

CLASS OF SERVICE This is a fast message unless its deferred character is indicated by the proper symbol.	WESTERN UNION TELEGRAM W. P. MARSHALL CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD R. W. MCFALL PRESIDENT	SYMBOLS DL=Day Letter NL=Night Letter LT=International Letter Telegram
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The time shown on the date line on domestic telegrams is LOCAL TIME at point of origin. Time of receipt is LOCAL TIME at point of destination.

first

239P CST FEB 18 66 MB172
 CTA358 M CT WA260 GOVT PD
 WASHINGTON DC 18 319P EST
 MRS MYRA SPENCER

Mr Beale
W 3/7 P
(Water Sept)
CALLS

(REPORT DLY DONT PHONE) EARLHAM IOWA

I DEEPLY REGRET TO CONFIRM ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY THAT YOUR SON LTJG LARRY HOWARD SPENCER 674085/1325 USNR IS MISSING IN ACTION. THIS OCCURRED ON 18 FEBRUARY 1966 WHEN HIS AIRCRAFT FAILED TO RETURN FROM A BARRIER COMBAT AIR PATROL MISSION IN THE GULF OF TONKIN. YOU MAY BE ASSURED THAT EVERY EFFORT IS BEING MADE WITH PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO LOCATE YOUR SON. YOUR GREAT ANXIETY IN THIS SITUATION IS UNDERSTOOD AND WHEN FURTHER INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE CONCERNING THE RESULTS OF THE SEARCH NOW IN PROGRESS YOU WILL BE PROMPTLY NOTIFIED. I JOIN YOU IN FERVENT HOPE FOR HIS EVENTUAL RECOVERY ALIVE. I WISH TO ASSURE YOU OF EVERY POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TOGETHER WITH THE HEARTFELT SYMPATHY OF MYSELF AND YOUR SONS SHIPMATES AT THIS TIME OF HEARTACHE AND UNCERTAINTY. IF I CAN ASSIST YOU PLEASE WRITE OR TELEGRAPH THE CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY WASHINGTON D C 20370. MY PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVE CAN BE REACHED BY TELEPHONE AT OXFORD 42746 DURING WORKING HOURS AND OXFORD 42768 AFTER WORKING HOURS. THE AREA IN WHICH YOUR SON BECAME MISSING PRESENTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT HE COULD BE HELD BY HOSTILE FORCES AGAINST HIS WILL. ACCORDINGLY, FOR HIS SAFETY IN THIS EVENT, IT IS SUGGESTED THAT IN REPLYING TO INQUIRIES FROM SOURCES OUTSIDE YOUR IMMEDIATE FAMILY YOU REVEAL ONLY HIS NAME, RANK, FILE NUMBER AND DATE OF BIRTH

VICE ADMIRAL B J SEMMES JR CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL.

SF1201 (R2-6)

One in a Million

On February 18, 1966, Myra Spencer of Earlham, Iowa, received a telegram delivering the news that her son Lieutenant Larry H. Spencer—a Navy radar intercept officer—was classified as missing in action after his plane failed to return from a mission to Thanh Hoa in North Vietnam. Later communications confirmed he had been captured by the North Vietnamese when his F-4 Phantom was shot down over the Gulf of Tonkin, and with these events the Earlham native became Iowa's first Vietnam prisoner of war.

During the seven years of her son's captivity,

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ALL ITEMS: SHS (DES MOINES)



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Myra Spencer (right) emerged as a spokesperson for POW/MIA causes through personal appearances, letter-writing campaigns, and active participation in the National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia, and Iowans Care for Prisoners of War and Missing in Action.

In her free time she faithfully compiled scrapbooks (above) to document her activism and record the political, media, and community response to POW/MIA issues. She hoped to someday present this record to her son as a testament of what she had done on his behalf during the anxious years of separation. That hope became a reality when he was released from his Hanoi prison in February 1973 as part of Operation Homecoming.

In 2010 Commander Larry H. Spencer donated the series of eight scrapbooks assembled by his mother to the State Historical Society of Iowa so that they can continue to commemorate not only the captured and missing service personnel of the Vietnam War, but those at home who did not allow them to be forgotten.

—Becki Plunkett, Special Collections Archivist



ALL ITEMS: SHSI (DES MOINES)