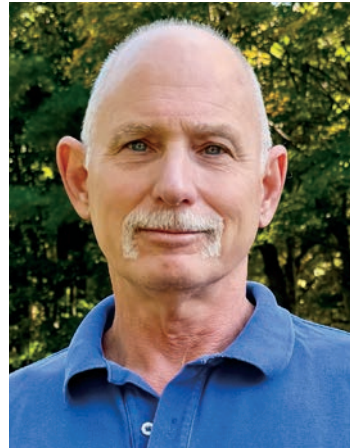


Faces of Freedom

BY EILEEN WUBBE

Walter Schuppe, formerly of Pacific Western Bank, started Faces of Freedom in 2019 to express gratitude to and honor the sacrifices and service of U.S. Military veterans and their families. The project uses black and white portraits and oral histories, as told by each veteran, to help connect a face with a personal story.



■ **WALTER SCHUPPE**

formerly of Pacific Western Bank

Walter Schuppe had been SVP/managing director Special Assets Group at Pacific Western Bank and retired in early 2024 to tackle home projects and other tasks that were put off. His career spans working in public accounting, middle-market lending at Dai-ichi Kangyo Bank, and Fleet Bank, general manager for a metal stamping company, asset-based lending with FleetCapital, and asset-based and cash flow lending for CapitalSource, which ultimately merged with Pacific Western Bank and then Bank of California.

These days Schuppe keeps busy running Faces of Freedom and serving as a board member and treasurer of SEALKIDS, a charity that raises money to help children with diagnosed learning disabilities who are children of U.S. Navy SEALs. The charity is in the process of expanding to all special forces. He assists the executive director with the financials, forecasting and strategic planning. Schuppe also volunteers his time teaching financial analysis for the Veteran Entrepreneurial Training & Resource Network (VETRN), a group sponsored by the SBA, for veterans who have a business and decide that they would like to get more training and a mini-MBA. VETRN was founded and is run by Lee Goldberg who Walter knew from his banking days.

Schuppe recalled his 60th birthday as a turning point that spurred him to begin Faces of Freedom.

“When I turned 60, it was the only birthday that I ever really stopped and thought a lot of time has transpired and I have been lucky,” he said. “I never had to make any significant sacrifices like those in the military. I wondered what I could do to show a little gratitude. Photography is a hobby of mine, and I thought narrowly and modestly, and felt I could take photographs of WWII veterans. I had an interest in World War II, anyway.”

Getting Started

Schuppe decided to seek out World War II veterans and photograph them as a gift. Photos were, and still are, printed in black and white, which Schuppe said looks more dramatic, and everybody receives an 8x10 photo that is matted and framed with a label on it including the details of their time of service, at no charge.

Schuppe recalled being in North Carolina for work, and his wife joined to visit for a vacation afterwards. They decided to drive to Raleigh to meet the first veteran, William Simpson, who earned three Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and three Battle Stars.

“I figured I’d snap a couple of photos, chat with him, and then we’d be on our way. Three and a half hours later I had to say to him, ‘I could sit here all day and listen to your stories, but we really need to get on the road.’ I ran out to the car and sat there with my phone typing in everything I could remember and thought ‘Maybe there’s more to this than I realize. Maybe it’s a photo and an interview.’

“You never know what to expect when you interview somebody. I’m going in blind. I usually don’t have very much information in advance. So, if somebody’s agreed to do the interview, they’re probably a talkative person. I don’t end up having to ask many questions sometimes.”

Finding veterans to interview was harder than expected. Schuppe would tell people what he was looking for and, through word of mouth, lined up more interviews. If he reads about someone or sees a veteran on TV, he will look them up and track them down. Everybody interviewed understands that Faces of Freedom is a feel-good project to show gratitude and there is no cost. Those who are interviewed can review their draft to make changes or corrections so that they are satisfied with what’s written.

Schuppe had success in reaching out to The Veterans History Museum of the Carolinas in Brevard, NC for potential interviews. Much to his surprise they had a disproportionate concentration of retired veterans there and many World War II veterans. He sent the museum an email telling them about the project and asked if they knew of any veterans that might be interested and they replied within an hour offering to help.



World War II veterans who have been interviewed and photographed for Faces of Freedom. Brad Freeman is top left and Clem Leone bottom right.

“I once interviewed eight people on a Saturday and went back another time and interviewed 16 in a day. That was lot!” Schuppe said. “While I was preparing for this trip, I got an email from Janis Allen who works with World War II veterans at the museum who had written an article about an interview she had with Brad Freeman, who was the last surviving member of the Band of Brothers.

“She gave me his phone number and I called him. He said, ‘Come on down.’ After all those interviews in Brevard, my wife and I drove to Caledonia, Mississippi the next day and interviewed Brad. When we went into his house, it was like a giant memorial to the 101st Airborne Division Easy Company.”

125 Stories and Counting

While not all veterans have stories of taking the hill, kicking down doors and clearing rooms or bombing missions, everybody deserves to have their story told because they sacrificed their time and things could have unexpectedly gone horribly for them, Schuppe noted. A few veterans’ interviews came to mind when asked if any in particular

stood out.

“Jim Brush was part of The Manhattan Project,” Schuppe said. “He worked on the development of the world’s first atomic bomb, with a focus on the development of the timing for the firing mechanisms. Clem Leone was a radioman on a B17 and flew missions over Europe. He has a pretty long story about being shot down in Holland and trying to be smuggled back through Belgium and into France and Spain to then get him back to England. The network got compromised somewhere in France, so he ended up a POW. *Masters of the Air*, an American war drama miniseries on Apple TV+ follows what they call The ‘Bloody 100th’ Bomb Group. There is one episode about Clem’s story.”

Schuppe also recalled interviewing George Steitz, who was part of the first wave that landed on Utah Beach; a woman who was Ruth Minsky in the United States and Riva Minska in Poland, who was a survivor of a satellite camp of Auschwitz; Colonel Harvey Barnum, who was awarded the Medal of Honor in Vietnam; Bill Guenon, a pilot that was part of The Son Tay Raid in Vietnam, and a young Marine who helped

with the American troops withdrawal in Afghanistan and was next to Abbey Gate, where the bomb went off at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

Schuppe has also interviewed several SEALs, including one he met at a SEALKIDS event, who witnessed Khalid Sheikh Mohammed confess to killing *The Wall Street Journal* reporter, Daniel Pearl.


“He invited me and a few others from the event to workout in his garage that he turned into a workout room,” Schuppe recalled. “He had all these pictures on the wall that I started asking him about. A few were photos of the psychologists he worked with at CIA Black sites. He explained that he guarded Mohammed after he had been captured, shuttled him around to all the CIA Black sites and was there when he confessed to killing Pearl.”

One of the more recent interviews Schuppe conducted was after seeing Mae Krier receive the Congressional Gold Medal on TV this past spring. They were honoring a group of women who played a role as a Rosie the Riveter, and Krier, an original Rosie the Riveter who built planes during World War II, accepted the Medal, on behalf of all Rosies. Schuppe tracked her down online. It took a few messages and letters and eventually she answered. The interview was conducted over

Zoom. Schuppe then went to Levittown, PA to photograph the 98-year-old, but that still took some convincing.

“She eventually said, ‘All right, well, you can’t stay long, 20 minutes.’ I said I’d just take a couple of pictures quickly. I went down there and was there for two and a half hours. We chatted about everything under the sun.”

Schuppe eventually wants to turn Faces of Freedom into a 501(c)(3) to raise money to allow more flexibility in traveling to veterans that are outside of driving distance from his hometown in Avon, CT. “Remember, every veteran has a story that deserves to be told,” he said.

If you are a veteran or know of a veteran who would like to be featured, contact Walter at walter11_22@yahoo.com. For more information, visit www.facesoffreedom.us. 

Eileen Wubbe is senior editor of The Secured Lender.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION

Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685. 1. Title of publication: The Secured Lender. 2. Publication No. 0888-255x. 3. Date of filing: October 1, 2024. 4. Frequency of issue: 6x a year. 5. No. of issues published annually: 6s. 6. Annual subscription price: \$65 for nonmembers. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 370 7th Ave. Ste. 1801, New York, NY 10001. Contact Person: Michele Ocejo, Telephone: (212) 792-9396. Complete mailing address of the headquarters of general business offices of the publisher: 370 7th Ave. Ste. 1801, New York, NY 10001. 9. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Publisher: Secured Finance Network, Inc. 370 7th Ave. Ste. 1801, New York, NY 10001; Editor-in-Chief: Michele Ocejo, 370 7th Ave. Ste. 1801, New York, NY 10001; Managing Editor: Eileen Wubbe. 10. Owner: (If the publication is owned by a corporation, give the name and address of the corporation immediately followed by the names and addresses of all stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a Corporation, give the names and addresses of the individual owners. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, give its name and address, as well as those of each individual owner. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, give its name and address.): Secured Finance Network, Inc., A Delaware Non-Stock, Non-Profit Corporation, 370 7th Ave. Ste. 1801, New York, NY 10001. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: has not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Title: The Secured Lender. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: September, 2024. 15. Extent and nature of circulation: a. Total number of copies (net press run): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 6,364; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 6,500. b. Paid circulation (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Mailed outside-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser’s proof copies, and exchange copies): Average No. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 5,758; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 5,885 (2) Mailed in-county paid subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser’s proof copies,

and exchange copies): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0; (3) Paid distribution outside the mails including sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales and other paid distribution outside USPS: Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0; (4) Paid distribution by other classes of mail through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 30; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 150. c. Total paid distribution (Sum of 15b(1), (2), (3) and (4)): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 5,788; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 6,035. d. Free or nominal rate distribution (by mail and outside the mail): (1) Free or nominal rate outside-county copies included on PS Form 3541: Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 0; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. (2) Free or nominal rate in-county copies included on PS Form 3541: Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: 0. (3) Free or nominal rate copies mailed at other classes through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 0; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 0. (4) Free or nominal rate distribution outside the mail (carriers or other means): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 200; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 300. e. Total free or nominal rate distribution (sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 376; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 300. f. Total distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 5,988; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 6,335. g. Copies not distributed: Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 376; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 165. h. Total (Sum of 15f, 15g): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 6,364; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 6,500. i. Percent paid (15c/f x 100): Average no. copies of each issue during preceding 12 months: 96.65%; No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date: 95.26%. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete.