

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Morrie Smith

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRV-A-L-2016-055

Morrie Smith, who as a child from 1970 to 1973 wore a POW bracelet for Captain John Borling, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – Vietnam War* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Nov 16, 2016 Location: Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Mark R. DePue, Director of Oral History

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 0:54 / 0.9 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 24, 2017

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Morrie Smith, *Veterans Remember*, VRV-A-L-2016-055

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Morrie Smith was born in Sycamore, Illinois on January 5th, 1960, and grew up in nearby Maple Park, Illinois, a small farm town west of Chicago. In 1970, when Morrie was ten years old, his church, the Wasco Baptist Church, held a program where members were encouraged to purchase POW bracelets, representing Vietnam War prisoners of war. Morrie's aunt purchased one for him, specifically for Captain John Borling, then being held prisoner in North Vietnam. (John Borling was an Air Force pilot flying an F-4 Phantom when he was shot down on June 1st, 1966 on his 97th mission over North Vietnam. He spent the next six and a half years as a POW, much of that time at the infamous Hanoi Hilton. During his early captivity, much of the time he was in solitary confinement.) Morrie knew very little about Captain Borling during the years he wore the bracelet. Those who received the bracelets were asked to pray for their POW, and to not take the bracelet off until their POW had been released. At that time, the United States had been at war in Southeast Asia for many years, with little hope for an end to the war anytime soon.

In early 1973, Morrie, then thirteen year old, saw a picture of Captain Borling with his wife and daughter, dated February 17, announcing his release from prison. During those three years, Morrie had faithfully worn the bracelet, and included Captain Borling in his prayers every night.

In early September, 2016 Morrie heard an announcement on NPR Radio that General John Borling would be speaking at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum on September 22nd. He attended that presentation, showed General Borling the bracelet that he had kept all those years, and purchased Borling book of poetry that the general had composed while a POW.

Subject Headings/Key Words: POW bracelet; Captain (General) John Borling; growing up in Maple Park, Illinois in the 1960s; *Taps on the Wall: Poems from the Hanoi Hilton* by Major General John Borling; Wasco Baptist Church, Wasco, Illinois; Kaneland High School

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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