

# THE FLAME OF LIBERTY TIMES



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**August 7 was  
Purple Heart Day.  
A Day Hearts Remember**

## August 7 Purple Heart Day

*We pause to recognize and  
remember the Purple Heart  
recipients among us...*

**Major General Kent Hillhouse U.S. Army (Ret.)**  
**Dr. Clyde Horn U.S. Army**  
**George H. Burris, U.S. Marine Corps - KIA**  
**Peter J. McGirr, U.S. Army Air Corps - KIA**



## August 7 Purple Heart Day and a Day Hearts Remember

August 7 | Purple Heart Day  
We Honor Our Heroes

The **Purple Heart** is awarded to military members who are injured and killed in combat, through an act of terrorism or by friendly fire. It acknowledges the physical sacrifice of service to the nation. Receiving a Purple Heart is an honor and comes with many benefits from state and federal governments and nonprofit organizations. Purple Heart Day is August 7.

The **Purple Heart is purple** because it directly descends from the "Badge of Military Merit" created by George Washington in 1782. This original badge was a heart-shaped piece of purple cloth, which has been the basis for the modern Purple Heart medal. (Source: Military.com.) The purple color was chosen to represent bravery and sacrifice, and it also had historical ties to royalty and high status.

On this solemn day, we pause to recognize and remember the courageous members of our Armed Forces who were wounded or made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of our

nation. The Purple Heart stands as a symbol of their bravery, resilience, and unwavering dedication.

To all **Purple Heart** recipients — we **thank you**.

Your sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Your courage continues to inspire us all.

Let us honor them not just today, but every day.

#PurpleHeartDay #HonorOurHeroes #MilitarySacrifice #NeverForgotten

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## ***Major General Kent Hillhouse, U.S. Army (Ret.)***

***Vietnam War Veteran  
Purple Heart Recipient with Oak Leaf Cluster***

***Board President***



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***President, Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation***

Major General Kent Hillhouse U.S. Army (Ret.) is a Vietnam War Veteran and President of the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation. He served with the 11th Armor Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam from '67-'68.

Kent's first real introduction to discipline and leadership was through high school football. He credits his coaches as his leadership role models. They understood the power of

motivation to inspire their team. Kent's coaches wanted their players to be disciplined, to understand the meaning of "team" and to realize that it took hard work and perseverance to succeed.

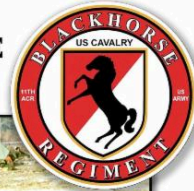
This early exposure became for Kent, his recipe for survival while serving in Vietnam. "Discipline got you through the day which usually started at 0500 hours with a search and destroy mission lasting until we moved into a new Night Defensive Position at sunset. Discipline got you through every night of sleep deprivation while monitoring on the radio, the ambush patrols, and listening posts unless it was my turn for ambush patrol. Discipline got you through the small skirmishes involving RPG teams and snipers that occurred almost daily. But when the rubber really met the road as in bayonet fixing time, it was discipline that forced you to stay calm, think about your training and focus on the mission - engaging and killing the enemy and, of course, surviving. For me the fear came after the firefight when I had time to think about what happened."

In Vietnam as a Platoon Leader Kent experienced different challenges, "In Vietnam we had a saying amongst the officers - 'You can't manage someone up a hill to die; you have to lead them up.' I could not be close to my men - no buddy-buddy stuff, could not talk about my girlfriend, etc. We all got to drink one canteen an hour of hot muddy water to stay hydrated. Two field issued C-rations ("C-rats") a day kept us nourished. Sucking on one half of the undissolved coffee tablet (from the C-rats) kept us awake while on ambush patrol. ... I made sure my guys knew that my goal was to ensure their safe return home. Obviously, that did not always happen. But, at least they knew I was not making irrational decisions and I was trying to keep them alive."

[Learn More About Purple Heart Recipient MG Kent Hillhouse](#)

[Learn More - About Purple Heart Recipient MG Kent Hillhouse - Mobile](#)

**U.S. ARMY 11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT  
WITH RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL KENT HILLHOUSE  
IN THE IRON TRIANGLE, VIETNAM, 1967 - 1968**



**VIET CONG  
BEWARE**



**US ARMY 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION  
WELCOME TO THE IRON TRIANGLE**



**A YOUNG LT. HILLHOUSE, RECIPIENT OF TWO SILVER STARS,  
BRONZE STAR AND PURPLE HEART, ON HIS M48 PATTON TANK IN  
THE IRON TRIANGLE WITH THE 11TH ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT**



**155MM ARTILLERY FIRE ALONG A WOOD LINE**

**A YOUNG LT. HILLHOUSE WITH A CAPTURED  
NORTH VIETNAMESE RPD 7.62 MACHINE GUN**



**CHILLING AT THE BIEN HOA AIRFIELD JUST AFTER  
THE 1968 TET OFFENSIVE**

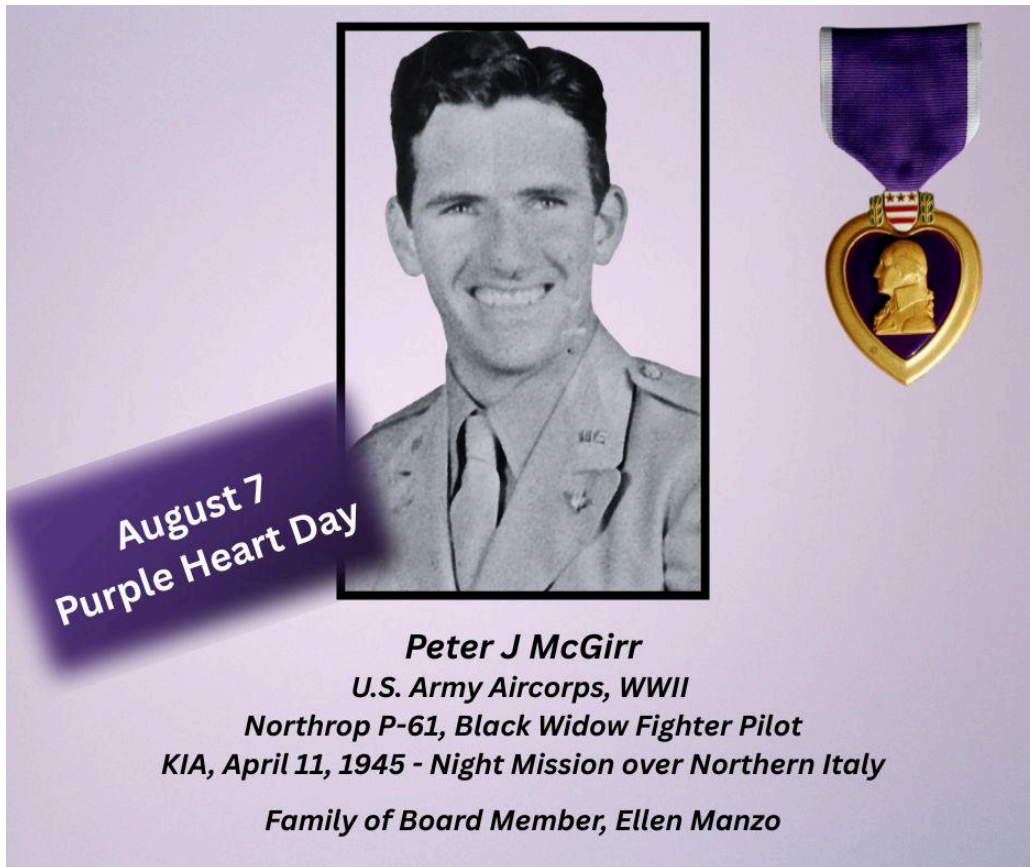
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***Peter J McGirr***

***U.S. Army Aircorps, WWII  
Northrop P-61, Black Widow Fighter Pilot***

***KIA, April 11, 1945  
Night Mission over Northern Italy***

***Family of Board Member, Ellen Manzo***



## Remembering Peter J McGirr

**Peter McGirr** served as a fighter pilot in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, flying the formidable Northrop P-61 Black Widow, the first American aircraft specifically designed as a night fighter.

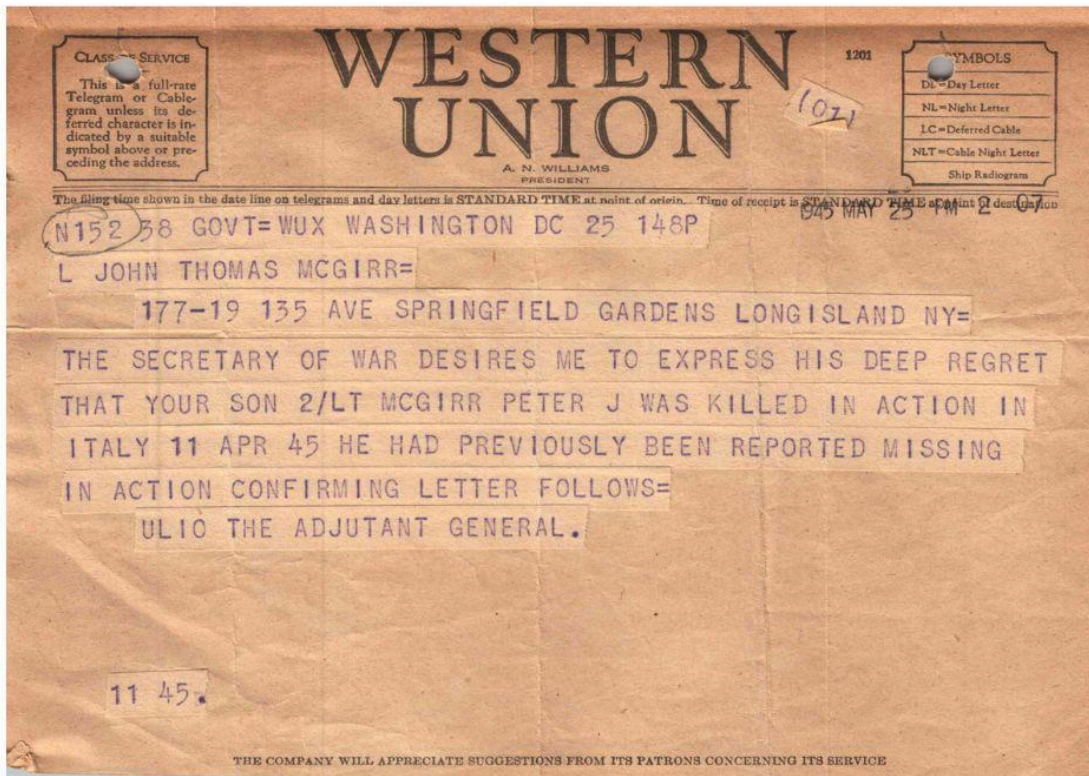
On the night of April 11, 1945, Peter and his crew of three aboard their aircraft, *Frontdoor 50*, took off from Pontedera Airfield at 20:56 hours for an intruder and bombing mission targeting the Ghedi Aerodrome. After confirming takeoff with base command, all contact was lost. Despite repeated attempts to reestablish communication, *Frontdoor 50* was never heard from again.

That very night, according to *Smithsonian Magazine*, marked the most successful single night of combat for the P-61 Black Widow during the entire war. U.S. night fighter crews downed 14 Luftwaffe aircraft, many of them Junkers and transport planes, as they attempted to resupply encircled German forces.

Peter McGirr's final mission was part of this pivotal night—his courage and sacrifice is forever linked to a turning point in the air war over Europe.

[Learn More - Purple Heart Recipient 2nd LT Peter McGirr - Desktop](#)

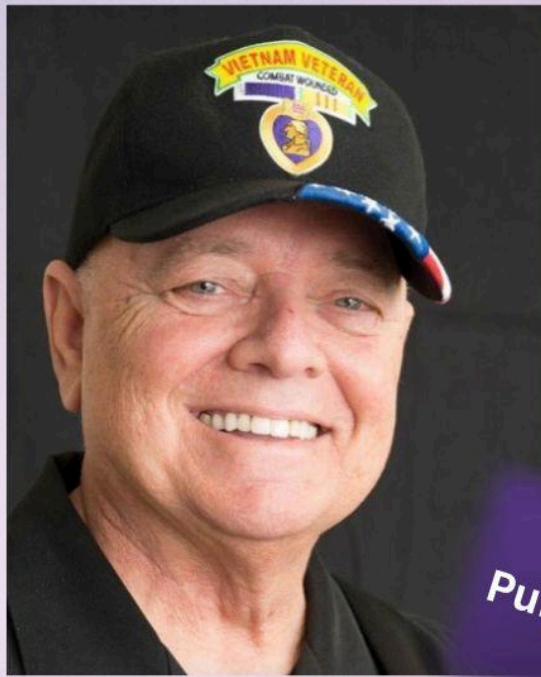
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***Dr. Clyde Horn***

***U.S. Army, Vietnam War Combat Veteran  
Purple Heart Recipient with Combat Infantry Badge***

***Board Member, Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation***



**August 7  
Purple Heart Day**

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***Purple Heart Recipient with Combat Infantry Badge***

***Board Member, Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation***

**Dr. Clyde R. Horn** is a combat Vietnam Veteran who served with distinction in the **199th Light Infantry Brigade** from 1967 to 1968. Today, he is a semi-retired, licensed psychotherapist and a passionate advocate for fellow Veterans.

After returning from the war with deep questions and invisible wounds, Clyde began a long journey of healing and discovery. He first pursued a Master's in Theology and a second Master's in Education, working in churches as both a minister and therapist. Determined to provide more focused care, he went on to earn a third Master's in Marriage and Family Therapy, and later, a **Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology**.



Throughout his life, Clyde has combined his professional work with personal healing. As a form of creative expression and therapy, he turned to photography—ultimately publishing a book titled *PTSD in Pictures & Words*, available at [www.rp-author.com/horn](http://www.rp-author.com/horn).

Diagnosed with PTSD from his wartime experience, Clyde made a powerful choice: not to live as a victim, but to live with purpose. A **100% disabled Veteran**, he now meets weekly with a group of fellow disabled Veterans in **Silicon Valley**, gathering every Friday morning for breakfast. This program, hosted by the **Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation**, provides a space for camaraderie, support, and healing. There, Clyde offers guidance on navigating the VA disability system and openly shares his ongoing journey toward recovery.

His life is a testament to resilience, service, and the strength found in community.

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## ***George Hughie Burris***

***U.S. Marine Corps, WWII  
First Battalion, 22nd Marine Division***

***KIA July 21, 1944 during the initial landing force on the beaches of Guam.  
George had just turned 17 years of age.***



### **Remembering George Hughie Burris**

**George Hughie Burris** hitchhiked from his hometown of Enid, Oklahoma, all the way to California with a fierce determination to serve his country. Family stories say that by the time he arrived, the soles of his shoes were nearly worn through.

At just sixteen years old, he lied about his age, claiming to be seventeen so he could enlist in the United States Marine Corps. He completed boot camp training in San Diego and was assigned to the **1st Marine Division**. This unit played a critical role in coordinating Pacific Theater operations during World War II.

On July 21, 1944, George was among the first wave of Marines to storm the beaches of Guam. He was tragically killed in action during the assault by a shrapnel wound to the head. He was just seventeen years old.

George Hughie Burris is buried in the U.S. military cemetery in Guam, a lasting testament to his courage and sacrifice.

Board Member Jim Free reflects:

“I think about him almost every day.”

Today — and every day — we remember him.



Know a Veteran or First Responder who should be remembered? Honor your Hero at the Flame of Liberty Memorial. Your gift delivers honor, gratitude and healing to those who served.

There is no better gift than the gift that gives back.

**Donate a Paver in Honor**

**Make a Major Difference by Joining the Circle of Supporters Upon the Wall of Gratitude**



**Volunteering Feeds the Soul. Donate you time & talent. Join the movement. Sign up today.**



The Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation thanks J. McLaughlin for generously hosting the "Sip, Shop and Celebrate Spring" Shop for a Cause event over Memorial Day weekend, with 10% of proceeds benefiting our cause — Your support makes a meaningful difference!



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patrol. ... I made sure my guys knew that my goal was to ensure their safe return home. Obviously, that did not always happen. But at least they knew I was not making irrational decisions, and I was trying to keep them alive.”



Upon returning to the US following the war, Kent was assigned to a U.S. Army Reserve Division, the 91st Infantry Division (training) where he served in numerous command and staff positions culminating in the command of the Division. For his terminal assignment, Kent served as the Deputy G-1 on the Army staff in the Pentagon from 1996 – 2001.



Kent Hillhouse is the recipient of numerous military commendations, each a testament to his extraordinary courage and unwavering dedication to our nation.

- DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL;
- LEGION OF MERIT;
- SILVER STAR with 1 bronze oak leaf clusters;
- BRONZE STAR MEDAL;
- **PURPLE HEART**;
- MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL with 4 bronze oak leaf clusters;
- ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL;

- ARMY ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL with 1 bronze oak leaf clusters;
- NATIONAL DEFENSE SERVICE MEDAL with 1 bronze service stars;
- VIETNAM SERVICE MEDAL with 4 bronze service stars;
- ARMED FORCES RESERVE MEDAL with gold hourglass device with numeral 2;
- ARMY RESERVE COMPONENTS ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL with 4 bronze oak leaf clusters;
- ARMY SERVICE RIBBON;
- REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM CAMPAIGN RIBBON W/DEVICE (1960);
- EXPERT BADGE with Auto Rifle Bar with Pistol Bar;
- PARACHUTIST BADGE – BASIC

It's a rare privilege to stand in the presence of a leader who so fully embodies the values of service, honor, and sacrifice. We are proud—and deeply grateful—to have him serve as Board President for the Veterans Memorial & Support Foundation.

**America: Land of the Free, because of the Brave.**

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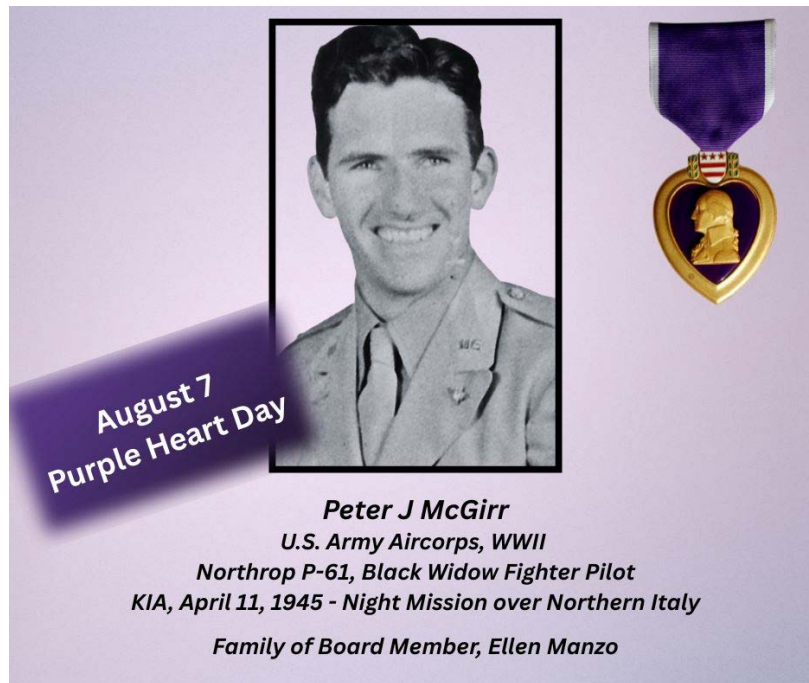
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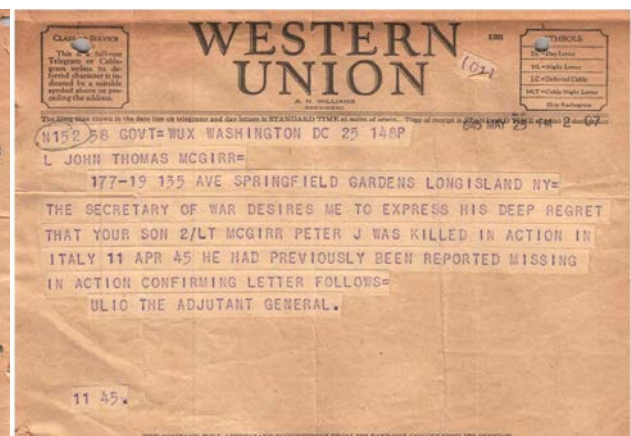
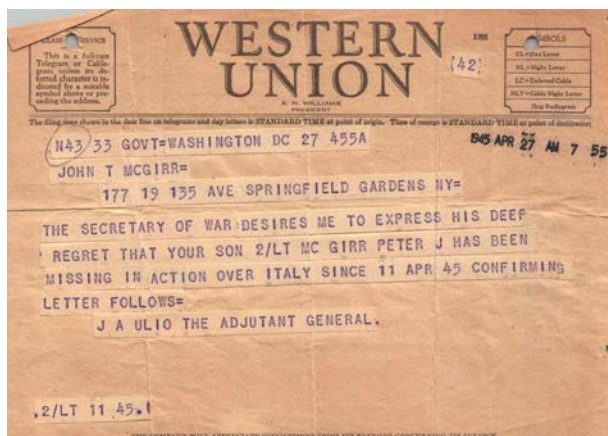
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JERRY - C. SMITH 763 ASP NORMAN - OKLA. November 20, 1945

Dear Mr. McGirr,

You don't know who I am, but I have some information about the death of your son, which I believe you would like to know.

I am a farmer pilot of the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force, and was shot down last February over North Italy. I managed to parachute down safely and to evade the enemy. A friendly Italian family took me into their home, and kept me until the Americans found me on the last day of April. This place where I stayed was a small village named Fontanella in the province of Mantova.

Every night as soon as it was dark, the American night-fighters

and bombers would begin their patrols bombing and strafing where ever they found a target. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of April about midnight, I was in bed when I heard a plane pass very low over the village. A few minutes later a girl from next door came running in to tell us that "People", this was the name that the Italians gave to all planes that flew at night, had crashed just outside of the village. This girl was scared to death of the planes, and would become hysterical whenever one was close; so we payed no attention to her and told her to go back to bed.

The next morning we found that it was true. a plane had crashed just outside of the village. I never

ventured out of the house for fear of being recognized; so it was impossible for me to inspect the wreckage myself. My friends did go out however, and brought back the news that the plane was completely demolished, and that three boys had been killed. The bodies were laying at some distance from the plane and were all intact. They also brought to me a form which is carried in all planes and which bears the names of the occupants. The last names of the boys on this particular form were McGirr, Bram, and Cheely.

The people of this village were kind and good and were very sorry for the three americans. So they

put their money together and bought three coffins at a great expense to them, because they were very poor. They then placed the bodies of the boys in separate coffins, and buried them in their own cemetery. They bought headstones for the graves and placed flowers on them. I know this is all true, because after I was liberated I went out to the cemetery and saw the graves myself.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, I arrived at the 12<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters in Florence, and reported what I knew. They told me that the coffins would be brought back South and placed in an American cemetery.

They also told me not to notify  
the families of the boys until  
after six months, which is the  
reason I am just now writing to  
you.

I wish to express my very  
depest sympathy for you, St. M'Girr's  
family, and friends. If there is  
anything I can do or any questions  
that I can answer, please call  
on me.

Sincerely yours,  
Jerry C. Smith

