homeless shelters, Loudoun Therapeutic, Rainbeau Reeks Nature Preserve, The Boys & Girls Clubs, The Library of Congress, Volunteers of Loudoun, Loudoun County Citizens for Social Justice- Children’s Services, Meadow Glen of Leesburg, Marine Corps-Habitat for Humanity, Salvation Army and the Holiday Coalition.

FRIDAY/JULY 17
JunkFood (Contemporary). 7:30-10:30 p.m. Lansdowne Resort’s Free Summer Concert Series – on the Terrace. Executive Chef Jason Lage and the culinary team will be offering a variety of fresh grilled foods. Call 877-509-8400 or visit www.lansdowneresort.com.

SATURDAY/JULY 18
Michael Sheppard at Acoustic on the Green. 7-9 p.m. Free. Seven-time Wannabe award winner for best Male Vocalist, Sheppard remains a busy member of the National Kid Friendly Rock Band Milk Shake while still finding time for solo performances and recording new songs for his next CD. The first single from that forthcoming work is “Say Something.” At Leesburg Town Green, 25 West Market Street, Leesburg.

WEDNESDAY/JULY 22
Mystery Games for Tweens. 3 p.m. At Cascades Library, 21030 Whitfield Place, Potomac Falls. Figure out the clues and help solve a mystery! For ages 8-11. Register online at library.loudoun.gov or call 703-444-3228. Check out our web site at http://library.loudoun.gov.

Rainbow Puppets. 5 p.m. Presents the Really Big Dinosaur Show with songs, puppets and the Dinosaur Hop. At Ashburn Library. Free tickets are required and may be picked up at the library half an hour before the performance. Check out the web site at http://library.loudoun.gov.

THURSDAY/JULY 23
Legos Robotics. 6 p.m. Teams will build and program robots then compete against each other. All materials provided. For ages 12-18. At Cascades Library, 21030 Whitfield Place, Potomac Falls. Register online at library.loudoun.gov or call the library. Call 703-444-3228.

FRIDAY/JULY 24
PETCH! The Buff Guide to Science Challenges. 1:30 and 3 p.m. Competitions and science for ages 8-10. At Ashburn Library, 43316 Hay Rd., Ashburn. Register online at library.loudoun.gov or call 703-737-8100.

Fancy Nancy Sees Stars Party. 2 p.m. Wear your favorite party dress and learn about the stars with activities based on the storybook character, Fancy Nancy. At Rust Library, 380 Old Waterford Rd., Leesburg. Register online at library.loudoun.gov or call 703-771-5621.

SATURDAY/JULY 25

Cool Crafts for Teens. 11 a.m. Summer’s Coming at the Ashburn Library. Call 703-737-8100. For ages 12-18, all materials provided. Register online at http://library.loudoun.gov or call the branch library.

July 17-19
The Soots’ Guards and Captain Razoof capture Aladdin for allegedly stealing a loaf of bread in The Sterling Playsmackers’ production of Disney’s “Aladdin Jr.” July 17-19 at 7:30 p.m. with matinees on Saturday, July 18 and Sunday at 2:30 p.m. in the theater at Sterling Middle School, 200 West Holly Ave., Sterling. Tickets are 45 general admission available at the door or online at www.sterlingplaysmackers.com. Call 703-437-6117.

COMMUNITIES OF WORSHIP

Loudoun/Cascades Connection  7/15-21, 2009  7
At Tiger’s Side, Cummings Sees All

Ashburn resident enjoys role as lead marshal for Tiger Woods at AT&T National.

By Michael K. Bohn

A gallery of thousands followed Tiger Woods during last weekend’s AT&T National at Congressional Country Club in Bethesda, Md., as miles of rope and a squad of security officials kept the enthusiastic crowd at bay.

Yet Ashburn resident Dick Cummings, a tournament volunteer, walked shoulder-to-shoulder with Woods throughout each round; talk about up close and personal with the world’s most famous athlete.

Cummings is the co-chairman of the event’s 850 marshals — the volunteers who keep order on the golf course.

“Our job is to promote harmony between the players and the fans,” Cummings said. “I want all the marshals to be ambassadors of the game, just like the people who represent the United States.”

A retired federal government employee, Cummings works year-round on preparing for the tournament. He draws upon years of experience as volunteer at the old Kemper Open at Congressional and nearby TPC at Avenel, the 1985 Senior Open and 1997 U.S. Open at Congressional, the Booz Allen Classic, and three Presidents Cups.

Twenty-three area golf clubs and two organizations contribute marshals, often with one club marshaling the same hole every year. Cummings organizes training sessions and buzzes about the course during the tournament as he checks in with each hole captain.

Additionally, whenever Woods is on the course, Cummings helps part the crowd as he moves from hole to hole. All of the policemen, PGA Tour security officials and secondary marshals follow in Cummings’ wake.

During Woods’ question-and-answer session and exhibition for children last Tuesday, June 30, Cummings helped Woods navigate the venue. He stood with Woods at the tournament’s grand opening during Wednesday’s pro-am, marvelling with Woods at the descent of the Army’s Screaming Eagle parachute team.

“He is the most wonderful young man I have ever met,” Cummings said of Woods. “He is courteous to everyone from the lowest volunteer to his fellow superstars.”

Cummings had retired as chief marshal in 2006 after the last Booz Allen Classic. The Tiger Woods Foundation, which runs the AT&T National, convinced Cummings to dust off his golf cart, tune up his walkie-talkie and return to the job.

“This is great fun,” he said. “How can you walk away from a prestigious golf tournament at a prestigious golf course?”

Week in Sports

Minor League Baseball Update

The Loudoun County Land Use and Transportation Committee recently voted in favor to permit the proposed minor league ballpark at Kincora. The recommendation will now go before the county’s Board of Supervisors for a vote on July 21.

The 424-acre Kincora Mixed-Use Development was rejected by the Board of Supervisors in 2007, but that proposal did not include a 5,500-seat baseball stadium, which would be home to a Loudoun-based minor league team in the independent Atlantic League.

Developers and government officials are encouraging residents to attend a July 20th public input session in front of the Board to voice their support or dissent for the project. The session begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Loudoun County Government Center (1 Harrison St., SE in Leesburg).

Washington Redskin Appearance

Washington Redskin defensive tackle, Lorenzo Alexander will make an appearance at DMB Sports Camp at the National Conference Center in Lansdowne, VA on July 21. This will be Alexander’s first appearance to DMB Sports Camp. He is also the second Redskin to visit the camp this summer. Alexander will talk to the campers about football and his experience with the Washington Redskins, and will also sign autographs for the campers. For more information about this pro athlete appearance or others being held this summer, contact Lisa Craig at 703-444-8805 x102.

Cheerleading Camp

Claude Moore Community Center will host a Fit Kids cheerleading camp Aug. 3-7. Cost of the camp is $95 and it will focus on learning cheer motions, jumps, tumbling and stunts. Those attending should bring a water bottle and wear sneakers daily. Contact the community center to register today at 571-258-3500.

Team Building Camp

Claude Moore Community Center will host a Fit Kids team building camp Aug. 10-14 from 2-4 p.m. Cost of the camp is $95.00. Campers will learn to work together through a variety of exciting and fun, cooperative, hands-on activities and games. Campers should bring a water bottle and wear sneakers daily. Contact the community center to register today at 571-258-3500.

Fall Flag Football

Cascades Flag Football is a youth league open to boys and girls ages 5-14 in kindergarten through middle school. The fall 2009 season starts Sept. 7; register online at www.youthflag.com/cascades early bird rates apply through July 31. For more info on coaching or officiating call 703-444-8805 x112 or emailcascades@youthflag.com. Leesburg Flag Football is a youth league open to boys and girls ages 5-14 in kindergarten through middle school. The fall 2009 season starts Sept. 7; register online at www.youthflag.com/leesburg early bird rates apply through July 31st. For more info on coaching or officiating call 703-444-8805 x112 or leesburg@youthflag.com.

Soccer Team Seeks Players

ors of the German POW camps to aid in their potential escapes.

What Sharpe knows is that indeed some packages did contain hidden equipment. The handle of a hairbrush, for instance, could contain compass needles, maps, and German currency. The correspondence between Sharpe and the National Geographic producer alludes to guns that were obtained by the upper echelon officers held at Oflag 64 but Sharpe said that neither from his personal knowledge nor through conversations with the scant remaining survivors that he has kept in touch with can he verify that that ever took place.

What he does know is that through the combined efforts of MIS-X — the existence of which Sharpe said was not declassified until within the last five years — and the covert operations of the imprisoned Americans, escape from Oflag 64 loomed within grasp but was never attained. Sharpe, just 20 at the time he was captured, was not in the loop of sensitive information or escape plans but he said that only one attempt at escape was ever made. The few who made it under the fence were soon recaptured by the Germans and spent 45 days in solitary confinement, giving pause to future escape plans.

Yet the Germans still did not detect the tunnel, Sharpe said. They did not find its entrance in the deep pit below the toilets. They did not find the missing slats of bed frames that supported the tunnel, nor did they notice missing mattresses whose burp- lap covers were torn and sewn into the clandestine dirt carrying tubes.

“They even came to our [theater] programs and we were digging right under them at the time,” said Sharpe.

OTHER ATTEMPTS to escape were planned but never executed. Then, in January of 1945 with the Russian military bearing down on the German occupation Sharpe and his comrades were marched out of Oflag 64 by the retreating Germans. They marched for eight days through the snow-covered country side, bedding at night in abandoned barns, sleeping against one another for warmth. On the morning of the ninth day, Sharpe and two of his fellow officers didn’t report for rollcall to march, hidning out instead in the haymow they had covered country side, bedding at night in abandoned barns, sleeping against one another for warmth. On the morning of the ninth day, Sharpe and two of his fellow officers didn’t report for rollcall to march, hiding out instead in the haymow they had covered night in abandoned barns, sleeping against one another for warmth.

Upon meeting with the Russian forces Sharpe and company were not immediately transferred to American forces. Instead, said Sharpe, they were stripped of their belongings and forced into service with the Russian infantry.

Sharpe supposes that what he saw in that next month is not indicative of Russians today, but still he holds a grudge. He witnessed German civilians killed and raped, their homes looted by Russian soldiers as they advanced towards Berlin.

“They were miserable people,” Sharpe said of the Russians.

Eventually Sharpe and his friends stole a Russian Jeep and made it to the rear of the Russian ranks where they found sympathetic officers and were eventually transferred back to American hands.

AFTER THE WAR Sharpe returned to his native Indiana where he met and married his wife, Mary. He remained in the Army Reserve then returned to action in the Korean War, where he said he fired the first combat salvo of the conflict from his 8-inch Howitzer battery. He returned home in 1952 after six months of service.

Sharpe then left the Army with the rank of Captain and spent the next 50 years working in retail. He and Mary moved to the Washington, D.C. area and Sharpe went to work for Kay Jewelers before opening up new stores for the expanding Woodward & Lothrop department chain as it grew through Maryland and Virginia. He retired, finally, in 2001 after working first for Burberry, opening their first D.C. store, and then Charles Schwartz & Son Jewelers.

“His fuse was getting short,” said Mary Sharpe as they sat in their new condo at then Charles Schwartz & Son Jewelers.

"His fuse was getting short," said Mary Sharpe as they sat in their new condo at the Ashby Ponds Retirement Living Facility in Ashburn earlier this week. They moved there from Bethesda, Md. late last year after selling the home they had lived in for 48 years.

While Bill Sharpe was out doing the retail work, Mary stayed at home raising their daughter and keeping the home front running smoothly.

“She did all the hard work,” Sharpe said. These days Bill Sharpe keeps in touch with a few remaining from his time in Oflag 64, the memories of which were stirred last November when he was interviewed for the National Geographic special which is slated for next month.

“We lose a lot of them every year,” he said.

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**Professional Achievement**

Battalion Chief Corey Parker of the Loudoun County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management has successfully completed the process that awards him the professional designation of “Chief Fire Officer” (CFO). The Commission on Professional Credentialing (CPC) met on May 12, to officially confer the designation upon Battalion Chief Parker. Above, Parker receives an award from Fire Chief Joseph Pozzo. Parker, one of only 645 CFO’s worldwide, has been a member of the Loudoun County Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Management since 2001.
“Heavy” is when you ask your oncologist what you perceive to be a rather ordinary question about dental health, as it relates to your ongoing treatment protocols for stage IV lung cancer and he responds as he knows (and you’ve told him) how you want him to: honestly and sincerely.

He advises you not to bother spending the money on hardware if a band-aid/temporary solution will work. Specifically responding to the question, now that I’m nearly finished with my primary chemotherapy, if it’s OK to have my dentist put in two crowns that we’ve delayed since I was diagnosed (and had treatment begun).

My oncologist asks how long will the crowns last. I shun and say I don’t know. He guesses/estimates 10 years. I guess back that I suppose that’s right. To which he replies that it might not be necessary for me spend money on something that will last 10 years. Puzzled for a moment by his answer, I process the information, then I nod and say: Oh, I get it. I don’t have 10 years so why spend money on something that will outlast me. So much for dental work.

But I’m not thinking that way. Nor would my oncologist want me to be thinking that way. All things are possible.

Everybody is different and responds to treatment differently. Medications; prescrip- tion or otherwise, chemotherapy, approved or experimental, homeopathic, non-western/alternative medicine; what’s not effective for persons 1-99 might be perfectly effective and suitable for person 100. And not that I see my self “the one” (the surviving one against all statistical odds and rare histories), but as I’ve written previously, it ain’t over simply because the chemotherapy is completed and the “standard of care” sort of says it is so far as the treatment protocols for the next 12 months are indicated.

Nevertheless, I don’t have any reason to believe that I am “the one” – that somehow forces beyond my control (in conjunction with some forces within my control) and somehow unique to me, will physically, spiritually, chemically, anatomically and miraculously combine to track me on an alternative course that will change the fate that I predicted (and likely prematurely) for myself. Nevertheless, I don’t have any reason to believe that I am “the one” – that somehow forces beyond my control (in conjunction with some forces within my control) and somehow unique to me, will physically, spiritually, chemically, anatomically and miraculously combine to track me on an alternative course that will change the fate that I predicted (and likely prematurely) for myself.

What will be will be; moreover, what has been diagnosed has been diagnosed and it’s my responsibility, my duty, my job, if you will, to see that it becomes prudent and meaningful that I pay the $5700 or so per crown for the more permanent hardware because life is for the living, it’s not for the waiting and wondering if.

So I’m going to follow Red’s (Morgan Freeman) advice from the 1994 Oscar-nominated film, “The Shawshank Redemption,” “Get busy living or get busy dying.” Given the alternatives, what choice do I have? What choice would I want to have? Granted, I’ve been dealt a bit of a hand – and quite unex- pected – hand, but so what? It’s not like it’s my fault.

I didn’t cause it; I just got diagnosed with it. I can live with it, hopefully long enough to replace these two crowns with a new pair in another 10 years. Hey, strange things can happen; after all, a lifelong non-smoker like me was diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer. What’s up with that?

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Arcata & the Crescent City Newspapers.
In honor of the Independence Day, the Goddard School in Ashburn had special guests from the U.S. Military speak with the pre-Kindergarten and school-age students. They were joined by Lt. Col. Daniel Larke, Marine Veteran Nick Sims and Army Veteran Charles Archey, a current Goddard School parent. Parents are encouraged to drop in for a tour or call Madhu Govil directly to arrange a personal appointment at 703-724-0601.

Photo by Maritza Saldana

Send announcements to loudoun@connectionnewspapers.com. Deadline is Friday; photos/artwork encouraged. For additional listings, visit www.connectionnewspapers.com.

Richard A. Stone has been promoted to the rank of major general in the U.S. Army Reserve. He is the son of Julius and Judy Stone of Sarasota, Fla., and the father of Aaron Stone of Springfield, Benjamin Stone of Alexandria, and Daniel and Rebecca Stone of Bloomfield Township, Mich.

Stone will be leaving Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio for his new position as the Army Reserve deputy surgeon general (individual mobilization augmentee) in Falls Church. He has been commander of the Medical Readiness and Training Command since 2006. The major general earned a bachelor’s degree from Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, and a master’s degree from Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich.
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