



DEPARTMENT OF MINNESOTA  
**VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS**  
OF THE UNITED STATES

BOX 17146, RICE ST. STATION  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55117

PHONE: 612/291-1757

VETERANS SERVICE BUILDING  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55155

January 9, 1984

**JOSEPH JEANETTE**  
State Commander

**DEL LAMBRECHT**  
Senior Vice Commander

**PATRICK BOHMER**  
Junior Vice Commander

**LARRY ZIEBARTH**  
Judge Advocate

**REV. ROMAN SCHAEFER**  
Chaplain

**JOE SCHIRMERS**  
Surgeon

**RICHARD CHRISTIE**  
Chief Inspector

**FRANK VOLK**  
Chief of Staff

**ROBERT MARES**  
Past Commander

**JOHN L. O'NEILL, JR.**  
Adjutant Quartermaster

**JAMES HESSELGRAVE**  
Assistant Adjutant-Qm.

**ROBERT E. HANSEN**  
Past Commander-in-Chief

**ROBERT LARSON**  
National Council Member

**BERNIE MELTER**  
1st District Commander

**JOE MACH**  
2nd District Commander

**JOE GEWERTH**  
3rd District Commander

**JACK MARTENS**  
4th District Commander

**HAROLD HANSON**  
5th District Commander

**STEVE WIERSGALLA**  
6th District Commander

**MICHAEL BRAINARD**  
7th District Commander

**RICHARD ZAHN**  
8th District Commander

**AL GERNER**  
9th District Commander

Mrs. Patty Skelly  
1205 Victoria St. Apt. 101  
Fairmont, MN 56031

Dear Patty:

I was surprised to hear that rumors have been circulating about your association with the POW/MIA programs in the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Ladies Auxiliary. These should be put to rest immediately.

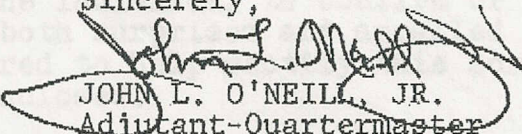
There is nothing in our records to support any indication that you had double billed the V.F.W. or Ladies Auxiliary and the Minnesota Chapter of the League for any travel expenses.

You were not removed for cause as the VFW Auxiliary POW/MIA Chairwoman, in fact each committee appointment is made for one year only. The appointment is made by the incumbent State Auxiliary President for during her term of office only. Because another president appointed another person is not the reason for a rumor to exist that you were removed for cause.

I have talked to President (1981-82) Audrey Busse and she stated that she was very satisfied with your chairmanship.

I might add that our association with you has been very satisfactory. For someone to presume that it would be other is completely false. Because our chairman and I agreed that the VFW association would be directly with the league rather than any other organization (Task Force Omega, Red Badge of Courage, etc.) is not a reason to presume any difference of opinion between Omega and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Our concern for the return of the MIA's is uppermost in our efforts, we hope that is shared by the other organizations and we believe that both you and Omega have the same concerns.

Sincerely,

  
JOHN L. O'NEILL, JR.  
Adjutant-Quartermaster

cc: Ann Mills Griffith  
Joan O'Brien  
Col. Hopper

NIA IN

HONOR THE DEAD BY HELPING THE LIVING

## TASK FORCE OMEGA

14205 TELEGRAPH ROAD • WOODBRIDGE, VIRGINIA 22192

Patricia B. Skelly  
Vice-Chairman  
Task Force Omega, Inc.  
1205 Victoria St. #101  
Fairmont, Minnesota 56031

Ms. Ann Mills Griffiths  
Executive Director  
National League of Families of  
Prisoners and Missing in  
Action in Southeast Asia  
1608 "K" Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20006

January 19, 1984

Dear Ms. Griffiths:

Because of the controversy surrounding the Department of Minnesota, Veterans of Foreign Wars' Fall Conference, I became aware of false information you provided to Col. Earl P. Hopper. I was informed of two specific stories which you relayed to him as being fact, and which you attributed to Mr. John O'Neill, Adjutant-Quartermaster, Department of Minnesota, Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The two stories are:

- 1) During my tenure as Minnesota State Coordinator for the League of Families, I double billed both the State Chapter and the VFW for the same travel expense(s).
- 2) During my tenure as Department of Minnesota, VFW Auxiliary POW/MIA Chairman, I was removed "for cause" from my position.

While Col. Hopper was in St. Paul to address an American Legion dinner, he raised these very sensitive subjects with me. Because we are both on the Board of Directors of Task Force Omega, Inc., he was obviously concerned over my honesty and integrity.

Upon hearing these accusations, I called Mr. John O'Neill since he is the individual to confirm or deny such charges. Mr. O'Neill was both surprised and appalled by these "facts," and immediately offered to help rectify this sorry situation. A copy of his letter is enclosed.

During our conversation, Mr. O'Neill also stated that the only time in the recent past that he has talked with you either in person or by telephone was in early November, the topic of which was solely the VFW Fall Conference.

It is my understanding that Col. Hopper also called Mr. O'Neill to varify the validity of these charges, and received the same response.

During the same timeframe, in a discussion with Mrs. Joan O'Brien, League Coordinator for Minnesota, I brought this problem to her attention and asked her if she had any knowledge of these rumors. Her response was yes, she had heard them from both VFW and American Legion members. She added that she was greatful that I brought them up as they had troubled her and had been wrestling with the decision of whether or not she should approach me with them.

Thinking that Col. Hopper may have misunderstood you in referring to your source of information, I then called Mrs. Alice Powers, League state chapter treasurer, to determine if she could have been your source. She told me she had never heard these stories, and was equally upset that such hideous statements are circulating which reflect not only on my personal reputation, but also on that of the League.

As a concerned citizen who has worked with the League, as well as other POW/MIA and veterans organizations in official capacities for many years, I am totally incensed and outraged by your gossip. For you to maliciously spread falsehoods as fact is outright slander and liable which is legally punishable. Such legal action is currently under investigation.

This is not the first time you have attempted to discredit an individual by implying misbehavior. Your tactics leave much to be desired for a person in your position as it only serves to demean yourself, and the organization you represent.

For years I have observed you manipulate League and board members alike by means ranging from flattery to intimidation. For those who were able to maintain their own perspective and integrity, you have attempted, and all to often successfully, to discredit them by whatever means available. This has been done for your own personal benefit rather than for the benefit of the men.

With so many fine and honorable people associated with the League, both as paid employees and volunteers at all levels, it is a tragic commentary in deed that one individual is consistantly undermining both the organization and the issue by her actions.

There is a great need for all organizations and individuals to work together on behalf of our unaccounted for fellow countrymen if we are to achieve their freedom in the shortest time possible. Your arrogant and belligerent attitude constantly aggravates those who come in contact with you. A pertinent example is graphically illustrated by your recent letter to Mr. Russ Schilling. A copy of which is enclosed with his permission. Since Mr. Schilling has been actively involved in this issue since 1966 to include being

the Co-Chairman of "Iowans Care," and one of the two gentlemen who met with the North Vietnamese representative in Paris in 1972, your letter to him is both insulting and degrading. As a "responsible" employee of the League, it is your obligation to know the accuracy of your information and/or comments before acting in whatever manner is appropriate in any given situation. In both Mr. Schilling's case and mine, you have acted inappropriately as well as unprofessionally.

As the Executive Director of the League, your actions and attitude reflect for better or worse on that organization. It is most unfortunate for the League that your behavior is so offensive, not to mention embarrassing for all concerned. It is also unfortunate that you have lost sight of the fact that you work for the Board of Directors, not the other way around.

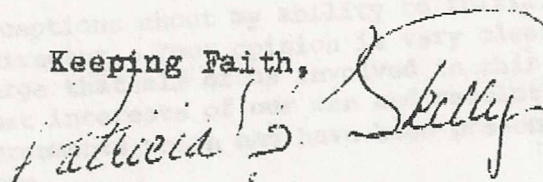
The League board may choose to take direct action in this matter. If this is the case, it is my prayer that each member examine the facts in this matter; and after searching his/her conscience and memory, act in the best interest of our prisoners and missing men.

In any event, I expect a full public apology in addition to a written one with copies going to those who are receiving this communiqué.

Since the League sponsored Public Awareness Seminar and board meeting are scheduled for next week, and I feel it is important that each member have a copy of this prior to these events, I am making arrangements for each to receive his/her copy before hand.

Since I will be attending the seminar, I plan to stay over to attend the board meeting.

Keeping Faith,



Patricia B. Skelly

Enclosures

cc: League of Families Board of Directors  
Mr. John O'Neill  
Mrs. Joan O'Brien  
Mrs. Alice Powers  
Mrs. Bette Charney  
Mr. Russ Schilling



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES  
OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

1608 K STREET, N.W., WASHINGTON, D. C. 20006 (202) 223-6846

February 8, 1984

Mrs. Patricia B. Skelly  
Chairman Task Force Omega, Inc.  
1205 Victoria Street #101  
Fairmont, MN 56011

Dear Mrs. Skelly:

Your letter dated January 19, 1984 was received January 23, a very hectic time in preparation for the POW/MIA Public Awareness Seminar which I was pleased to see you were able to attend.

Concerning your allegation that I "maliciously spread falsehoods as fact" and that I am guilty of slander, I can only state that misunderstandings obviously exist.

I have never at any time engaged in personal accusations or charges of misbehavior as you suggest. Undoubtedly this problem arises from the timeframe during which you were relieved of responsibility as the League's Minnesota State Coordinator at the request of the Minnesota families. A copy of a telegram from Mrs. Alice Powers to me and the board of directors is enclosed for your information. Further, I am unaware of any discussion concerning your removal as VFW Auxiliary POW/MIA Chairman other than personal discussions with League board chairman Earl Hopper concerning the fact that there appears to have been some difficulty in your relationship with the VFW Auxiliary and the term used by Earl was perhaps a "personality conflict."

Certainly you are entitled to your perceptions about my ability to fulfill responsibilities as League executive director. Your opinion is very clearly stated in your letter. I would only urge that all of us involved in this issue do as you suggest and put the best interests of our men and resolution of their fate above any personal disagreements which may have been present in the past or might occur in the future.

I have discussed the content of my letter to Russ Schilling directly with Mr. Schilling and apologized for my ignorance and lack of knowledge about his earlier position with Iowans Care or his trip to Paris in 1972.

Never a day passes that I don't learn something of importance that directly bears on this issue. I hope to continue to augment my level of knowledge and would hope that all involved in this issue feel the same.

Mrs. Patricia B. Skelly  
February 8, 1984  
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While I cannot fulfill your expectations of receiving a full public apology for something which did not occur, I do regret any unhappiness this misunderstanding may have caused. I was pleased to see the unity evident at the POW/MIA Public Awareness Seminar and look forward to all of the organizations represented continuing to work together to accomplish our mutual goal.

Sincerely,



Ann Mills Griffiths  
Executive Director

AMG/la

Enclosure

cc: League board of directors  
Mr. John O'Neil  
Mrs. Joan O'Brien  
Mrs. Alice Powers  
Mrs. Bette Charney  
Mr. Russ Schilling