



# ALL EARS!!

*The Litchfield Fund  
Weekly Newsletter*

“We just don’t hear it on the street, we have our ears spread across all the fields!!!!”



**Litchfield**

“**Because we owe it to them,**” was my answer when my much better half asked why I was standing in the small town square reading names on a granite monument out loud, but softly, to myself, a ritual of mine for years with every visit to a new place. The names were inscribed beneath the statue of a soldier, or maybe it was helmet hung on a rifle, an old cannon or anchor, or simply a Cross & Star of David. Years later at the U.S. Naval Academy, I rushed off to view artifacts & memorabilia. I found her at the wall of Medal of Honor winners, quietly reading the names. When I asked why, she answered, “Because we owe it to them.”

**What we owe:** We wake up every morning in a land that is free. Where we are free to choose where we live, what we do, what we say, how we worship. In a land where laws protect us, not just from criminals, but from the over reach of our very own government. Here, we are allowed to engage in free enterprise, make a fortune, lose a fortune, raise our children as we see fit, support charities & causes we care about. We are free to travel, unrestricted, on hundreds of thousands of miles of paved road with enough cheap gas to enjoy them all.

We owe this freedom to those who serve. Our military, who protects us from those who would seek to destroy this way of life. And our law enforcement, who protect that thin, sometimes blurry, line between freedom & anarchy. The men & women who do this do so freely, of their own volition. To those who have fallen, we owe even more.

Each name inscribed on those monuments has a unique American story. A story of mothers, fathers, sisters & brothers, childhoods spent in big cities or small towns, working on green farms or in grimy steel mills & coal mines, roaming beneath wide-open western skies or next to wide southern deltas. A story of sweethearts, wives & children. Or a story of struggle, be it immigration, prejudice, education or poverty. A story of dreams unfulfilled. A story of honor, courage, duty, valor & brotherhood.

It feels wrong to single out any single story, as each of those who have fallen & their families deserve our respect. But on this day of remembrance, certain stories always come to mind. They bear repeating, if just as an illustration of why we as a people, are in some ways truly unique. With respect to all those other important stories, we share the following.

Butch was a naval pilot & section leader flying a Grumman F4F Wildcat on the aircraft carrier USS Lexington (CV-2) on 20 February 1942, one of the worst periods in American history. The Lexington was penetrating the enemy held waters north of New Ireland. With only Butch & his

wingman flying patrol in their area, they came upon 9 Japanese Mitsubishi G4M "Betty" bombers. His wingman's guns jammed, & Butch ordered him back to the Lexington. Facing 9 bombers alone, with limited ammunition & under relentless machine gun fire, Butch shot down 5, damaged a sixth, & saved the Lexington. As the Navy's first WWII Medal of Honor winner, his citation read: "As a result of his gallant action--one of the most daring, *if not the most daring, single action in the history of combat aviation*--he undoubtedly saved his carrier from serious damage." Butch continued to win medals throughout his service, until 26 November 1943, when volunteering to lead one of the first ever night time carrier-based fighter attacks, his plane was shot down near the Marianas.

Is Butch's story pure Horatio Alger? Not quite. Born in St. Louis, Butch's dad was a businessman interested in flying & then became an attorney. One of his clients was Owen P. Smith, the commissioner of Greyhound Racing, and the owner of the lucrative patent on the mechanical rabbit used in dog racing -- '*And here comes Sparky!*' Butch's dad thought Butch was lazy, so he sent him to Western Military Academy. Butch's dad divorced, and when Owen Smith died, the mechanical rabbit business was expanded to Chicago. There Butch's dad went to work with Al Capone, made another fortune, and then married the sister of a mob related politician. But in 1930 Butch's dad, whether to save himself or to save his reputation for his son, arranged a meeting with the IRS, using a St. Louis news reporter as an intermediary. The IRS was attempting to put Al Capone in jail for tax evasion. For turning state's evidence, Butch's dad asked for his son to be admitted to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis. Capone was convicted in 1933. On November 8, 1939, Butch's dad was leaving a racetrack in Cicero, Illinois, when he was gunned down by two men with shotguns. A mentally deteriorated Al Capone was released from prison just a week later.

Almost every American knows the story of Al Capone, Chicago's gangland leader in The Roaring Twenties. Movies, books, songs & TV shows have spewed fact & fantasy. But few know the story of how Butch O'Hare became a Medal of Honor winner. Yet every year, nearly 100 million people pass through Chicago's old Orchard Depot Airport, which on September 19, 1949 was renamed O'Hare International & today is the world's busiest airport.

We owe much to those who serve & to those who fall. We are blessed as a nation to have among us those who seek out this duty, join this brotherhood & protect our incomparable way of life. We owe to them, within our humble means, to honor & protect their memory.

**Seeds, Sprouts, Grow, Harvest!**

**The Litchfield Fund**

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