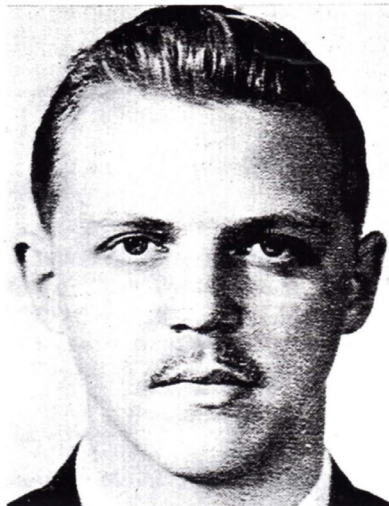


PARSELS, JOHN WILLIAM

RIP May 11, 2017

Name: John
William Parsels
Rank/Branch:
O3/US Army
Unit: HHC, 2nd
Brigade, 101st
Airborne
Division
Date of Birth:
28 June 1945
Home City of
Record:
Bradenton FL
Date of Loss:
05 February
1970
Country of
Loss: South
Vietnam
Loss
Coordinates:
163045N
1072824E
(YD494093)
Status (in
1973):
Returned POW
Category:
Aircraft/Vehicle
/Ground:
UH1H



P091

Other Personnel
in Incident:
Tom Y.
Kobashigawa,
Daniel H. Hefel
(returned
POWs); James
M. Lyon
(missing)

REMARKS:
730327 RELSD
BY PRG

Source: Compiled by HOMECOMING II and the P.O.W. NETWORK from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, interviews. 2017

SYNOPSIS: At 1530 hours on February 5, 1970, Capt. James M. Lyon, pilot, Capt. John W. Parsels, copilot, SP5 Tom Y. Kobashigawa, crew chief, and SP4 Daniel Hefel, door gunner, were flying a UH1H helicopter (serial #68-16441) on a maintenance mission from Hue to Phy Bai, South Vietnam.

When the aircraft was about 18 miles northwest of Hue City, the helicopter caught fire and crashed (due to a malfunction). Capt. Lyon was thrown clear of the aircraft and was burned extensively over his body and part of his right leg. His leg was severed four inches below the knee. The other crew members were also injured and could not take evasive action. They were captured at 1630 hours by NVA troops and spent the night near the crash site.

Throughout the night, the crew members heard their pilot yelling and moaning in pain. At 0600 hours, Capt. Lyon moaned and then a shot was heard from his position about 30 feet from the aircraft wreckage. No other outcry from Capt. Lyon was heard, and the others believed that he had been killed by the guard.

Two weeks later, Capt. Parsels was told by 1Lt. Lee Van Mac (an NVA commander at "Camp Farnsworth") that Capt. Lyon died from his wounds and was buried at the crash site. 1Lt. Lee Van Mac gave Capt. Parsels the personal effects of Capt. Lyon, including his ID card and several photos which appeared to be of Lyon's wife.

In late March, 1973, Parsels, Hefel and Kobashigawa were released from prisons in North Vietnam. In their debriefings, all three concurred on the story that Lyon had apparently been shot. They considered it a mercy killing, because their pilot had been so seriously injured that they doubted that he could survive.

Curiously, the Vietnamese have not returned the body of Capt. James M. Lyon, nor have they been forthcoming with information concerning him. Tragically, Capt. Lyon has been a prisoner of war for nearly 20 years - alive or dead.

Even more tragic are the thousands of reports that continue to flow in indicating that some hundreds of Americans are still prisoner in Indochina. It's long past time we brought our men home.

SOURCE: WE CAME HOME copyright 1977

Captain and Mrs. Frederic A Wyatt (USNR Ret), Barbara Powers Wyatt, Editor
P.O.W. Publications, 10250 Moorpark St., Toluca Lake, CA 91602

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UPDATE - 09/95 by the P.O.W. NETWORK, Skidmore, MO

JOHN W. PARSELS

Captain - United States Army

Shot Down: February 5, 1970

Released: March 27, 1973

I was born 28 June 1945 in Tecumseh, Michigan. I have a sister six years younger, a brother nine years younger and a brother three years older. I spent my early childhood in a small town near Jackson, Michigan. At age fourteen my family moved to Bradenton, Florida where I attended Southeast high school until I got married during the summer of my junior-senior year. My wife and I completed our high school education at Manatee Adult education and graduated on June 4th 1964. We were divorced in 1966. I have two boys, Donny, age 6, and Johnny, age 9.

I was drafted in December 1965 and took basic training at Ft. Benning, Georgia where I applied for Officer Candidate School (OCS). Upon completion of OCS I went to Korea as a 2nd Lieutenant, Infantry. I spent 9 months as an Instructor and Asst. Commandant of the 7th Infantry Division, Counter Guerrilla Warfare School. At that time I transferred to 2nd Battalion 31st Infantry and spent 4 months on the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) before returning to Ft. Wolters, Texas to attend Rotary Wing Flight training. I spent 4 months at Wolters going through the primary phase of Helicopter training and then went to Ft. Rucker, Alabama for 4 months in the secondary phase of training and graduated as a pilot in February 1969. On March 13, 1969 I was promoted to Captain and went to Ft. Eustis, Virginia to attend aircraft Maintenance Officers Course and graduated as a maintenance officer on July 2, 1969.

On August 14th, 1969 I arrived in South Vietnam and was assigned to 5th Transportation Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) at Hue (Way) city. I spent 5 months with 5th Transportation as shop platoon leader before transferring to Headquarters and Headquarters Company 2nd Infantry Brigade, Aviation Platoon, Maintenance Officer. On 5 February 1970 while on an area orientation flight near the Ashau Valley the UH-1-H Huey helicopter which I was flying in as co-Pilot, crashed into the side of a mountain at a speed of approximately 100 mph. The aircraft caught fire seconds after impact. I was able to crawl away from the aircraft although I sustained a broken leg in the crash. The other three crew members were also able to get away from the aircraft although the Aircraft Commander (the other Pilot) was injured badly and I believe died later.

Approximately one hour after the crash we were taken prisoner by what I believe to have been North Vietnamese soldiers. They tied my hands behind my back and left me lying where they found me until the next morning. At that time they put me in a hammock and carried me for six days over mountainous terrain to a camp I believe to have been somewhere in Laos. My crew chief and door gunner were also carried to this camp, although they were kept separated from me. I was given penicillin shots for infection and vitamin shots to keep my health for the entire two months that I was kept at this camp. I was given plenty of food which consisted of rice with a bowl of bouillon type soup three times a day. They also straightened my leg and splinted it. In April I was able to walk on crutches and was moved by truck

to North Vietnam. For the first eight months I was kept at a camp outside Hanoi where the treatment was the worst of my entire captivity. For the first four months I was kept in solitary confinement where I passed the time thinking about my past, future, and the predicament I was in at the time I also would go mosquito hunting nightly, play with ants, watch a baby rat playing in the room, and spend at least a half an hour brushing my teeth each morning along with many hours exercising my leg and cleaning my room.

After four months I was moved in with three other pilots. Our food was totally inadequate at this camp. It consisted of two bowls of watery soup made of squash or greens, and two small loaves of french type bread and occasionally; a few chicken bones. The medical treatment was fair. We suffered with skin rashes, diarrhea, and occasional malaria attacks. We were harassed constantly and spent all but about an hour in the room. We took a bath every other day. In November 1970 we were moved to a Camp called Plantation Gardens located in Hanoi. At this camp conditions were much better. We got enough food, fairly good medical treatment and very little harassment. We exercised approximately one hour a day and took a bath six days a week. We were also given several Russian novels along with a few American novels and magazines. We were shown movies once a month and given cards, chess and checkers. On holidays, including our Independence Day, we received special meals. Our Christmas meal consisted of turkey, french fries, salad, pork, soup, bananas, and a half bottle of beer. We listened to the voice of Vietnam radio daily which gave us their propaganda, any anti-war protests from the states, some sports from the states and sometimes American music. There were a few instances when prisoners were beaten in this camp for violating Camp Regulations which could include anything they wanted to call a regulation.

I was put on my knees for about three hours with my hands over my head and then shackled to a bed in solitary for a week for talking to other prisoners. Before 1969 there was a lot of beating and torture. Also in this camp from about April til September or October, we would constantly sweat. The rooms were very poorly ventilated and the temperature would stay in the high 90's or 100's. We would sweat 24 hours a day. All we had to cool ourselves with was a small hand fan. During this time we would break out with heat rash and boils over our entire bodies. These months were truly miserable.

In December 1973, we were moved to a portion of the Hanoi Hilton which is an old French prison. The facilities there were much better. More ventilation, larger rooms, and we were allowed outside with everyone else for at least half the day. This is where we were released from in three groups. I was in the last group released on 27 March 1973.

I always felt that someday I would be released but the question was when? My main concern from the beginning was to let my family and everyone know that I was still alive. I was having a constant battle with my faith in God and I questioned everything - from myself, our country, our way of life, our political system, and our government's policies. Since I've returned to the United States I find I have a very strong faith in God. I believe He has guided me through my life and keeps me headed in the right direction.

I have been exposed to communist propaganda and this has made me appreciate our country and our way of life. Believe me when I say this is the greatest country in the world! I have learned the value education, not only for the ability to have a good job, but to be aware of what's going on in the world. Before I was captured I was like the majority of American people who don't take the time to read and look into what's going on, or to vote. When the Vietnamese started telling about the war and the reasons we were there. I had nothing to come back with because I had never taken the time to look into it and find out why. All I knew was that we were there to help the Vietnamese people. I was also very disappointed when I learned of the low percentage of people who exercised their privilege to vote. I feel that if everyone would vote, then we could make this country a better country than it already is.

I also learned that the Vietnamese people are human just like you and I. They love, hate, and have the same feelings as we do. I have no hatred towards the Vietnamese as people. All war is senseless and should never happen. I hope the future will bring peace to Vietnam and the WORLD.

I have a great respect for President Nixon for getting us out of Vietnam, especially after reading the Pentagon Papers, which allowed me to understand the very difficult decisions which he had to make concerning the Vietnam situation.

Also, I feel that if our return has helped to re-unite our country, then my three years in "captivity" have been well spent.

There are still many Americans that are still Missing in Action. Let us not forget these men. Let us remain united in our efforts to find out the status of these Americans.

God bless all of you for your concern that you have shown towards us. God Bless America!

John Parsels retired from the United States Army as a Major. He resided in Florida until his death.

Decorations and Awards

National Defense Service Medal, Army Aviator Badge, Vietnam (6 Campaigns), Vietnam Campaign Medal, 70/s Bars, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Army Commendation Medal, Purple Heart, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal 301c, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Korea Defense Service Medal.

May 15, 2017

John Parsels passed on May 11th and his funeral Mass will be held on Tuesday, May 16th at 1400 hours at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church located at 509 N. Florida Avenue, Tampa,

FL 33602.

For those of you that didn't know John he is a Life Member of VHPAF and was captured in 1970 and repatriated in 1973. As you may imagine the time he spent as a POW was very hard and only a brave person could have lived through it. When he returned and joined the VHPAF, John donated his POW "uniform" to the VHPAF and it is currently on display as a part of our Memorabilia display in The Florida Air Museum in Lakeland.

BA