



## PERSPECTIVE

By: Robin Barnes McCarthy

Things look different from 10,000 feet. Yes, I said 10,000 feet. I recently had the unique opportunity to jump out of a (perfectly good) plane and parachute 10,000 feet in a tandem jump with an Army Ranger. You have probably already heard about the two octogenarian Blue Star Mothers who also jumped that day—Marge Bryan (83) and Marianna Sherman (82). [For those of you who attended National Convention last year, they were the two older women from Ohio who carried the flags into the Convention when I was installed as National President—some of you called them the “Queens of Ohio.” I called them the “Blue-Haired Daisies” this year, as we transported them and the other Quarter-Century Moms to the Veterans Day parade in NYC.] They had arranged the tandem jump to raise funds and awareness, in part, for Blue Star Mothers of America.

I want to keep that *perspective* in my life. The big problems below me (the airport in Lima, that possible “crash” landing site, the big lake next to the runway) truly seemed small from that elevated position. And falling to earth at a screaming 125 mph will give you a REAL facelift; surprisingly, it also lifts your “faith.” I can’t explain it, but it does change your perspective, and the floating part is really quiet and peaceful.

The morning of the jump, just before boarding the plane, the Ranger photographer snapped a picture of me pointing to the P.O.W. bracelet that I have been wearing since



Memorial Day weekend. On that yellow bracelet is the name “Sgt BOWE Bergdahl,” the young soldier who was captured in Afghanistan on 6/30/09. When I think of this soldier—still held in captivity three years later—and of his mother (Jani) and father (Bob) in Idaho, I get an entirely different perspective on my life and “problems.”

I can’t *imagine* the anguish these two Blue Star parents feel on a daily basis as they think about their son and his current situation. We all thought it was unbearable when our child(ren) went to basic and then advanced training, and eventually got deployed. We have also anguished over the Gold Star families who have received notice of the death of their child(ren). It’s part of our Blue Star Mothers mission to support the families of these fallen heroes, and we all do it with such dignity and aplomb. I often say (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that Blue Star Mothers are the moms who “sleep with one eye open.” But I imagine the Jani and Bob Bergdahl are Blue Star parents who *never* sleep. Please keep them (and their son Bowe) in your thoughts and prayers. Daily.



Ohio Blue Star Mothers Strong

And look at your life from a higher elevation. Maybe it will get you through this day with a renewed sense of gratitude for your family, the child(ren) who made you a Blue Star Mother, this organization and your role in it. I sincerely thank you for the blessed opportunity you gave me as National President of BSMA. And I look forward to seeing many of you at the National Convention in August. Until then, I will try to keep my perspective on “things above” and not so much on the negative things around me. I hope you can do the same thing and truly enjoy this wonderful day.

--Robin Barnes McCarthy, National President,  
BSMA



## **BLUE STAR MOMS TRIUMPH IN PARACHUTE PLUNGE**

LIMA OH — Retired Sgt. 1st Class Michael “Big Mike” Elliott waited patiently on the tarmac Saturday afternoon while Marjorie Bryan posed with her longtime friend, Marianna Sherman, for a crowd of friends and relatives snapping a few last photos. Then in a loud voice, Elliott called out the all-important question: “Ready, Marge?”

A brief plane ride later, Elliott was guiding Bryan, an 83-year-old Blue Star Mother from Lima, back to earth in a tandem parachute jump from more than 10,000 feet up.

About an hour later, Sherman, 82, of Kenton, completed her own jump. The two great-grandmothers parachuted June 23 at Allen County Airport to raise funds for the Blue Star Mothers and for the Lima Veterans Food Pantry. They jumped in tandem with Elliott and a team of six other members of the Ranger Group, a band of retired Army Ranger paratroopers with loads of training and experience.

Blue Star Mothers of America is an organization of women whose sons and daughters have served in the military. The organization is celebrating its 70th anniversary

The Blue Star parachutists were superb first-timers, said Elliott, 44, who has more than 9,500 jumps to his credit, about a third of them tandem jumps. Two of his tandems were former President George H.W. Bush on Bush's 83rd and 85th birthdays.

Her feet back on the ground and glass of champagne in her hand, a jubilant Bryan said she wants to accompany Bush if he jumps again for his 90th birthday.

“I’ll be 85, and I want to go with him,” she said.

“These Blue Star Mothers are so sweet, so special,” Elliott said. “We came up here two months ago, and they said they had this plan, and we said here’s what you have to do. It was challenging, but they did it. They didn’t quit.”

Eight other first-time parachutists jumped with them, including Bryan’s grandsons, Alan and Matthew High; Sherman’s son, Fred; and 57-year-old Robin McCarthy, of Dayton, National President of the Blue Star Mothers of America. The first-timers jumped one at a time from a single-engine small plane, tethered to a Ranger, while another Ranger soared next to them with a helmet-mounted video camera.

More than 200 people turned out to witness the event.

The idea for a Blue Star jump arose last year while Bryan, Sherman and McCarthy were in New

York City to participate in the annual Veterans Day parade. While on the bus to the event, Bryan struck up a conversation with a Ranger who told her he was with the crew that helped President George H.W. Bush celebrate his 85th birthday with a parachute jump. Bryan said she wished they could come and do that in Lima. They took her up on the offer.

Bryan, Sherman and several other jumpers remarked how quiet and peaceful it is to soar alone in the sky. Both kept their word: They didn’t scream on the way down, according to Ranger Tony Mouzon, who shot the airborne video of their jumps and performed some breathtaking parachute landings.

Other first-timers were at a loss for words.

“I can’t talk like I’d like to, but yeah, it was great,” Fred Sherman said a few moments after his jump. “It was everything I expected and a little bit more.”

His mother was one of the last to complete her jump. Minutes afterward, sprawled out in a lawn chair and smiling serenely, Marianna Sherman said the view was breathtaking, but the warming atmosphere contained air pockets that made her ride a little uncomfortable.

Did she like parachuting enough to do it again? “Not if I wasn’t asked,” she replied, smiling.



**Blue Star Mother Marjorie Bryan, 83**  
(Photo courtesy of Marc Odens)



**Blue Star Mother Marianna Sherman, 82**

--Adapted from The Lima News



## BLUE STAR MOTHERS HAPPENINGS OK5 BROKEN ARROW

On Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup> BA Chapter 5 attended the ceremony honoring those Veterans that passed away this past year. Their flags were raised for the first time.

On Monday, May 28<sup>th</sup>, Blue Star Mothers assisted the Boy Scouts from Indian Nations Council in helping to lower and fold 3053 flags at Floral Haven Cemetery. This was the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Avenue of Flags, and it was held on a beautiful weekend.



Avenue of Flags



## CONNECTICUT 1



Nancy Bentley-Wennberg of CT 1, Connecticut Blue Star Mothers, will be making a return trip to Bethesda in June to visit with our wounded heroes. This past March, Nancy, gathered cards of cheer from her chapter and other military support groups, loaded them into her suitcase, and set off for her first journey. She hand delivered the cards while there, greeting everyone with a smile, as she served at a luncheon on the combat surgical ward. We know these special warriors enjoyed seeing Nancy and reading the messages of honor she brought. We anxiously await hearing about her upcoming journey upon her return in July. Thank you, Nancy, for bringing our hearts, notes, and love to those to whom we owe so much! Love and appreciation from all the Members of CT 1. (Nancy has served as Recording Secretary for CT 1, the Connecticut Blue Star Mothers chapter for the past several years.)







### **KS4 BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF SOUTHWEST KANSAS**



Memorial Day at the Kansas Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Dodge, KS, had Blue Star Mothers of SW Kansas participating in the service. This picture shows the Patriot Guard Flag Line. BSMs Jan Allen and Margaret Butcher assisted in securing a memorial wreath in 50 mph winds!

Just another day in Western Kansas.

### **VA2 BLUE STAR FAMILIES OF RICHMOND**



VA2 recently celebrated their 5th birthday in June. Congratulations!!!

### **GA1 NORTH METRO ATLANTA**

Thanks to all who attended to pack up in Commerce this year! With the help of the FFA we were able to collect enough items to fill 50 boxes. And, they were kind enough to once again, collect enough funds to cover shipping the boxes, too. Way to show your support guys!!! Thanks SO much!!



### **DEPT. OF MINNESOTA**



Eagle's Nest National Veterans Community will open in August in Sauk Centre, MN, providing a place for veterans of any age to heal with honor. Pictured above are (from left): Vietnam veteran Mike Weisser, family member Cindy Anderson, Blue Star mom Melony Butler, Gold Star mom Dorothy Sills and family member Pam Hyatt. The Department of MN presented this print to the facility for display in the lobby of the PTSD unit, at the Gold Star program during the first weekend of renovation of the facility. Blue Star Mothers and other organizations came together for the weekend to clean, paint and fix up the facilities and ground. Pictured L to R is Department First VP Sharon Skaro and Department President Jean Duane. Dorothy Sills, Past Department President and Gold Star Mother, spoke during the ceremony. This project is very dear to her heart as she lost her son due to causes of War.





## **TX2 HOUSTON AREA CHAPTER**



### **BLUE STAR MOTHERS RECEIVE DONATION FROM FALLEN HEROES GOLF TOURNAMENT**

Friends all through high school, they played basketball and had a lot in common.

When Kingwood High School graduate Scott Mitchell brainstormed ways he could remember his close friend, Brandon Bury, who died while serving in Afghanistan in 2010; a golf tournament was the perfect idea.

The Kingwood Fallen Heroes Memorial Golf Tournament was organized April 28 not only to honor Bury but also to recognize and remember the additional service members, Army Sgt. William B. Meeuwsen and Lance Corporal Luke Yepsen; both of whom graduated from Kingwood High School.

"We started off small but there was a lot of interest from the community so we had plenty of teams; it expanded tremendously," Mitchell said about the event.

"When we first started to organize the golf tournament, we tossed around the ideas to raise money for scholarships for Bury's children but then we realized we wanted to make this a larger effort and recognize those who currently serve and those who gave all."

The original goal was to raise around \$20,000 to \$30,000 but they far exceeded that goal. They were able to raise around \$80,000 which enabled them to donate to the Houston Area Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers as well as several other groups including the Hope for Warriors and Patriot Guard Riders.

Mitchell presented the Blue Star Mothers with a check close to \$30,000 at their monthly meeting June 26, which is the largest donation they have received to date.

"This donation will mostly go toward our care packages which we send to soldiers currently serving overseas. The care packages we send really lift their spirits. We have even received letters from other soldiers serving inquiring how they could receive a care package from us," Kathryn Uhlman, first vice president of the Houston Area Chapter of the Blue Star Mothers of America, said before the presentation.

The soldiers the Kingwood Fallen Heroes Memorial Golf Tournament honored the following soldiers from the community who died while serving their country:

Sergeant Meeuwsen graduated from Kingwood High School in 1999 and attended Texas A&M University before joining the United States Army in 2002. He died November 23, 2005 when his unit came under direct fire during combat operations near Baghdad, Iraq.

Lance Corporal Yepsen graduated from Kingwood High School in 2004 and attended Texas A&M University before joining the United States Marine Corps in 2005. He died December 14, 2006 while conducting combat operations in the Al Anbar Province of Iraq.

Sergeant Bury graduated from Kingwood High School in 2002 and furthered his education in the Austin, Texas area before joining the United States Marine Corps in 2004. He died June 6, 2010 while on patrol in a combat area in Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan.

They hope to start hosting the golf tournament

Mitchell stated in a press release about the golf tournament, "We will forever miss Bill, Luke, and Brandon who gave their lives so we may continue to enjoy the many freedoms that come with being an American citizen. I knew the Humble and Kingwood areas were special communities where we could make this a success; we are so thankful for all of the support."



## FATE

I traveled to Washington DC for the events in our nation's capitol this past Memorial Day weekend like I have since 2005. With each trip, I take away a different thought, a different experience. The visits are never the same.

My first trip was filled with camaraderie. I met Blue Star Mothers and Gold Star Mothers from all over the country, who like me, had come to honor those who had given their all and paid the ultimate price. Many of these women I see every year when I return.

I have had the honor of representing Blue Star Mothers when meeting with the President of the United States and when laying a wreath at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I have been moved to tears at the candle light vigil walk to the Vietnam Wall with thousands of Vietnam veterans. Two years ago my daughter SSgt Jennifer Fleischman, USAF, was able to come to DC with her husband TSgt Reuben Fleischman, USAF, and she honored me by participating in the vigil (in the pouring rain) in her uniform.

I have listened to stories of Gold Star parents, Gold Star wives, fellow Blue Star Mothers and veterans of our nation's wars. I have put a face to the places we read about in history books and see on the news.

This year I sat at the annual Rolling Thunder banquet and listened to Bob Bergdahl speak about his son SGT Bowe Bergdahl, US Army. Bowe has been a POW since 6/30/2009. Bob spoke of the work that is on going to bring his son home. He spoke of the millions of people around the country who are praying for the safe return of his son.

As he spoke to us, he ran to a very large US flag and held on to it saying, "This is what we all fight for...." He then ran to an equally large POW/MIA banner and held it saying, "This is what I fight for." He pointed to the silhouette of that lone POW and said, "This is MY son"!! There wasn't a dry eye in the room.

I told myself that this weekend I was NOT going to check my email. There was nothing that couldn't wait until I returned home. As I walked by the business center at my hotel on Sunday, I caved. There was a gentleman there doing the same thing. As I read of yet another casualty, I made a comment out loud. He looked at me and said, "Bad news"? I explained who I was and what I had just read.

He told me that he was not in DC for a vacation either. He shared that he had just buried his son on Friday. As I expressed my sympathy, he showed me a Facebook page filled with loving comments and expressions of care and sympathy

from hundreds of friends. He shared pictures of his son's solemn burial at Arlington. Was he angry? Yes, but surprisingly not as bitter as I thought.

I told him that every member of Blue Star Mothers is remembering his son along with all the sons and daughters who have died from these wars. He looked at me and said, "My wife is now a Gold Star Mother." I agreed with him but told him that in our hearts she would always be a Blue Star Mother.

As I left that room I shared with him that I wasn't going to check my mail during my stay in Washington and that something or someone had other plans for me. I told him that it was fate that brought me there to meet him.

On Memorial Day I visited section 60 of Arlington Cemetery, the final resting place of many of those lost in the Iraq/Afghanistan war. Of the hundreds of graves, I knew immediately which one was SGT Andrew Britton Mihalo. It was the newest one, the one with the blanket of flowers that his father had shown me.

As I looked at that sad sight, I was struck by the comment each father had made that was almost the same, word for word. Both Bob Bergdahl and Bill Mihalo shared this comment about their sons - and our sons and daughters, "They were doing what they wanted to do."

As I look at the pictures below I am struck by this thought - one father doesn't know where his son is...one father does. Which is harder? Knowing or not knowing?

Perhaps it was fate that I met them both on Memorial Day weekend.



SGT Bowe Bergdahl



SGT Andrew Trevor Britton-Mihalo

--Anita Wagner, Spirit of Freedom, OH 1





## START PLANNING FOR YOUR DEPARTMENT CONVENTIONS

### DEPARTMENT OF MI CONVENTION

Fri. Oct. 5 - Sun. Oct. 7  
Doherty Hotel  
Clare, MI  
(989) 386-3441

### DEPARTMENT OF MN CONVENTION

Fri., Oct. 12 to  
Sun., Oct. 14

McQuoids Inn  
Lake Mille Lacs, Isle, MN  
1-800-862-3535 [www.mcquoidsinn.com](http://www.mcquoidsinn.com)

Please start planning now! Chapters may do fundraising to help send their President, Delegates and members to convention.

We have a lot of fun hands-on activities being planned for the weekend along with business, so start planning now. You may call and reserve a room at any time. Let them know you are with the Blue Star Mothers of America MN Convention group, and you will get the discount,

### DEPARTMENT OF AZ

Fri. Oct. 26 to Sun. Oct. 28  
Prescott Valley, AZ  
Location TBA

### DEPARTMENT OF OH CONVENTION

Fri. Nov. 2 - Sun. Nov. 4  
Quality Inn Suites & Conference Ctr.  
Bellville, OH  
(419) 886-7000

## 2012 NATIONAL CONVENTION UPDATE

Our Riverboat Cruise was such a hit that **ALL** of the tickets have been sold. This will definitely be a fun night on the river.

Our convention registration deadline is **FAST approaching..** IF you have no registered please do so **ONLINE!!!** We can no longer accept mail in registrations.

We **HAVE** to get our dinner and lunch numbers to our caterer by **JULY 15** in order to finalize our numbers.

The National Big Dipper meeting will be held in the Cincinnati Club at noon on Wed. Aug 1. Yes, this is during our lunch hour and yes you can sit in on the meeting even if you are not a Big Dipper member. Better yet, join Big Dipper for only \$5 prior to the meeting and you can participate and vote!!

The National Big Dipper Fun Night is Thursday, Aug 3 in The Garfield Inn & Suites. The dinner will be in the Kroger Room and will start at 7 pm. The entertainment will be in the Kentucky Room at the Garfield and starts at 8pm. Tickets for Dinner and the Show are \$25. Tickets for the Show only are \$10.

Don't forget to dress like its 1942!!!

### Department of Oklahoma



### 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention

October 19-21, 2012

Western Hills Guest Ranch  
Hulbert, OK.

(800)368-1486

Call now and reserve your rooms



## Heroes of the United States

### Killed In Action

June 2012

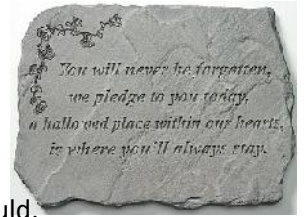
### DOD Reporting

Staff Sgt. Roberto Loeza, 28, El Paso, TX  
Staff Sgt. Alexander G. Povilaitis, 47, Dawsonville, GA  
Spc. Kedith L. Jacobs, 21, Denver, CO  
Pfc. Leroy Deronde III, 22, Jersey City, NJ  
Spc. Gerardo Campos, 23, Miami, FL  
Lance Cpl. Joshua E. Witsman, 23, Covington, IN  
Pfc. Vincent J. Ellis, 22, Tokyo, Japan  
Capt. Scott P. Pace, 33, Brawley, CA  
1st Lt. Mathew G. Fazzari, 25, Walla Walla, WA  
Cpl. Anthony R. Servin, 22, Moreno Valley, CA  
Pfc. Brandon D. Goodine, 20, Luthersville, GA  
MCPON Richard J. Kessler Jr., 47, Gulfport, FL  
Pfc. Nathan T. Davis, 20, Yucaipa, CA  
Spc. Bryant J. Luxmore, 25, New Windsor, IL  
Cpl. Taylor J. Baune, 21, Andover, MN  
SFC Barrett W. McNabb, 33, Chino Valley, AZ  
Sgt. Nicholas C. Fredsti, 30, San Diego, CA  
Sgt. Joseph M. Lilly, 25, Flint, MI  
Spc. Trevor A. Pinnick, 20, Lawrenceville, IL  
Pfc. Jarrod A. Lallier, 20, Spokane, WA  
1st Lt. Ryan D. Rawl, 30, Lexington, SC  
SFC Matthew B. Thomas, 30, Travelers Rest, SC  
Spc. John D. Meador II, 36, Columbia, SC  
Sgt. Jose Rodriguez, 22, Gustine, CA  
Lance Cpl. Eugene C. Mills III, 21, Laurel, MD  
Maj. Paul C. Voelke, 36, Monroe, NY  
Pfc. Steven P. Stevens II, 23, Tallahassee, FL  
Lance Cpl. Hunter D. Hogan, 21, Norman, IN  
Lance Cpl. Niall W. Coti-Sears, 23, Arlington, VA  
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Leach, 29, Ferndale, MI  
1st Lt. Stephen C. Prasnicki, 24, Lexington, VA,  
Sgt. James L. Skalberg Jr., 25, Cullman, AL



The days come  
And the days go  
The ocean ebbs and flows.

It seems all life goes on  
Except the one I understood  
That one does not seem as it should.



I look for you but you are not there  
You, my hope, my joy, my love, my life  
Now I stand alone in this darkness and strife.

Yet the days of sorrow will one day end  
For your spirit lives in all I say and do  
And one day I will again be with you

\*\*\*\*\*

### P.O.W. "Bowe" Bergdahl



#### A POW'S PRAYER

God, please grant me  
The courage and endurance  
To persevere at the hands  
Of my enemies.

Please endow me with the presence  
Of mind to always remember  
Who and what I am.

Gift me with the needed fortitude  
To resist all torture and deprivation  
Be it mental or physical.

And most of all, dear Lord,  
Grant unto me the power and ability  
To keep my soul and resolve  
American to the core.

--Henry R. Tavares