

POW / MIA PROFILES

The purpose of the State POW/MIA Committee is to “provide increased awareness of POW / MIAs, to organize the Department and Posts’ POW / MIA activities and to provide education to the public”. To realize this duty, a profile of a WI resident who is or has been classified as POW / MIA will be presented each month for your reflection. It is with great respect that we present this month’s Profile.

James Ketterer grew up in Milwaukee near the corner of Glendale Ave and 42nd street. According to a boyhood friend, Bill Moore, “Jim was always infatuated with aircraft”. “We flew “U” control 1/2A planes that we built. Jim had the larger aircraft engines, and was really into it.” Bill lost contact with Jim during Jr. High but saw him again later at Greendale High School. Later, James entered the Air Force and became an F4 Phantom pilot.

On January 20 1968, James, then a 1st Lieutenant, was co-pilot with Captain Tilden Holley in an F4C using the call sign of Outlaw 01. They departed DaNang Airbase, South Vietnam as the lead aircraft in a flight of two for a night armed reconnaissance mission over North Vietnam’s coastal region between the 17th and 18th parallels. This area of the Quang Binh Province was known as “Talley Ho” and included the major port city of Dong Hoi.

Working with Outlaw flight was Spud 15, a Forward Air Controller (FAC) flying an OV1C Army Mohawk. Approximately 15 miles northwest of Dong Hoi, Spud 15 spotted a moving target on the road below and authorized Outlaw flight to engage. As Outlaw 02 pulled out from their attack run, they observed 37mm anti-aircraft artillery from their right and passing 100 feet below their aircraft. Outlaw 01 told Outlaw 02 to hold in a pattern over the water while they took a closer look at the target.

After roughly a few minutes, Outlaw 02, while above the clouds at 9000 feet and approximately 5 miles NNE of the target, observed a large orange glow below the cloud cover. Attempts by the pilot of Outlaw 02 to reach Outlaw 01 went unanswered. It is speculated that what Outlaw 02 observed was Outlaw 01’s aircraft striking the ground. No parachutes were seen and no voice contact was established but Outlaw 02 did hear 2 to 3 seconds of tone emanating from an emergency beeper within 30 seconds of seeing the orange glow. Search and Rescue operations were initiated and continued into the next day but no trace of the downed aircrew could be found. Pilots James Ketterer and Tilden Holley were listed as Missing in Action.

Each year in September the 1st District, Wisconsin American Legion, conducts a Silent March to honor and remember Veterans in conjunction with National POW/MIA Recognition

Day. During the ceremony, black balloons are released in reverence for those listed as POW/MIA from WWI, WWII, and Korea. We also read aloud the names of the 30 Wisconsin Veterans who are still unaccounted for from Vietnam. One who we remember is Major James Ketterer.

The POW/ MIA Committee wishes to thank Mr. Bill Moore, retired veteran of the US Navy & the 128th Air Refueling Group in Milwaukee and Mr. David Bachmann, Wheeling IL for their outstanding contributions to this story.