

Local

Vietnam veteran Antoine Johannes Johnny Thunderhawk Mulder shares extraordinary life

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This year marks the 50th anniversary of the start of the Vietnam War. A half-century later there are many military veterans living with the mental and physical scars from the time spent in Vietnam. This Memorial Day it is important to keep these soldiers in thoughts and prayers and to thank them for their supreme sacrifice.

Not all casualties of war lose their lives in foreign jungles and battlefields. Some who gave their lives in service to this country come back home and live among us after sacrificing beyond the limits of human tolerance.

This is true of Baker City resident Antoine Johannes Johnny Thunderhawk Mulder.

“The families and the soldiers who’ve served overseas feel the same, when you come back you’re here, but you’re not,” Mulder begins. “I came back alive physically but emotionally I’m as dead as a coat-hanger. I’ve had four wives and I’ve tried to make a life of it.”

US Marine Corps Master Sergeant Mulder served in Vietnam, spending his youth fighting in that country from 1967 to 1974. A shirt hangs in his entryway indicating his belonging to the Marines Det. 4th Force Reconnaissance Company, Reno, Nevada. He lives by the Marine creeds emblazoned on the shirt, *Semper Fidelis, Always Faithful; and Celer Silens Moralis, Live and Die for Mortality.*

“We trained the Navy Seals,” Mulder said.

He can’t speak about much of his service due to the nature of his orders but does admit to his mission in Infiltration and Execution, avoiding any detail.

Mulder’s life reads like

a Hollywood movie script every bit as sensational as any martial arts action thriller.

He was raised in an Indonesian Buddhist temple, and following tradition as the eldest son, was being molded as a Buddhist priest. He was trained in the Indonesian martial arts, a lethal form of *Dung Fu*, in a world where the term “martial art” is taken in the literal sense. At age 16, while in Canton, China he earned his Red Belt by emerging victorious from a death-match.

“I was raised in a Buddhist temple in Indonesia in that sense for that purpose. You can’t understand it if you don’t feel it,” he tries to explain to this American journalist.

A U.S. Marine Captain witnessed Mulder emerge victorious from the lethal fight and afterward asked him if he wanted to join the U.S. Marines: an offer he accepted and, lying about his age, began his service in the U.S. military. His immigration into the United States was sponsored by an American Indian family who gave him the name “Johnny Thunderhawk.”

“The Marines are the best and I joined the best. It’s as simple as that,” he said. “I turned 18 in Vietnam. I took basic training in San Diego at Camp La Juene and jump training a Fort Ord.”

Indonesia was in the throes of a brutal civil war at the time of his immigration to the U.S. and he lost family members in that war. The remaining members of his family were lost when they turned their backs on him for the decision to join the U.S. Marines, he explains.

Mulder holds many wartime experiences and is unable to speak about most of them because of

the top-secret classification and emotional toll taken, including time as a prisoner of war.

“When I’d go out and do things in Vietnam, I automatically put in the mind-set that I’m already dead. You can’t kill a dead man. You black everything out,” he explains. “You can’t live with it but you can go on. I lost plenty of friends. Too many. I’m sick of bloodshed and won’t pick up a gun to this day.”

Adding to his expertise in hand-to-hand combat, Mulder possesses extraordinary linguistic skills and speaks English, Cantonese, French, German, Dutch, Indonesian dialects, Sumatran, Japanese, Danish, Swiss, Cambodian, Thai, Laotian, and four different African dialects.

“I could go into the brush and listen and identify the language being spoken,” he said of his value in infiltration.

During his time in Vietnam, Mulder took a bride and together they had a daughter.

“I met a Vietnamese woman and we had a baby girl. Both were executed by the Communists,” he discloses. “That was the love of my life. I shed all my tears when she died, I have none left.”

Cooking is another of the skills Mulder brought to the Marines and he used the role of cook as a cover in Vietnam. His service and governmental experiences include cooking in the White House during the Nixon and Reagan administration, he said.

After the military, Mulder used his culinary knowledge to forge a civilian career. His life as a chef includes partnering with Eddie “the Italian Elvis” at Palermo’s in La Grande, restaurant owner in Baker City, and chef for some of the finest restaur-



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Antoine Johannes Johnny Thunderhawk Mulder here with his service dog Shadow. Shadow saved Mulder’s life by pressing the emergency button on the telephone.

rants in Las Vegas and Seattle.

Mulder has been accepted with open arms into Baker City resident Arvid Andersen’s family. Together with the Andersens, he shares dinners, church service, and communion.

“As happy as I’ve been has been the time I’ve spent with Arvid and his family. I love them and I’d do anything to protect them,” said Mulder.

Arvid speaks of a trip he took with Mulder to the Veteran’s Administration in Seattle, Washington. During the trip, the two stopped at an Oriental market in Everett, where as coincidence would have it, Mulder ran into a Vietnamese married couple he knew from Vietnam—the man had helped the Marines as a scout.

They conversed for a while in Vietnamese, Andersen said.

Mulder said he’s known in Seattle as a martial artist and has had people recognize him there and walk on the other side of the street.

While familiar with the

somewhat recent evolution of the sport of mixed martial arts in this country, he shows no interest in it. “I’ve been asked to train fighters but I don’t agree with it. The first rule of martial arts is no limitation. Fighters have called to ask for training. It’s good for American sport but to me it’s not really martial arts because of too much restriction. I grew up with the instinct,” he explains.

During the brief interview with Mulder, emotion, patriotism, and the recognition of his value as a soldier only entered his tone on two subjects. He explained that after explaining some of his war experiences that some people have asked why he didn’t desert. “That was a heartbreaking thing to hear,” he said.

The other subject that brings about strong feelings from Mulder is the current state of U.S. government politics and lack of commitment to military veterans.

“I think Obama is a trai-

tor and a coward. He has no business being President of this country. He is against the VA and has cut military benefits. He’s cut my pension. Military veterans have marched on Washington in the past. Do we need to do it again?” he asked.

Mulder has lived in Baker City since 1994 after moving here with his then wife. He now lives a quiet life and shares his home with his two dogs Coco and service dog and savior Shadow. He has endured two strokes and a heart attack, caused by his exposure to the U.S. use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, he supposes.

“My service dog Shadow has saved my life four times. She is trained to push the land-line emergency phone number and she did it,” he said.

After living a life as a warrior with experiences outside the ordinary life he closes this Memorial Day interview with, “I just want to die in peace.”

NRAC

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Harvey discussed that the NRAC would be divided up into smaller sub-committees, covering the following six categories: Forest Resources/Wildfire/Watersheds, Agriculture/Livestock Grazing, Mining, Recreation and Tourism, Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species, and Energy. Energy is a new topic this year, and Bruland reminded the committee that a plan needs to be developed for that category.

He displayed on a whiteboard example recommendations, including: no more wilderness areas (or study areas); no more roadless areas; no wildlife corridors; and small riparian areas (50 feet both sides).

Garrett discussed House Resolution (HR) 1735, The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, introduced by Walden. He said, “It gives the military its authority to provide for the national security of our country. The listing of the (Greater) Sage-Grouse would present significant problems to military readiness.” He said that the bill includes a 10-year delay in the

listing of the Greater Sage-Grouse, and preference for State management plans, when any Federal plans are in contradiction. Currently, he said, the bill has reached the Senate stage.

Harvey explained that input and ideas from committee members would be more thoroughly discussed at the next NRAC meeting, on June 23.

For citizen participation, Dielman had concerns about the timing of making potential changes to the NRP now, and asked, “And the reason it can’t be dealt with later? It’s a big plan, a lot of pages. Everybody in this room, or at this table, knows what’s in the plan, that was adopted five years ago (December 22, 2010)... Is the committee’s purpose to make changes where necessary, or make additions?”

Harvey responded that the purpose is to find out if changes need to be made now to the NRP, because there wouldn’t be an opportunity after it’s adopted into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. He said there is a new category, Energy, that also needs to be addressed.

Bruland said, “Because we’re on the ground, local people, we need to work toward developing levels of production that are sustainable, that we

know we can do,” without relying on state and federal considerations. She went on to broadly discuss with the committee the different topics/categories in the NRP. She repeated Harvey’s comments about forming the sub-committees, and Harvey said, “We’re going to attempt to have (at least) four people per category.”

Harvey said that Access and Travel Management, also included in the NRP, was formed as a separate committee, and members will address the issues, including any potential changes to the NRP, also within that committee.

Bruland said the County Commission is going to hire staff to assist the NRAC with the coordination process with the federal government. She said the staff would be involved with the NRAC at some point, and Harvey added that the staff would give the NRAC updates regarding the process.

Bruland reminded the committee that the NRAC exists to serve the County, and that community input should be considered, and issues expressed by the public, who would be attending meetings periodically, should be addressed.

The NRAC didn’t form sub-committees at this meeting, but broadly dis-

cussed the different topics within the NRP. Harvey, Bruland and the committee discussed the NRP’s content, including Purpose and Need, Land Composition and Economic Base, Custom and Culture, Coordination, and Natural Resource Goals and Objectives.

Included in Purpose and Need is the following:

“The (Baker County Commission) Board commits to the following principles to guide decision making governing natural resources within the County:

1. Revitalization and maintenance of multiple uses on all public lands in Baker County.
2. Multiple use shall be inclusive rather than exclusive, thereby avoiding pitting one use against the other.
3. All plans should mitigate based on multiple use rather than by a resource by resource issue.
4. Maintain flexibility in all plans to allow for extraction of natural resources from public lands and to continue to use existing resources in accordance with all laws.
5. Protect and preserve the following rights of all County’s citizens, including:
 - a. Private property interests, such as water rights



Todd Arriola / The Baker County Press

Doni Bruland is the new NRAC chair.

and access to lands, which have ties to public lands,

b. Traditional economic structures in the county

that form the base for economic stability,

c. Historical custom, culture and values of the local people, and

d. Enjoyment of the natural resources of the County.”

Suggestions were made about the different NRP categories the committee discussed broadly, including comments from De-frees, Parry and Justus that any additional language in the plan not be too specific, because that could create a locked-in limit to access, production, etc., regarding natural resources in the future for the County.

Danser and Dielman add-

ed public comments at the conclusion of the meeting.

Danser said, “Just reiterating, the snowmobile use needs to be added, and the bicycle use, the mountain bikes, and so forth.” Bruland said that would be addressed.

Dielman said, “The last category there, Energy, what all does that include?” Harvey responded that, rather than touching on topics such as global warming, the category would address land use issues, such as wind farms, solar, geothermal, etc.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 23, 2015, at 3 p.m., in the Commission Chambers.