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Weekly Newsgram - February 28th 2018

Billy Graham He wanted to be an Army Chaplain



Billy Graham, Pastor to Presidents, will be laid to rest this Friday, March 2, at the library bearing his name in Charlotte, North Carolina. Countless numbers have paid tribute to him since his death last week following 99 years of service here on this earth. Today he lies in honor at the Capitol Rotunda. Only three other private citizens have been accorded this honor - two Capitol Police Officers, Jacob Chestnut and John Gibson, both of whom were died in the line of duty, and Rosa Parks, African-American civil rights hero, who died in 2005.

Many know of Billy Graham the world renowned evangelist who brought his crusade style preaching to over 210 million around the world. A biographer, William Martin, said Graham "can safely be regarded as the best who ever lived at what he did." Quite an honor.

But did you know that Billy Graham on finishing his college days at Wheaton wanted to be an Army chaplain. After marrying Ruth in 1943 Graham planned to become an Army chaplain. However, he fell seriously ill and by the time he recovered and was physically able to apply, World War II was nearly over and the opportunity had slipped his grasp.

Not forgetting his love and concern for those who serve however, Graham and his team accepted an invitation from General William Westmoreland to visit Vietnam in 1966. While in country, Graham and his team consisting of Cliff Barrows, George Beverly Shea, Tedd Smith, and Dan Piatt among others toured field hospitals, servicemen's centers, Vietnamese villages, mess halls, officer's clubs, improvised chapels, and schools built by American Servicemen for Vietnamese children.

Graham was not content to stay in Saigon but insisted on going north toward the DMZ. At An Khe he held a Christmas Eve candlelight service for nearly 4,000 troops standing in boot-top

mud. in Nha Trang he hosted a dinner for missionaries, chaplains, and Vietnamese pastors. He and his teams took numerous trips via helicopter to remote sites where he conducted services, dedicated chapels, and made himself available to the soldier on the ground.

Returning in 1968, Graham and company traveled further north to Phu Bai where he held a service for 5,000 troops in the pouring rain. His opening line to them was, "I come to bring you greeting from millions of Americans who are proud of you and what you are doing." Other stops on this trip included a COD ride to the USS Ranger where he held a hangar bay service while numerous destroyers sailed along side with sailors watching on closed circuit TV.

Even as Dr. Graham desired to serve those who serve with an unwavering commitment to the nation's men and women in uniform, The Billy Graham Association continues to meet the needs of veterans and their families through retreats for married couples and injured veterans as well as training opportunities for military chaplains. This years annual chaplain retreat will take place in Charlotte, NC, on Nov 26 - 29. More information [here](#).

Graham's impact and message will be examined by political scientists and historians for decades to come. As we remember him and his ministry this week, we give thanks for a man true to his call who loved and respected those who serve with sacrifice and pride.

More reading - [Billy Graham, volunteer military chaplain](#)
[Evangelist Billy Graham, Who Reached Millions, Dies at 99](#)
[With the Troops in Vietnam](#)
[Billy Graham to lie in honor in Capitol Rotunda](#)

Director of Communications
Lyman Smith



In Memoriam

***COL Samuel Stocks, USAF, Retired
we ask all to remember in prayer
Karen Stocks, past MCA President,
as Sam is laid to rest today at Arlington Cemetery
Graveside service at 3:00 PM***

**VA Choice,
Department of Veterans Affairs,
and Veteran Service Organizations**

In case you missed it, one of the top controversies regarding currently serving Cabinet Members embroiled VA Secretary David Shulkin. The VA Inspector General found Shulkin "improperly accepted airfare for his wife and Wimbeldon tickets during a European trip last year." Shulkin initially called the [findings unfair but following its \(the IG report\) release expressed regret and said he would repay the cost.](#)



One might say, so what else is new? He is a man in a powerful position who made a mistake. Hopefully he will do better in the future. Let's get on with business.

However, there may be much more going on behind the scenes. On Monday of this week, White House Chief of Staff, Gen. John F. Kelly, met with veterans groups at the White House to discuss Shulkin's status and accusations of turmoil at VA caused by Trump administration political appointees.

From [Military.com](#) - *The meeting at the White House included the advocacy group Concerned Veterans for America, which several of the major veterans organizations have charged is in league with efforts to oust Shulkin and outsource VA health care, according to sources familiar with the meeting.*

The meeting with retired Marine Gen. Kelly included the executive directors of the so-called "Big Six" veterans service organizations -- the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), AmVets and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). Also attending were CVA, the Military Officers Association of America, the Vietnam Veterans of America, and the Wounded Warrior Project, according to the sources.

Following the meeting, VFW Executive Director Bob Wallace issued a statement calling the session "very productive." He said "We discussed current legislation that would better care for veterans and we discussed current operations inside the Department of Veterans Affairs. It was a good meeting."

The meeting at the White House was followed Monday afternoon with a joint session of the House and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees hearing testimony from the same VSO leaders regarding their concern for the turmoil at VA and the potential impact it has on the future of care for our veterans (see [Vets Groups Want a Meeting with Trump to Sort Out VA Choice Impasse](#)).

The current controversy is not new. It seems to revolve around two ideologies going forward - one which wants to preserve the VA in its current form as it incorporates more and enhanced opportunity for care of veterans in the community when and where it makes sense; and a second which would like to dismantle the VA system and replace it with largely a special HMO for veterans to assist them in gaining care in our civilian health system.

As chaplains for life, these matters are of great concern to us. All of our members are encouraged to seek out the facts and be a part of the discussion within your communities and the various MSOs and VSOs where you have voice. Our veterans are too important to write them off because of political controversy.

Women's Military Chaplain Training May 29-31 2018

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces and the Military Chaplains Association are co-sponsoring the Women's Military Chaplain Training on May 29-31, 2018 at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center, Marriottsville, Maryland. The focus of the training is Connect, Cultivate and Contextualize. Women serving as military chaplains in all components and all services are invited to attend. Unfortunately, chaplain candidates are not able to attend.

Those attending the training will increase networking skills, resilience and pastoral identity while decreasing isolation. Chaplain (Major General-Retired) Lorraine Potter, first woman Chief of Chaplains for the Air Force, will be the keynote speaker. She will address how to cultivate a network while increasing resilience. Chaplain Potter will also share her story as the first female Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force and provide mentorship and modeling for those in attendance.

Registration is open through April 16th. Cost is \$150 per participant. This will cover all meals and lodging.

The Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center is at 1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104, rccbonscours.com 410.442.3120. Each room is a single room with a private bath providing toiletries and towels. The closest airport, the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), 7035 Elm Road, Baltimore, MD 21240, is 22 miles away.

All meals will be served in the dining room and two hospitality rooms will provide fresh fruit and beverages 24 hours a day. If you have special dietary needs, please fill out the appropriate form available at on-line [registration](#).

More information is available at NCMAF.net



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If you missed the February 21st edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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