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Dennis Adamscheck

Dear Dennis:

Many years ago when you first asked me about my thoughts concerning Bobby Garwood, I told you that I felt that the Defense Department in general, and the Marine Corps in particular, were reacting to their frustration at being unable to prosecute the high ranking officers who were clearly guilty of collaborating with the the enemy, other officers who made damaging statements in order to obtain early release, or the enlisted men who paraded around Hanoi as "anti war" protesters. To this you add the need to discredit any one who just by coming home, proved that three Presidents lied to the American public when they claimed that no "American servicemen remained alive in Communist Viet Nam." I told you then that if Bobby Garwood was guilty of misconduct, so were many, if not all, who survived the POW ordeal.

Since many valued my words in a climate of general confusion and misrepresentation surrounding the MIA/POW issue, I made a point of meeting and speaking with Bobby. I found him to appear to be a sincere and honest young man who had been through the most devastating experience possible for a surviving POW - coming home to accusations and trumped up charges leading to punishment by your own government at a time when you are most vulnerable. However, I realized that I did not have the time to try to research all of the charges and innuendoes, so I contacted Winston Groom, the author of CONVERSATIONS WITH THE ENEMY, the Bobby Garwood story. Here was a reporter who frankly was skeptical about what he first learned from Bobby Garwood. Then, as he delved more and more into the research required to write the story, he found himself slowly coming to realize that this was not the story of a traitor and a collaborator, but rather the inspiring story of now a young, not well educated, Marine private was able to call on an inner strength and good old American ingenuity to survive and still minimize any benefits the enemy might gain from his survival. In short, a testimony to an American hero. Based on what I learned, I strongly endorsed Bobby Garwood, called to task other former POWs who derided him, and recommended to those who looked to me for guidance that they should support his cause.

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Dennis, when you recently called me to once more seek my support for Bobby, I hesitated. At the ripe old age of 69 and having recently completed back surgery, I asked myself why should I once more arouse the ire of the more vocal and highly placed former colleagues who seek to elevate their own status by covering their fears of personal inadequacy by denigrating the actions of someone who may have survived more than they could have had they been in his place? I let my mind go back to the terror of those long gone years and asked myself if I could have survived as well. I had two wars and several skirmishes under my belt, a lot of education and was imprisoned, not in the primitive conditions of the South Vietnamese jungle, but in the structured prison system of North Viet Nam where pain and deprivation were a daily occurrence, but death was seldom faced. Frankly, I admire his ability to not only survive the 14 endless years, but even more, the years of unjust punishment since his repatriation to his home. I still ask myself why people like the Marine Lt. Colonel, who beat up his fellow Americans to force them to appear for propaganda purposes in front of Jane Fonda, is not only allowed to retire honorably with full rights, but is accepted by high ranking Democrats as something of a personality. Why men who live in comparative luxury, demean themselves by continuing to deny the unescapable truth of Bobby Garwood's true status, an American Hero, rather than the scapegoat for the collective sense of "not being quite tough enough" to be found hidden in the private darkness of the minds of those who survived.

With that in mind, and remembering the Serenity Prayer, I realize that it is wise to now seek to "change those things that can be changed." Put my name on the growing list of those who demand justice for all American Servicemen and Women, in or out of uniform, particularly Bobby Garwood. Give him back the \$102,000 or more due in back pay that was stolen from him. Give him back his citizenship, his rights, his privileges. Give him back his life. He has earned, at least this from we, the people of his homeland. And, tell Bobby that like so many others I, as one who has been there, still stand beside him.

God bless you



Laird Gutteresen

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