

# It's A Matter of Patriotism!



Leo Thorsness, Medal of Honor Winner, passes at age 85.

No matter how you feel about the Vietnam war, you cannot possibly question the valor, heroism and sacrifice of men who served during that controversial era!

Colonel Leo R. Thorsness (he was promoted to Colonel upon his death) is one such person. The most highly decorated American airman who received the Medal of Honor while he was a captive in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Senator John McCain was also a prisoner of war at that location during the same time frame.

In April 1967 the skies were filled with Migs supposedly flown by North Vietnamese pilots, (there was always a question as to whether or not Russian pilots were also flying with the North Vietnamese)

The skies were also filled with Russian SAM Missiles. (As a matter of fact he was one of the famous Wild Weasels. This group of fighter pilots, including Major Thorsness was assigned to take out the Sam Missiles, which were a direct threat to the American Fighter bombers.) On top of that anti aircraft fire was extremely intense.



The F105, flown by Maj Thorsness and Capt Johnson on 19 April 1967.t


Major Thorsness shot down one Mig, and was protecting his wingman that was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and had ejected from his F105 along with his weapons specialist, this pair were captured. With low fuel Major Thorsness passed up the opportunity to refuel by an aerial tanker, instead decided to head for a safe airfield in Thailand 70 miles away. By pulling back his power and essentially gliding he made it to the Thailand Airfield, landing "long".

Eleven days later, on his 93rd mission, with only seven missions to finish his tour, his F105 was hit by anti aircraft fire over North Vietnam. He was captured and spent the next 6 years in captivity. ONE FULL YEAR WAS SPENT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT. Along with his fellow prisoners he was severely beaten, treated with extreme cruelty but they never broke his spirit.

After returning home from his terrible ordeals, he served as a state senator for one year.

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Colonel Thorsness is an outstanding example of what patriotism is all about!



Major Thorsness speaking at a 2007 event commemorating the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Air Force