

My name is Grant Huebner and I am a Navy pilot from Edwardsville, Illinois. Many years ago I reported to my new unit. On my first day Sgt. O'Brien came up and asked me to be his co-pilot on a secret special mission. I knew this was a very special honor and I wanted to be on top of my game. I remember asking myself, "I wonder what you have to do to be a GREAT pilot?" After that day, I spent all my spare time studying and training to be the best pilot I could be. I couldn't wait for the day I would get to climb into that plane!

Sgt. O'Brien and I were going on a practice run and something went wrong. Smoke was in the cockpit and I couldn't see a thing. I knew our plane was going down. "We're coming in hot!" I said. We were only one thousand feet from the ground and Sgt. O'Brien was unconscious. I bailed out with my parachute and then I blacked out. The plane must have made a soft landing and thankfully Sgt. O'Brien was not killed. I thought I was getting captured when I saw a vehicle coming toward us but when I saw the flashing lights of the ambulance I knew I was in good hands. The ambulance took us to the hospital and we were both checked out. I woke up from my deep sleep and I won't ever forget when Dr. Neil told me Sgt. O'Brien was paralyzed from the waist down.

When I got out of the hospital I went straight back to where my plane crashed. To my surprise the plane was gone. I went back to the base and the A-7E Corsair II was sitting there all cleaned up and fixed. The head of the Naval Unit told me "It's your turn to fly this beast of a plane!" My practice run was going good until I realized I was in the real deal. We were at war. I was flying my plane along with a few other crew members in the back. We were flying over Germany when a missile hit our plane. Once again I thought for sure I was going to die. When we landed two of my crew members were dead and the rest of us were captured. We were all held prisoners of war. They fed us barely enough food to survive and we were tortured. We were held in the prison camp for 127 days. Finally, we were rescued

by United States soldiers and the soldiers asked me if I wanted to get revenge on the Germans and I said I just want to be flown home. If you go to the Edwardsville Township Park you will see a replica of my plane in honor of all the soldiers who have served our great country and those that lost their lives. When I drive by the park I always think of Sgt. O'Brien.