

Testimony of Jo Anne Shirley
Sister of Major Bobby M. Jones, MD, USAF, MIA November 28, 1972
Before the Subcommittee on National Security
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
November 19, 2019

I am very grateful to Chairman Lynch and Ranking Member Hice for the opportunity to share my brother's history with you and our efforts to reach the fullest possible accounting.

My brother, Maj. Bobby M. Jones, M.D., USAF Flight Surgeon, was two years older than me, and we had a very close relationship.

He graduated from the University of GA, finished the Medical College of GA. and did his Internship in Dallas, TX, at Baylor University Hospital.

The Vietnam War was raging. Bobby had a very low draft number, so he decided to join the USAF for two years and return home to complete his Medical Residency.

In September 1972, he entered the USAF and was assigned to Udorn, Thailand. He took care of the servicemen at Udorn and even helped local residents.

On November 28, 1972 Bobby, was flying backseater in an F4D headed to Da Nang, South Vietnam. There is a large mountain - Bach Ma Mountain.- as you approach to land. It appears that the F4D clipped the top of Bach Ma Mountain as they came in to land. When we learned Bobby was Missing-in-Action, I promised him I would do everything I could to bring him home.

JPAC and DPAA have excavated the entire mountain slope and have found no human remains. I still work hard to help get the fullest possible accounting of all our Missing Servicemen. I realized quickly that this issue is not just about Bobby, but about all of the 1,587 missing from the Vietnam War, as well as the over 73,000 other Americans still Unaccounted For from wars and conflicts prior to the Vietnam War.

My parents learned about the National League of POW/MIA Families about a year later, and we decided to join and have never missed a meeting. I have served as the GA State Coordinator for about 36+ years. I have worked diligently to keep our Governor, the GA State Veterans Dept., and our US Senators and Representatives up to date and knowledgeable about challenges we frequently face. Each year at our Annual meeting here in DC, my husband and I come two days early. The first day, we go to both GA Senator's offices. The second day we go to all 14 GA Congressmen's office and deliver an update. We try to set up a meeting with each one and often only meet with staff members. I leave an update with everyone and followup after our Annual Meeting.

I served on the League's Board of Directors for 18 years and was Chairman for 16 of those years. I was blessed to have support from my husband and my parents. I was blessed to make four delegation trips to SE Asia - Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand - where we met with high officials in each country. We went out to 12-14 ongoing site Excavations, stayed in base camps in very remote locations and interacted with JTF-FA then JPAC working the sites.

I got to see firsthand what our excavation teams were doing to try to recover remains and airplane debris.

I have been to HI several times and visited the CILHI/JPAC facility each time. I got to see how the specialists process remains that are recovered, trying to extract samples of their DNA to match the DNA in the Armed Forces DNA Laboratory's database with DNA from the maternal side of the family.

The accounting effort faces a number of challenges:

1 - Funding

2 - I regret that DPAA, DIA and AFDIL do not have enough personnel to reach the seemingly ever-increasing goals first set by Congress and now by aspirations of the Lab leadership. When WWII and Korean War families finally got organized, we saw a vast expansion of the accounting mission to include all wars, but without the resources – personnel and budget – to meet requirements resulting from the vast mission expansion. There was some increase in personnel, but it was more difficult to have any personal connections with those working your individual case, as had been possible in years past.

3 - The technology has had major changes over the years. We no longer use only blood samples but can use a cheek swab and a hair sample to get qualified family member DNA samples on file.

4 - Soil acidity is so high in the key countries in SE Asia that we face a limitation of very few years left to recover and try to identify the fragmentary remains. In a few years, US teams will recover bone fragments so decomposed it will no longer be possible to obtain the DNA or the remains will be so decomposed, the possibility of identification will no longer exist.

I do not know any Congressmen who have a loved one or a friend who is Missing. Many Government officials have no idea what we are dealing with as we strive to reach the fullest possible accounting.

Realistically we will never be able to recover and identify ALL of our Missing but many can be brought back and honored. I believe that is our responsibility, as individuals and as a nation!!

I decided not to stand for reelection to the League's Board about several years ago. My husband was retiring and my Mother was getting older. She is still very active and praying we will get Bobby home. She will be 103 years old in three weeks. My time and dedication to achieving the League's accounting objectives have not changed due to my no longer serving on the Board of Directors.

I am committed to support all our Servicemen, both those Missing and those serving on active duty today. I hope and pray you are too.