



Wing Commander presents Public Service Award

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5/1/2015 - **GOODFELLOW AIR FORCE BASE, Texas** -- Col. Kimberlee P. Joos, 17th Training Wing Commander, presented the Public Service Award to Paul and Nita Clever during a ceremony in front of the Norma Brown Building April 30.

The award recognized the two for their distinguished service to the United States Air Force.

Between Aug. 1, 2011 and Aug. 31, 2014, the Clevers searched, found and recovered human remains and artifacts from an Air Force EC-47, electronic combat aircraft, lost over Laos in 1969.

"Not until months later was the badly burned aircraft wreckage finally located in dense jungle along the Ho Chi Minh trail in southern Laos," said Joos referring to the incident that happened 46 years ago. "Moving in and out quickly, because it was a war zone, the search team managed to recover some human remains, though these unfortunately were skeletal and commingled due to the violence of the crash and the time that already had elapsed.

"Given the science of the day, a positive individual accounting of the 10 crewmembers was not yet possible, and the remains were repatriated for burial in a communal grave at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis. For the 10 families, that was not closure. The utter uncertainty of the identifications and the possibility, however, remote, that their sons and husbands and fathers were not among the remains repatriated for burial at Jefferson Barracks meant that their personal anguish would continue ... until Paul and Nita Clever took it upon themselves to bring closure to the families."

Paul and Nita prepared themselves for their journey by acquiring skills needed for success such as map reading, unexploded ordinance detection and basic archeological concepts and procedures.

They entered Laos on Dec. 1, 2012 and spent the next week hacking through the jungle while enduring stifling heat. On Dec. 6, 2012, Paul noticed light reflecting off a piece of glass, and upon investigation, they had found what they were looking for.

The Clevers uncovered nearly four dozen bone fragments and numerous artifacts. After their return to the U.S., they successfully petitioned to have the fragments tested together with the remains buried at Jefferson Barracks. Overall, the results led to the positive identification of seven of the 10 crewmembers, including Tech. Sgt. Louis Clever, Paul's father.

At the end of the ceremony, Paul and Nita thanked everyone who put the ceremony together and shared stories of their journey. Paul concluded the ceremony by reciting the warrior ethos.

"A warrior will always place the mission first," he said. "A warrior will never accept defeat. A warrior will never quit. A warrior will never leave a fallen comrade."



GOODFELLOW AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – Col. Kimberlee P. Joos, 17th Training Wing Commander, presents the Public Service Award to Paul Clever during a ceremony in front of the Norma Brown Building April 30. The award recognized Clever and his wife for their distinguished service in recovering human remains from a Vietnam crash site to confirm the identities of seven of the CAP-72 crewmembers who were shot down by enemy forces over southern Laos in 1969, one of whom was Clever's father. (U.S. Air Force photo/ Airman 1st Class Devin Boyer)