



Please Register by July 8th @  
<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/july-officers-club-tickets-11856740831>

# Officers' Club Discussion & Social

## Hosted by LTC Jan and MAJ Dan Behn

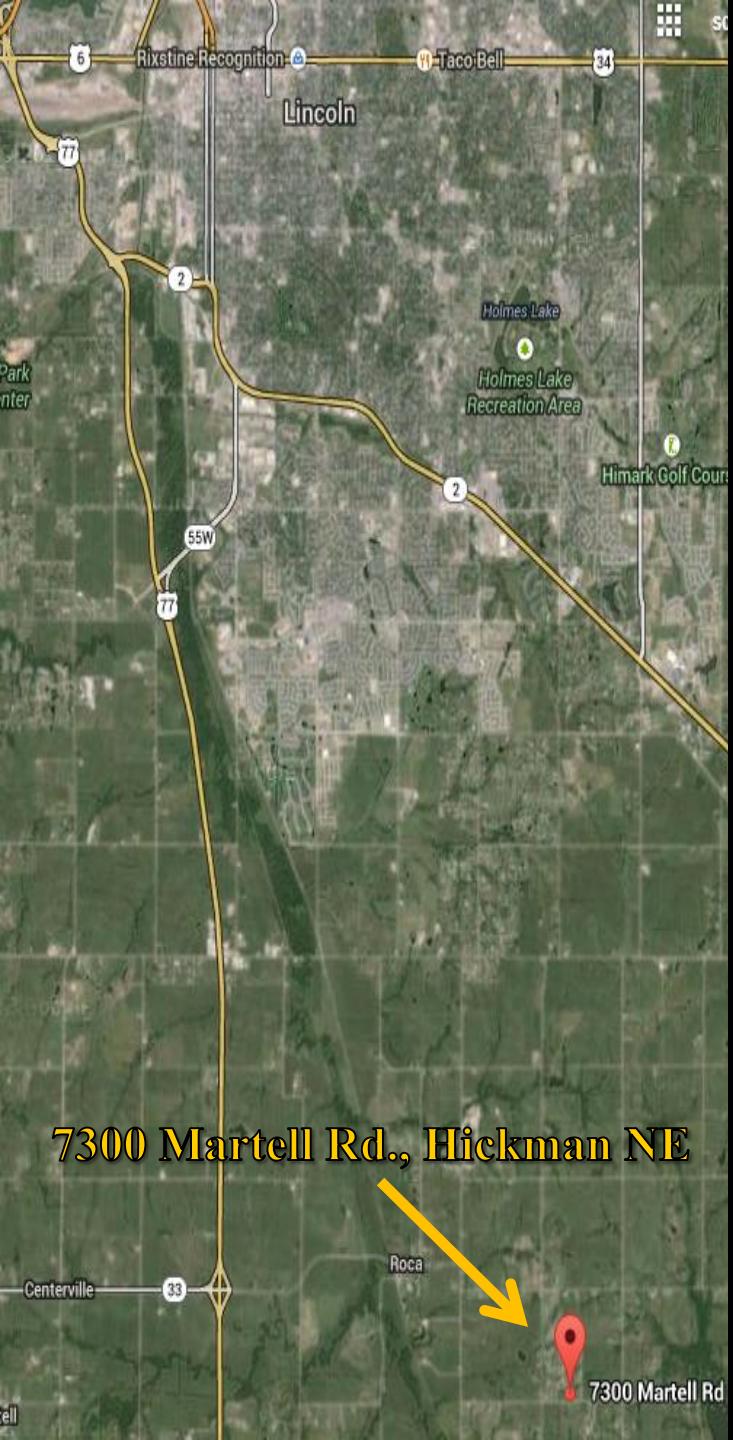
**Conversations  
With  
The Enemy**

**The Story of  
PFC Robert Garwood**  
Winston Groom  
and Duncan Spencer

**9 July 2014 @ 1800 hours**

**7300 Martell Rd., Hickman NE 68372**

***Topic: "Conversations with the Enemy: The Story of PFC Robert Garwood" by Winston Groom and Duncan Spencer***



[Conversations With The Enemy](#) is the well documented saga of the 14 year captivity of U.S. Marine PFC Robert Garwood in Vietnam. In September of 1965, while serving in Da Nang as a staff driver, Garwood was tasked to pick up a military member some distance from his base when he was accosted by the Viet Cong and placed into the enemy prison camp system.

Beginning his ordeal in Southern Vietnam, the book portrays a story of dreadful conditions suffered by American POW's in the worst types of conditions. The compelling narrative will illustrate how a U.S. serviceman can suffer and cope and adjust to a situation to make it survivable so that he may one day return home. But, it goes quite deeper than that.

We find that Garwood, while stationed at a number of prison camps in the south, was eventually joined by other captured American prisoners. Already in the camp system for many months on his own before seeing new Americans, he had to adjust his means of survivability in the way he interacted with the North Vietnamese enemy that held him. Some of the measures he adopted were learning to speak the Vietnamese language fluently, interpreting for the camp hierarchy, assisting camp cadre with duties, and succumbing to propaganda viewpoints (after being tortured).

It is no great leap of logic that when new American prisoners were brought to the camp and witnessed Garwood's activities and unusual behaviors, he appeared to be collaborating with the enemy in certain ways and his actions could certainly appear to be traitorous. When described in detail by the authors, the activities of Garwood do appear to be detrimental to the U.S. Soldiers' code of conduct but you must also ask yourself this: In his position, what would you do to survive and to make ends meet in a very harrowing situation?

Garwood's actions are very suspect and quite possibly out of line and readers will cast their own judgments' about the controversial actions.

After years of confinement in Southern Vietnamese camps, the story shows how Garwood was eventually moved to North Vietnam to another camp and was "employed" in a matter of speaking by the North Vietnamese as a mechanic for their military vehicles. The methods by which he lived in that camp might also be seen as controversial depending on the views of the reader. There is no doubt though, like his life in the Southern Vietnamese camps it was far from pleasant. Using clandestine methods, Garwood was eventually able to get a note to a foreigner in Hanoi to alert the United States of his captivity in Vietnam.

Upon being repatriated back to the United States in 1979, his return is problematic and controversial to our government and to the Vietnamese government. After the release of POW's in 1973, both governments claimed there were no more POW's in Vietnam. To compound the problem, Garwood is accused of committing several military crimes while he was in captivity and is faced with a court martial. Many of the POW's he was interned with at the different camps testify against him at his court martial adding further questions to the whole situation. This book will detail the elements of his trial and court martial proceedings and in the end, the reader will be left to form their own assumptions of what really is or is not true justice. Additional recommended reading about this same Soldier: [Why Didn't You Get Me Out.](#)