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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

## Weekly Newsgram - April 4th 2018

### The Anniversary of the Assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King



The servant ethos of the Army chaplaincy includes three principles -

Nurture the Living; Care of the Wounded; and Honor the Dead.

On that history changing night, 50 years ago in Memphis, TN, when the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated, chaos erupted around him and began to consume the cities of our great nation. Much is written about the events of the evening and the impact this tragic death had on our nation. In the midst of this history two Franciscan nuns were present to honor him in his death.

A simple but [poignant story](#) provides us assurance that in the midst of the confusion and dread, these two individuals, called to service in meeting the spiritual needs of others, lived out their servant ethos as they were present with him to fulfill their duty.

Upon being shot King was taken to St. Joseph Hospital in Memphis. This was a Catholic institution with 400 patient beds and a nursing school. Two Franciscan nuns, Sisters Jane Klein and Anna Marie Hofmeyer were walking the grounds as they heard the sirens of an ambulance. On being paged to the unfolding scene, they were told of King's having been shot and brought to their facility.

After King had been pronounced dead and the activity shifted to how to break the news to the nation, the two Sisters went to the E.R. to see how they might be of assistance. Sister Hofmeyer recounted, "There was a gentleman as big as the door guarding the door and he looked at us and said 'you want in?' We said yes, we'd like to go pray with him. So he let us in, closed the door behind us and gave us our time."

Three decades later, Sister Klein met with King's widow, Coretta Scott King, at a meeting of the Catholic Health Association Board in Atlanta where Mrs. King was a keynote speaker. The Franciscan sister and the widow of the civil rights leader shared with each other how they had spent that night.

Sister Klein said being present that night in 1968 was "indescribable."

"You do what you got to do," she said. "What's the right thing to do? Hindsight? It was a privilege to be able to take care of him that night and to pray with him. Who would have ever thought that we would be that privileged?"

As we remember the life and death of Martin Luther King today, we give thanks for the gracious provision of these servants who spent time honoring the dead, quietly caring for King in his death that fateful evening.

May we be reminded of the importance of each life, especially those lost in violence, and our call to live out our servant ethos, even in the most unlikely of circumstances.

The above story from The Catholic News Agency article, [\*The nuns who witnessed the life and death of Martin Luther King\*](#), by Kevin Jones, published on January 14, 2018



## In Memoriam

### *Otis Dean Essex Jr.*

Commander, CHC, USN, Retired  
United Methodist Church  
Born November 7, 1926  
Died February 25, 2018  
North Canton, OH

## Executive Director Notes

First of all, my opening prayer for those of us who celebrated Passover or Easter in the Western Christian tradition this past week is that we were able to be re-grounded in our faith, and celebrate the events of this past weekend with family and friends. And for our Eastern Christian tradition friends who are celebrating Holy Week and Easter this week, my prayer is the same for you, with perhaps a bit warmer weather.



There is quite a bit of energy about the upcoming issues of the magazine, and you will note below that Lyman Smith, our Communications Director, has noted the date to receive articles for each issue, and the projected publication date for each issue as well. I will share with you that the theme of each issue will be energizing, and especially for the Summer issue, historic.

As we look toward our 100th anniversary in 2025 - not really that far away - I invite you to weigh in on "what will we look like?" In January, I found out that the Coast Guard Auxiliary now has a Chaplain Corps, which mirrors its "sibling" auxiliary, the Civil Air Patrol. Should we consider inviting the CGA chaplains into MCA? There are also other professional, endorsed federal chaplains that a) we could benefit from having in our midst and b) would benefit from our advocacy for them. Do any of you have any thoughts on who we may want to add to our fold as we move forward? Please feel free to let us know any thoughts you have on what 2025 might "look like" for us as MCA.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the pain that has recently been felt in the Marine Forces Reserve with the relief of the senior chaplain "due to a loss of trust and confidence" by the commander. This action has been reported in several sources - the article from the Marine Corps Times on the subject is available [here](#). I ask your prayers for the chaplain, his family, and for the Marine Corps Reserve leadership, chaplains, Marines and families. None of us at MCA know any more about the situation than what is in the article.

Finally, in next week's Newsgram we should have the final pieces in place for our Fall National Institute which should be absolutely dynamic. Stay tuned for more details.

Peace be with each of you as you continue your remarkable ministry, whether still serving in uniform or at the VA, or by your continued service in the communities which benefit from your experience and wisdom in retirement.

Executive Director  
Fr. Razz Waff, DMin, BCC  
RazzW@aol.com,

## [Bombardier's road to priesthood took a turn in Hanoi prison](#)

**Retired Air Force Reserve Col. Chaplain Bob Certain** had often wondered what path to take in life - others noticed it even when he said little. The slow-motion nudge he got on his final combat mission helped settle the question.

He had long thought of becoming a minister. But busy, focused and never quite ready to commit, Certain put off the decision. But things were beginning to change even before Dec. 18, 1972, when his B-52G was hit by two surface-to-air missiles over Hanoi during the Vietnam War.

On Friday morning, the 23rd of March, 2018, Certain looked back on that mission, his 100th aboard the fabled Stratofortress, before a crowd at the Missing Man Monument at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, saying he was pleased "to be with the men who kept their honor as we lived in the hardships of incarceration in Vietnam."

Certain's ejection from the bomber seemed to take forever. But it was only a split second before he was tumbling in the night sky under a full moon, enveloped in darkness yet ultimately headed



**Chaplain Certain greeted by Lt. Col. Jon Elza, Freedom River Reunion**

toward the light of his faith.

"I think it was God doing it. I thought it was kind of strange until I started reading the Bible and realizing that it seemed like everybody that God called ... they all had arguments with God," Certain, 70, of San Antonio, said in an interview. "So I wasn't so unique after all, and I think in the Bible it's fairly common for people to sense this call from God and say, 'That can't be happening.'"

Certain survived the ejection, was captured, and became a prisoner of war in Hanoi. Like all POWs, he had been trained to foil interrogations, to give worthless information or lie when at the breaking point under torture.

Once freed, the Air Force gave Certain his pick of assignments, but he had other plans. He entered the seminary and later joined the Air Force Reserve. A parish priest in Episcopal churches across the U.S. and the author of "Unchained Eagle, From Prisoner of War to Prisoner of Christ," Certain for a time was the rector at Ford's church during the former president's retirement years in California.

Certain was 25 when he flew his last mission, and he had flown in combat since 1971 as a B-52 navigator-bombardier. He had been scheduled to fly home from Guam that day but flew 13 hours west instead, his plane carrying more than two dozen bombs destined for a Hanoi rail yard. His return to the U.S. had been delayed by Operation Linebacker II, the "Christmas bombings" that ran from Dec. 18 to 29, 1972, aimed to pressure North Vietnam to end the war.

We at MCA give thanks for Certain's commitment and service. Having served as our Executive Director, we congratulate Certain for this opportunity to be recognized and to honor the other brave POWs of America's wars.

For the full article along with video of Certain's champagne flight see [Bombardier's road to priesthood took a turn in Hanoi prison](#) by Sig Christensom, published March 23rd, 2018 by the San Antonio Express News

## **The Military Chaplains Magazine 2018 Themes and Submission Deadlines**

### **Spring Issue** - *The Intersection of Spiritual and Psychological Care*

Articles to be submitted by April 30

Publication May 21

### **Summer Issue** - *Chaplains and World War 1*

Articles to be submitted by June 30

Publication July 23

### **Fall Issue** - *Religious Accommodation in 2018*

Articles to be submitted by September 30

Publication September 24

### **Winter Issue** - *Chaplaincy and Religion in a Post-Truth World*

Articles to be submitted by November 30

Publication December 21

**The South Carolina Chapter  
of the  
Military Chaplains Association  
(MCA)**

***SOUTH CAROLINA CHAPTER***



## Luncheon

Tuesday, the 10th of April, 1145

Program:

### **The Richland County Sheriff's Department on Home and School Security (Do's and Don'ts)**

NCO Club ... Lee Road ... Fort Jackson, SC

RSVP: SJTBoone@gmail.com AFFIRMATIVE ONLY!!!

#### **Warning Order:**

**Dinner Cruise on the Spirit of Lake Murray with the  
National Executive Committee of the MCA ...**

**Tuesday ... 1 May ... Departure Time and Cost to follow**

Visit our [website](#). There you will be able to [update your contact information](#), [join](#), [pay your dues](#), [make donations](#), [file ministry reports](#), contact our supporters, [read The Military Chaplain](#) magazine and otherwise [connect to resources](#).

If you missed the March 28th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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AND THOSE THEY SERVE: military members, veterans, and their families at home and around the world

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