



## John A. Deering Cpl, USMC

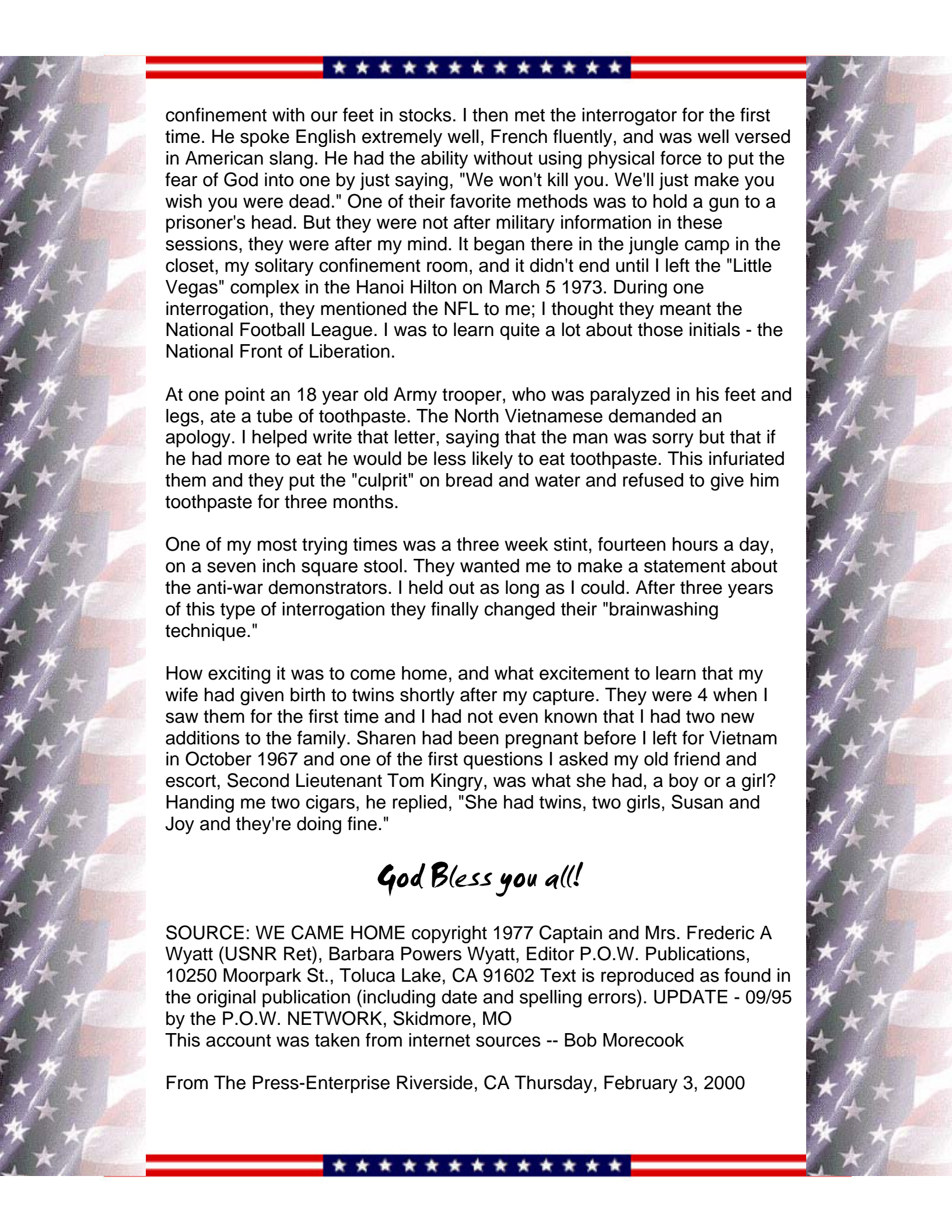
Unit: AFVN – Det 5 MAC V  
Date of Birth: 06 February 1943  
Home City of Record: Nashville, TN  
Date of Loss: 05 February 1968  
Country of Loss: SVN  
Loss Coordinates: 162700N 1073500  
Status (in 1973): Returnee  
Category: Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: Ground  
Died in November 2009

Source: Compiled by P.O.W. NETWORK from one or more of the following: raw data from U.S. Government agency sources, correspondence with POW/MIA families, published sources, personal interviews.

### The Account of His Capture

A 16 hour battle was raging as I, the officer in charge of the Armed Forces Radio and TV station [in Hue], and my men tried to stave off the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong. Finally after an encounter with several Viet Cong, others appeared and set fire to the house. I was shot in the arm by enemy small arms fire but shot my way out and ran to a rice paddy. About 50 North Vietnamese pursued me and with additional wounds from grenade shrapnel I soon became a guest of the North Vietnamese. I was slapped around a bit by one North Vietnamese and another took my glasses and smashed them on the ground. Later the soldiers poured hot iodine on my wounds bound my arms and fed me rice and some bones either cat or rat. Then began the long 55 day trek through the jungles of South Vietnam. Carrying 40 pound sacks of rice on our backs through the rain and with torn feet the hardships of the trail were so much that we found that the Communists did not harass us unnecessarily. There was no way to escape on the march though as a guard was constantly in attendance, besides with no glasses I could not see ten feet.

Later my men and I were placed aboard trucks and transported for the 11 night journey over the Ho Chi Minh Trail to a jungle camp in a southern province of North Vietnam When we arrived two of us were put in solitary

The page is framed by a border of the American flag, with stars on the left and right sides and a horizontal band of stars at the top and bottom. The text is centered in the white space.

confinement with our feet in stocks. I then met the interrogator for the first time. He spoke English extremely well, French fluently, and was well versed in American slang. He had the ability without using physical force to put the fear of God into one by just saying, "We won't kill you. We'll just make you wish you were dead." One of their favorite methods was to hold a gun to a prisoner's head. But they were not after military information in these sessions, they were after my mind. It began there in the jungle camp in the closet, my solitary confinement room, and it didn't end until I left the "Little Vegas" complex in the Hanoi Hilton on March 5 1973. During one interrogation, they mentioned the NFL to me; I thought they meant the National Football League. I was to learn quite a lot about those initials - the National Front of Liberation.

At one point an 18 year old Army trooper, who was paralyzed in his feet and legs, ate a tube of toothpaste. The North Vietnamese demanded an apology. I helped write that letter, saying that the man was sorry but that if he had more to eat he would be less likely to eat toothpaste. This infuriated them and they put the "culprit" on bread and water and refused to give him toothpaste for three months.

One of my most trying times was a three week stint, fourteen hours a day, on a seven inch square stool. They wanted me to make a statement about the anti-war demonstrators. I held out as long as I could. After three years of this type of interrogation they finally changed their "brainwashing technique."

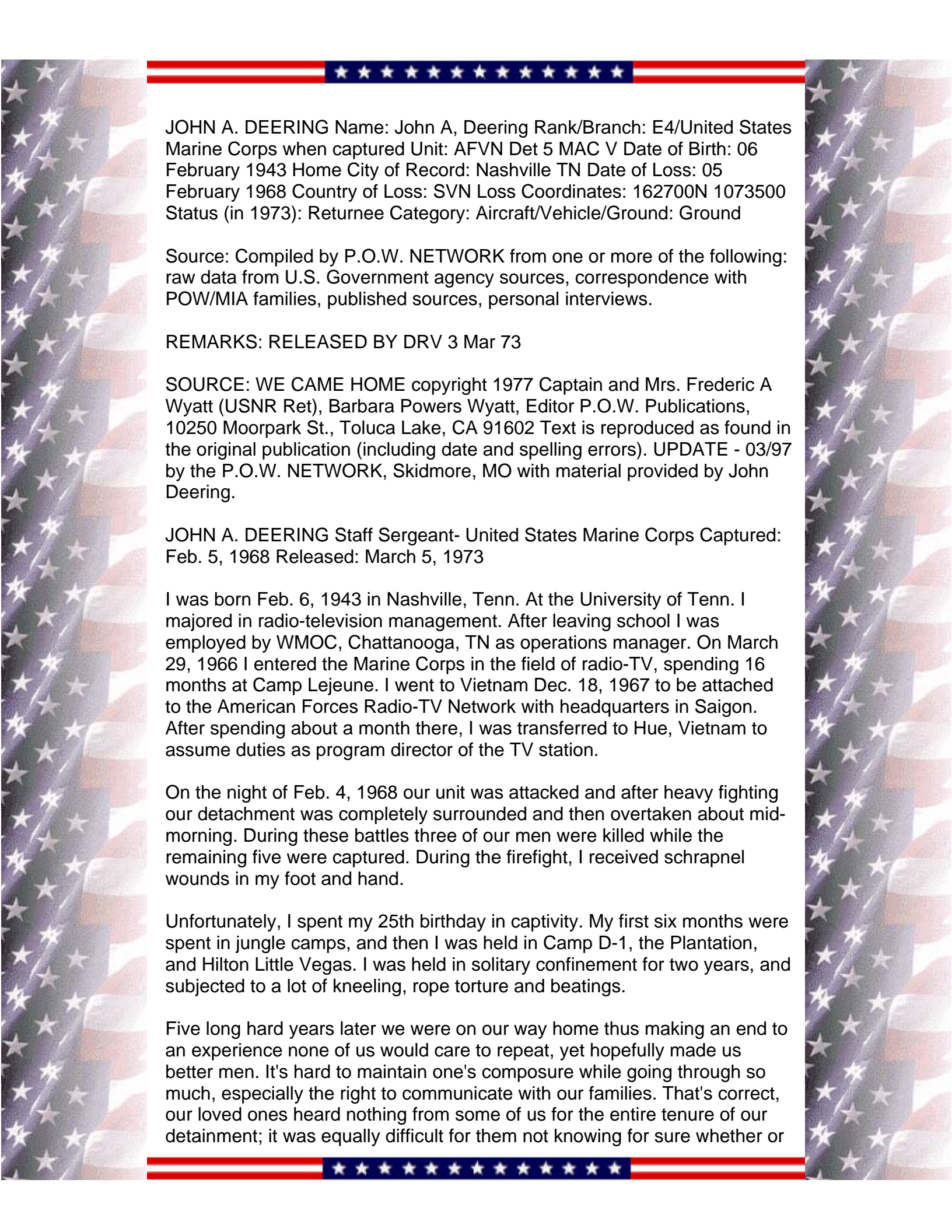
How exciting it was to come home, and what excitement to learn that my wife had given birth to twins shortly after my capture. They were 4 when I saw them for the first time and I had not even known that I had two new additions to the family. Sharen had been pregnant before I left for Vietnam in October 1967 and one of the first questions I asked my old friend and escort, Second Lieutenant Tom Kingry, was what she had, a boy or a girl? Handing me two cigars, he replied, "She had twins, two girls, Susan and Joy and they're doing fine."

*God Bless you all!*

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This account was taken from internet sources -- Bob Morecook

From The Press-Enterprise Riverside, CA Thursday, February 3, 2000



JOHN A. DEERING Name: John A, Deering Rank/Branch: E4/United States Marine Corps when captured Unit: AFVN Det 5 MAC V Date of Birth: 06 February 1943 Home City of Record: Nashville TN Date of Loss: 05 February 1968 Country of Loss: SVN Loss Coordinates: 162700N 1073500 Status (in 1973): Returnee Category: Aircraft/Vehicle/Ground: Ground

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REMARKS: RELEASED BY DRV 3 Mar 73

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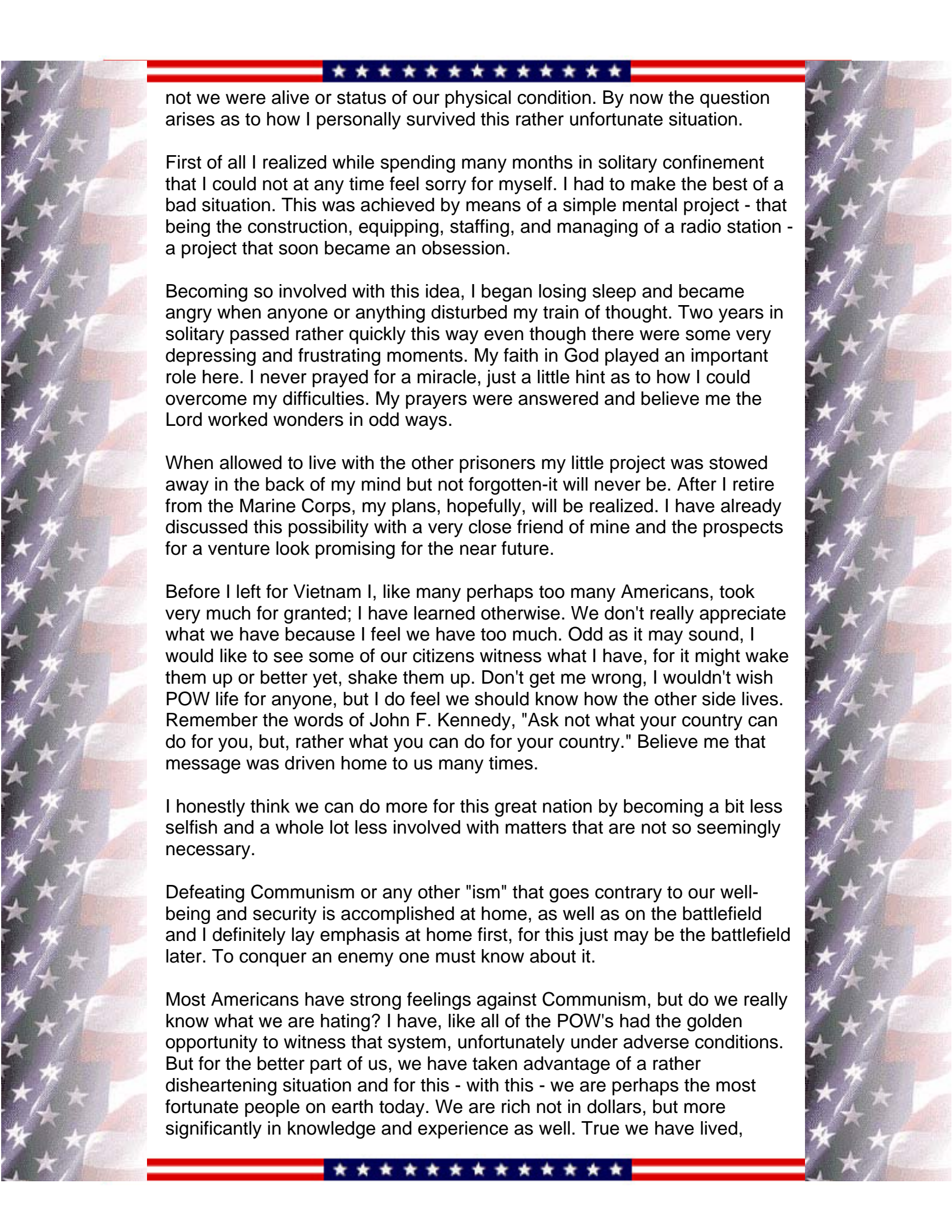
JOHN A. DEERING Staff Sergeant- United States Marine Corps Captured: Feb. 5, 1968 Released: March 5, 1973

I was born Feb. 6, 1943 in Nashville, Tenn. At the University of Tenn. I majored in radio-television management. After leaving school I was employed by WMOC, Chattanooga, TN as operations manager. On March 29, 1966 I entered the Marine Corps in the field of radio-TV, spending 16 months at Camp Lejeune. I went to Vietnam Dec. 18, 1967 to be attached to the American Forces Radio-TV Network with headquarters in Saigon. After spending about a month there, I was transferred to Hue, Vietnam to assume duties as program director of the TV station.

On the night of Feb. 4, 1968 our unit was attacked and after heavy fighting our detachment was completely surrounded and then overtaken about mid-morning. During these battles three of our men were killed while the remaining five were captured. During the firefight, I received schrapnel wounds in my foot and hand.

Unfortunately, I spent my 25th birthday in captivity. My first six months were spent in jungle camps, and then I was held in Camp D-1, the Plantation, and Hilton Little Vegas. I was held in solitary confinement for two years, and subjected to a lot of kneeling, rope torture and beatings.

Five long hard years later we were on our way home thus making an end to an experience none of us would care to repeat, yet hopefully made us better men. It's hard to maintain one's composure while going through so much, especially the right to communicate with our families. That's correct, our loved ones heard nothing from some of us for the entire tenure of our detainment; it was equally difficult for them not knowing for sure whether or

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not we were alive or status of our physical condition. By now the question arises as to how I personally survived this rather unfortunate situation.

First of all I realized while spending many months in solitary confinement that I could not at any time feel sorry for myself. I had to make the best of a bad situation. This was achieved by means of a simple mental project - that being the construction, equipping, staffing, and managing of a radio station - a project that soon became an obsession.

Becoming so involved with this idea, I began losing sleep and became angry when anyone or anything disturbed my train of thought. Two years in solitary passed rather quickly this way even though there were some very depressing and frustrating moments. My faith in God played an important role here. I never prayed for a miracle, just a little hint as to how I could overcome my difficulties. My prayers were answered and believe me the Lord worked wonders in odd ways.

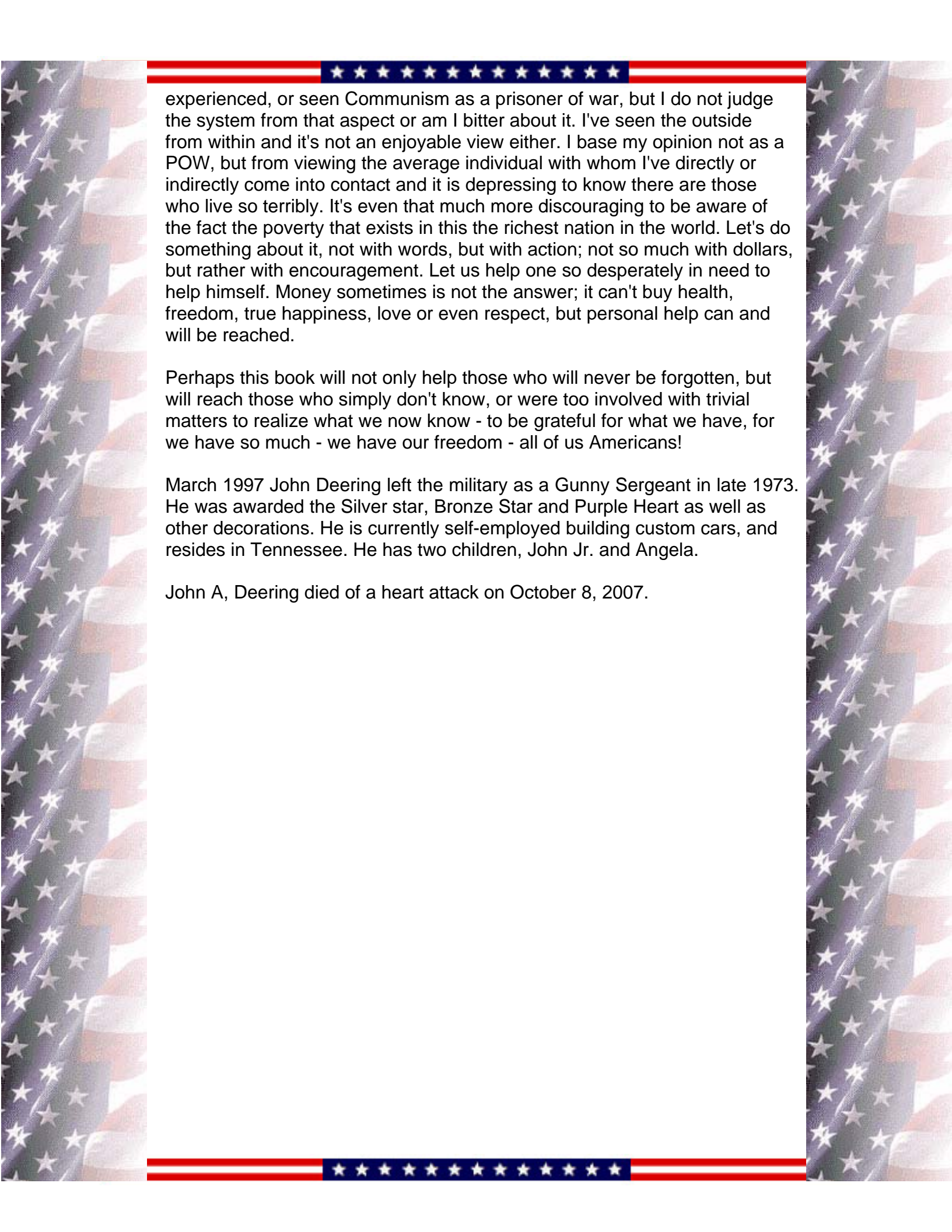
When allowed to live with the other prisoners my little project was stowed away in the back of my mind but not forgotten-it will never be. After I retire from the Marine Corps, my plans, hopefully, will be realized. I have already discussed this possibility with a very close friend of mine and the prospects for a venture look promising for the near future.

Before I left for Vietnam I, like many perhaps too many Americans, took very much for granted; I have learned otherwise. We don't really appreciate what we have because I feel we have too much. Odd as it may sound, I would like to see some of our citizens witness what I have, for it might wake them up or better yet, shake them up. Don't get me wrong, I wouldn't wish POW life for anyone, but I do feel we should know how the other side lives. Remember the words of John F. Kennedy, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but, rather what you can do for your country." Believe me that message was driven home to us many times.

I honestly think we can do more for this great nation by becoming a bit less selfish and a whole lot less involved with matters that are not so seemingly necessary.

Defeating Communism or any other "ism" that goes contrary to our well-being and security is accomplished at home, as well as on the battlefield and I definitely lay emphasis at home first, for this just may be the battlefield later. To conquer an enemy one must know about it.

Most Americans have strong feelings against Communism, but do we really know what we are hating? I have, like all of the POW's had the golden opportunity to witness that system, unfortunately under adverse conditions. But for the better part of us, we have taken advantage of a rather disheartening situation and for this - with this - we are perhaps the most fortunate people on earth today. We are rich not in dollars, but more significantly in knowledge and experience as well. True we have lived,

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experienced, or seen Communism as a prisoner of war, but I do not judge the system from that aspect or am I bitter about it. I've seen the outside from within and it's not an enjoyable view either. I base my opinion not as a POW, but from viewing the average individual with whom I've directly or indirectly come into contact and it is depressing to know there are those who live so terribly. It's even that much more discouraging to be aware of the fact the poverty that exists in this the richest nation in the world. Let's do something about it, not with words, but with action; not so much with dollars, but rather with encouragement. Let us help one so desperately in need to help himself. Money sometimes is not the answer; it can't buy health, freedom, true happiness, love or even respect, but personal help can and will be reached.

Perhaps this book will not only help those who will never be forgotten, but will reach those who simply don't know, or were too involved with trivial matters to realize what we now know - to be grateful for what we have, for we have so much - we have our freedom - all of us Americans!

March 1997 John Deering left the military as a Gunny Sergeant in late 1973. He was awarded the Silver star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart as well as other decorations. He is currently self-employed building custom cars, and resides in Tennessee. He has two children, John Jr. and Angela.

John A, Deering died of a heart attack on October 8, 2007.