

***The 101st Airborne Division Association and the Michigan Chapter:
Who Are We? Where Did We Come From?***

The 101st Airborne Division Association was formed on the fields of Europe in May of 1945 by WW11 Screaming Eagles who wanted to ensure that all who wore the Screaming Eagle patch would not lose touch with each other after the war: Mutual respect, trust, and friendship, - e.g., camaraderie, were the foundations underlying the Association's formation. The bonds between this "Band of Brothers" were forged in the fires of their shared beliefs, values and war-time experiences.

The national Association is a non-political, non-sectarian, (501) (c)(3) non-profit soldier's and veteran's fraternity (#75-1094916) that has chapters around the country. We are the Michigan chapter, a (501) (c) (19) Veterans' organization (EIN #82-5293523). As such, we represent Michigan's close-knit Airborne/Air Assault community; camaraderie defines who we are and why we exist.

Amongst other activities during the year, we sponsor a monthly "Gathering of Eagles" at our luncheon meetings in Livonia, MI during which we present an educational program on some aspect of military history or some closely related topic of interest. *Searching for Augusta, the Forgotten Angel of Bastogne*, for example, was a video presentation at one of our recent luncheon meetings. It tells the story of Augusta Chiwy, the forgotten Belgian nurse who quietly and courageously served as a volunteer providing vital medical support and treatment to U.S. soldiers during the siege of Bastogne in December 1944 and January 1945.

We also hold an annual reunion and memorial banquet at which time we gather to remember our soldiers and families, our MIAs and KIAs, those Eagles who have gone before us, and all those currently serving in harm's way: It is a very solemn and sacred ceremony. In our remembrances, we leave no one behind!

Our 35th annual reunion will be held this September 16th-18th in Brighton, MI. And this year, we are privileged and honored to host the Association's 77th national reunion in Grand Rapids, MI this August 3rd-6th at the Amway Grand. ...That's who we are. We continue the legacy!

Our chapter traces its genealogy back to a small group of WWII veterans from the 101st Airborne Division that met in Detroit at the old Veteran's Memorial building located on the banks of the Detroit River overlooking Windsor, Ontario (Canada). They met in the month of December to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge and to honor the memory of their fallen comrades who fought with such valor and distinction.

Known as the Ardennes Offensive, the Battle of the Bulge was a surprise German offensive that began on 16 December 1944 at a thinly defended section of the Allied line, held predominantly by American forces. The Germans (250,000 strong) surrounded the Allied troops (8,000 in number) in the small, pivotal village of Bastogne in Belgium. On 22 December, the German command sent a message to Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe -the acting division commander of the 101st Airborne Division troops defending Bastogne, demanding that he immediately surrender to avoid certain defeat and humiliation.

McAuliffe responded with his now famous one-word reply, "Nuts!" When asked for further clarification, he simply replied, "Go to hell!" And, so clarified, the brutal battle continued to rage on in horrific weather conditions and against unbelievable odds for over a month.

Freezing rain, thick fog, deep snow drifts, and record-breaking low temperatures coupled with some 30 German divisions relentlessly attacking the battle-fatigued Allied forces across 85 miles of the densely wooded Ardennes Forest. At the end of the battle, General McAuliffe and those under his command prevailed. Victory was declared on 25 January 1945 with the completion of the German withdrawal.

The Allied forces then began moving towards Berlin and the war ended less than 5 months later with Germany's unconditional surrender on 7 May 1945. The Battle of the Bulge proved to be Hitler's last major offensive during World War II against the Western Front. Winston Churchill called it the greatest American battle of the war.

The small group of WWII veterans that met in Detroit at the old Veteran's Memorial building in December 1983 called themselves, "The Nuts Club" in honor of the valor, sacrifice, and defiance of General McAuliffe and their comrades who fought so valiantly and sacrificed so much during the Battle of the Bulge: There were over 75,000 casualties taken by the Allied forces and an additional 20,000 soldiers were killed in action.

The Michigan Chapter was founded by George E. Koskimaki, the well-noted and much-celebrated 101st Airborne Division historian and author.¹ That first meeting on the banks of the Detroit River took place on 16 December 1983. Three years later -on 14 December 1986, our chapter's national charter was rendered at the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, at which time we officially became a chapter of the national Association. On 14 December 2021 we celebrated our 35th anniversary. "The Nuts Club" is an integral and defining part of our chapter's history, identity, and legacy!

From an historical and organizational perspective, that's something about *who we are* and *where we come from!* Moreover, we believe, that the storied history and cherished values of the 101st Airborne Division Association must be taught to the young people in Michigan's schools: They are the next generation of American citizens and leaders. The history taught, however, must be more than simply memorizing the dates of significant battles or knowing the numbers of casualties taken and those killed during the Battle of the Bulge. The values, beliefs, and traditions for which so many American soldiers and families sacrificed so much must also be taught, discussed, and thought about for this chapter of American history to become alive, meaningful, and relevant (see below).

What Stories Do We Have to Tell and Why?

Strengthening Michigan's Families and Communities

Succinctly stated, our chapter's primary purpose is to uphold and advance the Association's ideals, values, and history in Michigan's local communities. That is -and more

¹ A former paratrooper who jumped in Normandy, Koskimaki served as General Maxwell Taylor's radioman. He went on to become a preeminent historian of the 101st Airborne Division. His books include: *The Battered Bastards of Bastogne*; *The 101st Airborne and the Battle of the Bulge, December 19, 1944-January 17, 1945*; *D-Day with the Screaming Eagles*; and, *Hell's Highway: A Chronicle of the 101st Airborne Division in the Holland Campaign, September-November 1944*.

specifically, to uphold our ideals of *equality, liberty, freedom, and justice for all* and to advance our core values of *patriotism, self-sacrifice, and commitment*. And we do so in the memory of our departed comrades and whose presence is forever amongst us: We do not leave them behind. In this way, we continue our legacy!

As to the question, “*Why do we do this?*” That is, “*Why do we spend so much time, effort, and energy in telling our story and advancing our core values in Michigan’s local communities?*” For us, it is a moral imperative!” Woven into the delicate knit of their social fabric, these core values literally construct social reality: Values structure reality! As we advance our ideals, history, and values, we create “ripples” in Michigan’s local communities, a “ripple effect,” if you will: We disturb existing systems!

A ripple effect is said to occur when there is an initial disturbance to a system -a stone drops into the water, for example, and the effect creates ripples that begin moving outward through the system -like ripples moving across a pond. A ripple effect can take place in any system like, for example, an eco-system, ideological system, educational system, or family system. The initial disturbance in the system can be a force for *right* and *good*, or a force for *wrong* and *evil*. It all depends... It depends on the underlying ethic and ethos -or system of values, of the individual or group disturbing the system.

When a dedicated and committed group of individuals share certain core beliefs and values and unite in the cause of advancing, preserving, and defending *equality, liberty, freedom, and justice* for all members of their community, they become a formidable force to be reckoned with. They can disturb and defeat oppressive and tyrannical ideological systems like, for example, the racialized ideology of Aryan Supremacy and the global ambitions of Nazi Germany during WW11 -or, more recently, the radical religious ideology of the ISIS Caliphate in Afghanistan and Iraq during our twenty-year intergenerational War on Terror.

The Screaming Eagles of the 101st Airborne Division have a history of disturbing oppressive and tyrannical systems. ... The Michigan chapter continues the legacy! We unabashedly advance our ideals and core values of equality, liberty, freedom, and justice for all, irrespective of one’s skin color, religion, gender, sexual preference, and ethnicity -or, any other divisive and polarizing way of categorizing people, for that matter.

These aspirational ideals and values provide our chapter members with a certain moral clarity and directionality that guide our decisions and activities, underlie our monthly meetings and annual reunions, and provide the moral foundations for determining that which constitutes the *good* and *right* in the continuing evolution of our educational mission and purpose as we strive to strengthen Michigan’s families and communities..

Our Chapter’s Continuing Evolution:

Education-centered; Mission-focused; Community Outreach

As a (501) (c) (19) non-profit Veterans organization, we are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of all Michigan Airborne/Air Assault service members and their families who served honorably in the United States Armed Forces, -e.g., the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force. Our 225 members include those who served during WW11, Korea, the Vietnam Era, the Cold War, and the 20-year intergenerational War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Consistent with the Association’s 501(c)(3) status, our chapter’s activities are organized around supporting and providing education in three significant ways: First, by supporting the Association’s Screaming Eagle Scholarship Foundation -financially and otherwise, the purpose

of which is to provide financial assistance to members and their families in pursuing their higher education; second -as previously mentioned, by providing educational programs for our chapter members on some aspect of military history -or some closely related topic, at our monthly luncheon meetings in Livonia; and, third, by revising our chapter's mission statement in 2019 and extending our educational outreach into Michigan's local communities.

We are committed to strengthening our local communities, families, and the next generation of young Americans by actively advancing the storied history, traditional beliefs, and cherished values of the 101st Airborne Division Association in Michigan's local communities. To this end, we joined Face Book (April 2017), went on-line with a new website (January 2020) (101stairbornemichiganchapter.com); and, launched the first edition of *The Michigan Screaming Eagle* (April 2021), the chapter's quarterly newsletter. We now reach into every local community in Michigan -and beyond: We are education-centered, mission-focused, and involved in community-outreach.

Our chapter members are encouraged to form satellite groups throughout Michigan, become more active in their local communities, develop educational programs rooted in our history, values, and traditions, and present and promote these programs to their local community leaders, groups, school boards, and schools, -e.g., elementary, high schools, community colleges and universities. In this way, we extend our educational outreach into Michigan's community schools and actively transmit our history, values, and traditions to the next generation of young Americans.

In so doing, we support our nation and its founding principles and strengthen our local communities and their families. At the same time, we honor and advance our history, core values, and traditions as they become more tightly interwoven into the social fabric of our local communities. And -fortuitously, this is happening none too soon. Over the past year, there has been a seismic shift in the focus and locus of our educational system.

Students are leaving our public school system in droves as their parents have come to realize the radicalized and racialized premise of Critical Race Theory and the 1619 Project and their influence in shaping their children's educational curriculum and content. During the past year, over 1 1/2 *million* students left the public-school system across the country. At the same time, there has been a dramatic and corresponding increase in student-enrollment in our private schools and in the Home School Movement.

The Michigan Chapter is moving forward in leaps and lurches as we reach out and implement our expanded educational mission in Michigan's local communities. Recently, we rather unexpectedly -but necessarily, expanded our educational mission even further in response to our nation's confused and chaotic exit from Afghanistan in August 2021, leading to "Operation Lone Eagle," our chapter's *Rendezvous with Destiny!*

"Operation Lone Eagle":

No One Left Behind!

No one left behind! is a principle deeply ingrained in the American character, spirit, ethic, and ethos. It is a core ethical principle and value woven tightly into the delicate knit of our cultural and social fabric. As an integral part of our society's ethical doctrine, it defines, reflects, and perpetuates that which is held out to be the dignity, the values, and the ideals of human life.

It speaks to how we understand and interpret ourselves as a nation and people with regard to what is *good* and *bad* and *right* and *wrong* as we move through life.

No one left behind! influences and shapes our nation's social policies and underlies our willingness to support the many social programs in contemporary society through our charitable contributions, tax dollars, and volunteer activities. And, it also occupies, of course, a central place in the core principles and values of the U.S. Armed Forces - "*We do not leave anyone behind!*"; it's a foundational pillar of the Warrior's Creed, "*I will never leave a fallen comrade!*"

Given the centrality of this core ethical principle and set of values in American society, the chaotic and confusing exit from Afghanistan in August 2021 provides the precipitant underlying Operation Lone Eagle, our chapter's *Rendezvous with Destiny!*

While most Americans were in favor of ending the never-ending 20-year intergenerational War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, most did *not* approve, however, of President Biden's exit plan -or lack thereof, as unknown hundreds -if not thousands, of American citizens, Afghan interpreters, and allied others were sealed off from the Kabul airport, trapped behind enemy lines, and left behind!!!

Shock and outrage - *not* "Shock and Awe," over his poorly designed and executed exit strategy dominated the national news, cable news, and radio talk shows. The exit from Afghanistan was confused, confusing, and chaotic and -for many American citizens and veterans, it was infuriating as they listened and watched helplessly as Americans and Afghans were knowingly left behind, openly violating -if not mocking, one of the core principles and values of the American people's ethic and ethos and the Warriors Creed: *No one left behind!*

After Al Qaeda's terrorist attack on the Twin Towers on 11 September 2001 at the World Trade Center, things unfolded very quickly: Nine days later -on 20 September, the first chapter in the story of our nation's response was written by President Bush when he declared a global War on Terror; twenty-six days later -on 7 October, a U.S.-led coalition began attacks on Taliban controlled Afghanistan with an intense bombing campaign by American and British forces; and, seventy-three-hundred days later -on 13 August 2021, the last chapter was written -supposedly, by President Biden with his confused and confusing withdrawal from Afghanistan, just 27 days before our Chapter's 34th annual reunion in Fenton, MI.

The desperate, frenzied, and chaotic scramble to leave Afghanistan is, perhaps, best captured in a 16 August headline in the Wall Street Journal, "*Saigon on Steroids!*" For those Eagles from the Vietnam Era, it reawakens vivid memories of Black Hawks desperately trying to evacuate more than 7,000 civilians and personnel from the roof tops in Saigon on 29 and 30 1975. For those Eagles from the Afghanistan-Iraq Era nearly 50 years later, the images of Afghans falling to their death from the tires and wheel wells of C-17 military aircraft rolling down the runway and lifting off from the Kabul airport are forever etched in their memories.

The lack of a coherent exit strategy from Afghanistan should in no way reflect poorly on our brave young men and women who volunteered to serve in the War on Terror, many of whom volunteered for multiple deployments. They went to war for their nation, did everything that was asked of them, and fought honorably and with valor. We cannot -we *must* not, leave our Eagles from Afghanistan and Iraq behind, feeling alone, forgotten, and betrayed, as were our Vietnam Eagles fifty years ago when they were shunned, shamed and looked down on upon their return.

We must let them know that they are not alone and forgotten: They are *not* "Lone Eagles." Indeed, they are members of Michigan's Airborne/Air Assault family and community;

they are our brothers and sisters! We must do everything we can to not leave any Michigan Eagle behind! ... *We leave no one behind!*

Given the pressing urgency to reach out to Michigan's Lone Eagles, our executive committee met on 20 September 20²¹ – just eight days after our 34th annual reunion (Fenton, MI), to consider how we might best reach out and connect with those Lone Eagles who served so valiantly in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Vietnam. We decided to do everything possible to let them and their families know that their service and sacrifices were not in vain: They truly matter to a very grateful nation!

There are a number of things we are doing: The October 15th, 2021 edition of *The Michigan Screaming Eagle* is organized around what our chapter members can do to ensure that no Michigan Eagle or their family is left behind. It contains very practical information that communicates where they can go for help including -but not limited to, legal aid, family counseling, financial assistance, and mental and physical healthcare. Our chapter members are encouraged to actively reach out to the Lone Eagles in their community and let them know about these different agencies, the services they offer, and their contact information.

Knowledge is power! And accessing that knowledge is empowering! Our chapter members constitute an already existing network that can provide Michigan's Lone Eagles with some very practical information, life-enriching opportunities, and life-altering experiences. In reaching out, connecting with, and passing this information on our members become a vital link in empowering our Lone Eagles! Information opens the door to “the possibilities of possibilities” in their lives.

Also, the chapter is offering a two-year chapter membership to every Lone Eagle (at no cost), the benefits of which include attending our monthly Gathering of Eagles in Livonia or a satellite group meeting in their local community. In effect, we encourage our chapter members to become force-multipliers in their local community. We are doing everything we can to reach out, connect with, and engage our Lone Eagles in the agencies in their respective community. There is something more, however, that is being done across Michigan....

Education and Michigan's Lone Eagles:

Leaving the Darkness of Their Personal Wars of Terror

No one -absolutely, no one, comes home from war the same as when they went. For too many of our Lone Eagles, the personal horrors and terrors of their war-time experiences have become their all-consuming and presiding reality: It is their “new normal.” Their traumatic and traumatizing experiences have become the lens through which their experiences of everyday life are filtered, understood, and interpreted: They interfere with and prevent them from adapting and reintegrating into civilian life.

Many of our Lone Eagles lived and functioned for far too long in the fog of war -scared, terrified, and not knowing if they would survive and make it back home. They lived in an ever-present and all-pervasive low-grade state of dread, anxiety, and hyper-vigilance. Too many walked to the edge of the abyss and are left standing there alone, staring into the void, reliving, re-experiencing, and repeating again and again their intensely conflicted and traumatic war-time experiences in living color in the present moment of their past.

In reaching out and connecting with our Lone Eagles, our chapter members let them know that someone else knows something about the darkness at the edge of the abyss, the nighttime dreads and anxieties, the contradictory and conflicted realities in which they live, and the ever-present moral anguish and guilt -and agitated states of anger, if not rage, over feeling that they and their comrades were betrayed on 13 August 2021 and that their sacrifices were meaningless, as so many Vietnam Eagles felt after the fall of Saigon.

Left behind, feeling forgotten, and believing that their sacrifices -and those of their fallen comrades, were for nothing, the darkness and isolation at the edge of the abyss all too often turns into a viscous downward spiral of helplessness, hopelessness, and despair. Too many times, the only viable solution for the Lone Eagle is suicide -often disguised in one form or another, and the drama of this trauma becomes forever etched in the minds and memories of every family member.² And the beat goes on...

At our executive committee meeting on 20 September 2021 -eight days after our 34th annual reunion, the committee decided that we cannot simply stand by watching and doing nothing about our Lone Eagles who are at great risk of being forgotten and left behind. So, we developed and adopted "Operation Lone Eagle!" as an integral part of our community-based educational project, moving forward.

We are currently engaged in community-based education in several significant ways: First, by participating in the classroom education of Michigan's next generation of young Americans by communicating the storied history, beliefs, and tradition of the 101st Airborne Division and, second, by reaching out and connecting with Michigan's Lone Eagles and providing them with certain life-altering and life-enriching opportunities through the lived-experiences of everyday life.

Operation Lone Eagle -Grant Request:

How, Where and When Funds Are Spent

Hosting the Association's 77th national reunion in August 2022 provides our chapter with the unique opportunity to reach out to Michigan's Lone Eagles and welcome them back into our Airborne/Air Assault community. To this end, we established "The Lone Eagle Fund" in October 2021 so that as many Lone Eagles as possible can attend our Association's 77th national reunion at the Amway Grand Hotel in Grand Rapids, MI (August 2022) and, also, our chapter's 35th annual reunion in Brighton, MI (September 2022).³

In this way, we are reaching out, connecting with, and inviting our Lone Eagles to rejoin our Airborne/Air Assault family and participate in as many life-altering opportunities and life-enriching experiences as possible with their brothers and sisters. All contributions received will be used to cover the costs associated with registration fees and transportation, food and lodging, and providing opportunities to participate in normalizing activities like, for example, city tours, golf outings, and charter-boat fishing. Funds can also be used to help underwrite some of the chapter's operating costs associated with Operation Lone Eagle so that we might continue moving forward with this project.

² This has been my experience in over 50 years of clinical practice and teaching, and supervising and consulting in various residential treatment facilities, including 25 years at the VAMC-Allen Park and the VAMC-Detroit. Also, I have published many articles on the manifestations and treatment of extreme psychic trauma in peer-reviewed journals, and have presented many papers on the same in local, national, and international conferences and forums.

We understand and interpret Operation Lone Eagle -in its essence, to be an educational and spiritual project -*not* medical and scientific. From the Latin word *ducere* (meaning *to draw* or *lead*), and the prefix *e* (meaning *out of* or *away from*) the word *education* -in the context of Operation Lone Eagle, translates into *drawing* or *leading* the isolated and withdrawn Lone Eagle *out of* -or, *away from*, the darkness in which they live at the edge of the abyss into the light of everyday life as they rejoin their comrades, families, and communities.

Many of our chapter members have “walked the talk” in their own lived-experiences of standing at the edge of the abyss. In the very act of them reaching out, a connection is made between the Lone Eagle and someone who knows something about being in that dark place and space: “Reaching out and connecting” is understood as the first step involved in drawing and leading our Lone Eagles *out of* -or *away from*, the dense, thick darkness of their personal Wars of Terror in the private theatres of their minds and move towards the light.

As stated in General Order No. 5 that gave birth to the 101st Airborne Division in 1942, ... The history we shall make, the record of high achievement we hope to write in the annals of the American Army and the American people, *depends wholly and completely on the men of this division. Each individual, each officer and each enlisted man, must therefore regard himself as a necessary part of a complex and powerful instrument for the overcoming of the enemies of the nation...* (italics added for emphasis)

Again, our soldiers and families did everything asked of them to overcome the enemies of our great nation. We cannot -and must not, abandon them now: We must not leave them behind! We are committed to successfully carrying out Operation Lone Eagle. We believe it has moral clarity, purpose, and direction: It is *good* and *right*. Moreover, we believe that it can make a meaningful and significant difference in the lives of our Lone Eagles as they connect with themselves, their families, and their communities through community-based outreach and educational programs. Hopefully, you agree.

Please consider making a financial contribution. For those interested, a Donation form can be found in the Donation/Scholarships section of this website. Whatever you can contribute is much-needed and greatly appreciated. While our financial resources are meager and our sources of revenue are limited, our dedication and commitment to the success of Operation Lone Equal is nothing less than our *Rendezvous with Destiny!*