



## HISTORY OF THE POW/MIA FLAG

In 1970, Mrs. Michael Hoff, MIA wife and active member of the National League of POW/MIA Families, recognized the need for a symbol of our POW/MIAs. Prompted by an article in the Jacksonville, FL, *Times-Union*, Mrs. Hoff contacted Norman Rivkees, Vice President of Annin & Company, which had made a banner for the newest member of the United Nations, the People's Republic of China (PRC), as part of their policy to provide flags of all United Nations member states. Mrs. Hoff found Mr. Rivkees very sympathetic to the POW/MIA issue. He and an Annin contractor, Newt Heisley, designed a flag to represent our missing men.

Following approval by the League's Board of Directors at a January 22-23, 1972, meeting, POW/MIA flags were manufactured for distribution. Wanting the widest possible dissemination and use of this symbol to advocate for improved treatment for, and answers on, American POW/MIAs, no trademark or copyright was sought. As a result, widespread use of the League's POW/MIA flag is not restricted legally. The large volume of commercial production and sales now required to meet demands of federal and state laws does not benefit the League financially, though Annin & Company did contribute a modest amount on one occasion years ago.

On March 9, 1989, an official League flag – flown over the White House on National POW/MIA Recognition Day 1988 – was installed in the US Capitol Rotunda as a result of legislation passed overwhelmingly on a bipartisan basis during the 100<sup>th</sup> Congress. In a demonstration of further bipartisan Congressional support, the leadership of both Houses hosted the installation ceremony, at which then League Executive Director Ann Mills-Griffiths, now Chairman of the Board/CEO delivered remarks representing the POW/MIA families.

The League's POW/MIA flag is the *only* flag ever displayed in the US Capitol Rotunda where it stands today as a powerful symbol of America's determination to account for US personnel still missing and unaccounted-for from the Vietnam War. On August 10, 1990, the 101<sup>st</sup> Congress passed US Public Law 101-355, which recognized the League's POW/MIA flag and designated it *"the symbol of our Nation's concern and commitment to resolving as fully as possible the fates of Americans still prisoner, missing and unaccounted for in Southeast Asia, thus ending the uncertainty for their families and the Nation"*.

The importance of the POW/MIA flag lies in its continued visibility, a constant signal of the plight of America's UNRETURNED VETERANS. Other than "Old Glory," the League's POW/MIA flag is the only flag ever to fly over the White House, displayed since 1982 in this place of honor on National POW/MIA Recognition Day, now displayed daily 24/7.

The 116<sup>th</sup> Congress acted: "To amend title 36, United States Code, to require that the POW/MIA flag be displayed on all days that the flag of the United States is displayed on certain Federal property." Cited as the "National POW/MIA Flag Act", signed into law by President Donald Trump on November 7, 2019. Section 902 of title 36, United States Code, was amended by striking the prior subsection (c) and inserting the following: "(c) Days for Flag Display – For the purposes of this section, POW/MIA flag display days are all days on which the flag of the United States is displayed."