

# STATE OF MICHIGAN



## MICHIGAN SENATE

### Senate Resolution No. 597

Offered by Senators DiNello, Bouchard, Dingell,  
Faxon, Miller, Schwarz, Nick Smith, Vaughn and Welborn

#### A RESOLUTION OFFERED AS A MEMORIAL FOR THE LIFE OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL GILBERT VANDERMARLIERE

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert VanderMarliere was a veteran of three wars and truly represented the caliber of men and women who willingly served their nation when called upon to do so. He earned recognition for his bravery and the gratitude of his countrymen for his exploits as a member of the United States Air Force. He also showed his mettle during the last days of his life as he struggled against illness to one more victory—to spend his seventeenth wedding anniversary with his wife, Helen. It was his last day; and

WHEREAS, On April 24, 1944, Gil VanderMarliere was the pilot of a B-17, the fabled "flying fortress," when he was hit by heavy German anti-aircraft fire. In spite of his wounds, he managed to bring his craft to earth on a German farm. He was captured and held prisoner for one year before being freed by advancing American armored units. He again answered the call to arms when trouble brewed in Korea, where he flew combat and rescue missions. When fighting erupted in Vietnam, the Air Force utilized his skills to train airmen in rescue operations at Udorn Air Base in Thailand. His career spanned twenty-eight years of active and reserve service, and it is indeed most fitting that his final resting place be with others who served their country so faithfully, Fort Custer National Cemetery in Battle Creek; and

WHEREAS, It is most appropriate, too, that the members of this legislative body offer a final salute to this man who served the people of this state through his military deeds and as a dedicated worker in the transportation department of the city of Detroit; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, That a unanimous accolade of tribute be accorded as a memorial to the life of Lieutenant Colonel Gilbert VanderMarliere; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this resolution be transmitted to his wife as evidence of our esteem.

Adopted by the Senate, September 23, 1992.

Secretary of the Senate

DEAR RVSS,

ENCLOSED IS AN ARTICLE  
A LOCAL REPORTER DID IN  
CONJUNCTION WITH THE "V E DAY"  
ACTIVITIES, HERE IN DETROIT.

THIS GENTLEMAN THOUGHT  
WE COULD WITH SOME STORIES  
ABOUT THE SOLDIERS EXPERIENCES,  
AS OPPOSED TO THE ACTIVITIES OF  
GENERALS, FIELD COMMANDERS AND  
POLITICIANS WITH REGARD TO  
CELEBRATIONS SUCH AS THIS.

HE GOT A LITTLE FROM  
EACH OF US AND DEVELOPED  
THIS "DIARY" APPROACH FOR  
THE 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY.

I COULDN'T MAKE IT TO  
DENVER FOR OUR P. O. W. REUNION  
BECAUSE I'M ON DISABILITY AND  
I JUST RETIRED ON SOCIAL  
SECURITY.

OVER

TWO YEARS AFTER I RETIRED  
IN 1970, FROM THE MR FORCE,  
I TOOK A JOB DRIVING A BUS FOR  
THE CITY OF DETROIT. IN 1980  
I WAS ASSAULTED AND GOT A  
BEATING - KICKED IN THE SPINE  
AND HEAD. THIS RESULTED IN  
LUMBAR NERVE DAMAGE AT  
THE SPINE. SINCE THEN I'VE  
HAD LOW BACK PAIN AND NUMB-  
NESS IN THE RIGHT LEG THAT  
BECAME AGGRAVATED BY DRIVING  
OVER ROUGH STREETS AND IN  
SHAKY BUSES. I FINALLY HAD  
TO QUIT.

- I PLAN ON WRITING  
MY STORY ABOUT THE E.T.O.,  
AND THE 306<sup>TH</sup> (THREE MISSIONS)  
IN THE FUTURE. AND P.O.W.

WE'LL KEEP IN TOUCH

SINCERELY,

Gilbert Vandermolen

VANDERMARLIERE - APRIL 24 1944

'82 ISSUE PP 238/239

OBERPFAFFENHOFEN / DEC 90

HELLO RUSS,

I WOULD LIKE ANOTHER COPY OF 1<sup>ST</sup> OVER GERMANY, PRIOR TO XMAS IF POSSIBLE. (CHECK ENCLOSED) INCLUDES NEW ADDRESS - JUST MOVED TO 3 MILES NORTH OF SELFRIDGE MAIN RUNWAY (360/180)

I'VE JUST BEEN RELEASED FROM COTTAGE HOSPITAL, GROSSE PTE FARMS FOR A 1/2 KNEE REPLACEMENT.

CARTILAGE WAS GONE ON INBOARD SIDE OF RIGHT KNEE. - DOCTOR SAID BONE WAS GRINDING INTO ENDS OF EACH BONE. HE INSTALLED A PAIR OF WASHERS ON ENDS OF EACH BONE. SORT OF CONCAVE/CONVEX SILVER DOLLARS WITH A RIGHT ANGLE UPRIGHT BRACE CEMENTED TO FLATTENED SIDES OF THE BONE. - CIRCLE A NEW BALL JOINT. - MOST OF THIS DUE TO 1944 BAR-OUT.  
OVER

WHAT A RELIEF FROM PAIN OF  
WALKING "BONE ON BONE"

- RUSS I WOULD ALSO LIKE  
COPIES OF MY 3 MISSIONS.

I KNOW ONLY ABOUT 24 APRIL  
(MIA) - HAD A KASSEL MISSION (19 APR)  
PRIOR TO 24<sup>TH</sup> AND MY 1<sup>ST</sup> MISSION  
(ORANIEBURG 18 APR) OVER BERLIN. I HAVE NO OTHER  
DETAILS - I WAS IN THE UNIT  
SUCH A SHORT TIME I HARDLY HAD  
TIME TO MEET ANY BODY.

IS THAT \$ 5<sup>00</sup> FOR EACH OF THE  
3 MISSIONS OR 5<sup>00</sup> FOR ALL THREE?  
PLEASE ADVISE - I LL MAIL YOU A  
SEPERATE CHECK IF YOU CAN COME UP  
WITH THESE 3 MISSIONS.

THE \$ 38<sup>00</sup> CHECK IS ENCLOSED FOR  
THE BOOK.

NEW ADDRESS IS AS FOLLOWS

Lt. Col. G. VanderMarliere

Helen T. VanderMarliere

26551 Birchcrest

Mt. Clemens, MI 48045 - 4953

G. VanderMarliere

G. VANDER MARLIERE

JAN '81

313/774-3117

being checked out as 1st pilot

at 24,000

WE 105 hit the out of the sun

lost 3 engines

2 out used

lost control

20 mm blew hole in control equip

lost oxygen

generator control panel

passed out. walk around better brought  
in to at 14000

ordered bail out

passed out again, back at 4000

shot in left leg & arm.

wood rope tied to chest pack pad fell out  
of ditch, pulled it back in.  
doors closed. doors suddenly opened.

Admiral C.  
Shertzer on 1st mission  
just arr.

Candler  
N.J.  
Campbell Long Co.  
Shertzer  
Shertzer never saw him until in ambulance  
friendly farmer rescued him.

next day took him to hospital then to  
U of Munich hospital. 6 hrs in hosp.

Shertzer landed in tree, 50' off ground.  
cut wrong straps, fell on ground, crushed  
2 vertebrae  
James chute oscillated twice & hit ground

deeply moved. 19  
slight in current story.  
will aid me. This  
aim to keep. I am  
to have boxes and

Aug. 21, 1992

Dear Russ,

Enclosed you will find our  
check in the amt. of \$3800 to  
cover the cost of FIRST OVER  
GERMANY. Please send this  
ft directly to our niece as  
stated on the order form.

Russ, my husband, Gilbert,  
dying of cancer. He is enrolled  
in the Hospice Program and will  
spend his last days at home. It's  
a difficult time. Today we  
celebrate his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday. He  
will leave behind a legacy of  
courage and bravery. His life  
has been full of dignity and  
heroic deeds. He made a difference!

I vividly recall your phone  
call to our home requesting info  
to incorporate into this wonderful  
book. You were then in  
Hamazo, MI. <sup>MI. ~~MI.~~</sup> Since then THE  
STROIT FREE PRESS ran a magazine  
read in MAY of 1985 titled  
WAR OF A WAR. The reporter was  
motivated to concentrate on WWII  
former POWs. Gilbert was  
featured (among 6 others). I  
attended the press interviews and



Aug. 21, 1992

Dear Russ,

Enclosed you will find our check in the amt. of \$3800 to cover the cost of FIRST OVER GERMANY. Please send this gift directly to our niece as noted on the order form.

Russ, my husband, Gilbert, is dying of cancer. He is enrolled in the Hospice Program and will spend his last days at home. It's such a difficult time. Today we celebrate his 71<sup>st</sup> birthday. He will leave behind a legacy of courage and bravery. His life has been full of dignity and meritorious deeds. He made a difference!

I vividly recall your phone call to our home requesting info to incorporate into this wonderful book. You were then in Halamazo, MI. <sup>MI.</sup> Since then THE DETROIT FREE PRESS ran a magazine spread in MAY of 1985 titled DIARY OF A WAR. The reporter was motivated to concentrate on WWII and former POWs. Gilbert was featured (among 6 others). I attended the press interviews and

was very deeply moved. It told of Gilbert's flight in 1944 and what he was doing currently.

I started his biography in 1985 and stopped when he was shot down in my manuscript.

However, I shall finish

DESTINED TO FLY in his memory.

All his USAF orders are in our home, along with incredible books that will aid me. This is a goal I aim to keep. I am also fortunate to have boxes and boxes of photographs to serve as memory-boosters.

Through the years I have enjoyed reading ECHOES and look forward to future editions.

Thank you for all the inspiration you have given me via your writing.

I wish you and yours continued success in your endeavors. God bless you.

Sincerely,  
John P. VanderMaatere

P.S. I will keep in touch.

# viewpoints

## THE MACOMB DAILY

J. GENE CHAMBERS, Publisher

JERRY W. BALLENGER, Marketing Director

KEN PRANGER, Controller

MITCH KEHETIAN, Editor-in-Chief *THE WRITER*

### Our opinion

# We humbly salute a quiet local hero

Lt. Col. Gilbert VanderMarliere lived a good life, and by all measures was a real patriot.

While the veteran of three wars might not be known by today's younger generation, we feel the late Chesterfield Township resident warrants more than a passing note on the obituary page.

He truly represents the caliber of men and women who serve their nation, and today's editorial tribute is dedicated to all who serve — and who do their job without fanfare.

From this vantage point, we feel the retired Air Force lieutenant colonel was the kind of person who best personifies heartland America. He did what had to be done because America was more than a place to live. It was his country and to VanderMarliere, that was enough.

After retirement from the service in 1970, the Grosse Pointe Farms native went to work in the transportation division for the city of Detroit. In recent years, he fought for his life against the pain of cancer — and he never asked for favors or sympathy.



VANDER MARLIERE  
1921-1992

when VanderMarliere died Aug. 29 at age 71, his wife Helen, was at his bedside. It was an extra-special day that he had prayed to see and enjoy with his caring wife.

It was their 17th wedding anniversary.

For the decorated airman, we go back to April 24, 1944.

As pilot of a B-17 that day in time, heavy German anti-aircraft firepower hit VanderMarliere's "flying fortress."

Though at the controls of a crippled plane, and wounded by exploding shell fragments, he was able to guide his craft to a crash-landing on a German farm.

While the farmers tried to protect the wounded pilot, military officials were finally notified because it was feared the American airman would not survive unless he received medical treatment for his wounds.

The next happiest day in VanderMarliere's life came a year later on April 29, 1945, when he was freed by advancing American armored units, and was able to return to the United States for a full recovery from his war wounds.

But it wasn't long before the trumpets of war, in the rugged terrain of a place called Korea, would pull our patriot back into service. And again he took part in combat missions, concentrating on rescue flights.

Later, when fighting erupted in Vietnam, the call came again as the Air Force utilized VanderMarliere's skills to help train our airmen in rescue missions while flying out of the Udorn Air Base in Thailand.

In total, VanderMarliere logged 28 years of active and reserve service spanning three wars.

Yet he never extolled the Air Force Cross or Purple Heart medals he had received for having served in three armed conflicts.

VanderMarliere's final resting place will be at Fort Custer National Cemetery in Battle Creek with other men and women who served out of love for their country.

One of VanderMarliere's last wishes was that he could be best remembered through donations to the "good people at St. Joseph Hospice" in Mount Clemens.

We agree.

We also feel an editorial salute is due this man who served in three wars.

And we extend that salute to his wife, his sons and daughters, sisters, 21 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Farewell, Lt. Col. Gilbert VanderMarliere.

9-15-92

Dear Russ,

The enclosed newspaper editorial says it all. It was my privilege to spend 17 years with Gilbert.

Now, it's on to Ft. Custer on Oct. 1, 1992 at 1:00 PM. for the final military site.

He lives in my heart.

Gil made a difference for me and my country.

Many a Viet Nam Veteran came into our home and he healed several emotional scars for them by listening.

Stay well, my friend, for you too I salute for utilizing and dedicating your time to freedom.

Thank you for the honor of reading your works.

Sincerely,  
John

18 September 1992

Dear Helen:

I was much saddened today to receive word from you of Gil's death, although your previous letter had indicated that it was imminent.

May I offer my personal condolences, and I know that I speak for those others in the 306th who knew him at Thurleigh, or perhaps in prison camp, that he will be missed by them as well.

In the newspaper column which you sent, I noted mention of his receipt of the Air Force Cross. By any chance, do you have a copy of the citation for this award that you could send me? I would like to make mention of it in Echoes and to put a copy in his folder in the 306th collection.

All of our materials will eventually be placed in the Library of the U. S. Air Force Academy, so I am trying to assemble as much personal data as I can. We hope, in looking into the far distant future, that the 306th collection will be unique among those materials available to future generations of cadets, and will therefore be used for historical research on the air war that we knew.

Our reunion in England, on the 50th anniversary of the Group's arrival for combat was a tremendous success, and the Group is as strong today as it ever was in its heyday.

I look forward to hearing from you again.

Oh, by the way, I stopped to see Gil once in St. Clair Shores. Were you there? This must have been in 1980, 81, or about that time. My recollection is that I remember a wife, but not her name.

Sincerely yours,

November 16, 1992

Dear Russ,

Forgive my tardiness  
in answering your letter.  
I've been deluged with  
paperwork.



Enclosed is a copy  
of the Michigan Senate Resolution, which was  
initiated by Senator Gilbert J. DiNello of  
the 26 District. I was presented with this  
on November 12th. It is a well-deserved  
salute to Gil's memory, so beautifully recog-  
nized by our good Senate.

Also herein is an order form for FIRST  
OVER GERMANY, along with my check for \$3800.  
Upon receipt of the book, I shall present  
it to Senator DiNello as a gift from our  
family.

Russ, unfortunately I wasn't home  
when you visited with Gil on Kramer St.  
in St. Clair Shores. I regret not having  
had the pleasure of meeting you there.

I will be sending you copies of many  
important documents as soon as possible. There  
are multitudes, which I have to put in  
chronological order. In the interim...

Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours.  
Sincerely,  
Delire

March 4, 1994

Dear Hess,

I apologize for my lateness responding to your call. However, I listed below ~~is~~ Gilbert's Training data:

Pre-Cadet - Kelly Field

Primary - Pine Bluff

Basic - Greenville

Advanced - Ellington Field

Class: 43E

Hope all is well with you and yours.

Sincerely,  
Helen

Helen T. VanderMarliere  
26551 Birchcrest  
Chesterfield, MI 48051-3019