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Bracelets bring story full circle

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After newspapers around the country reported on the identification of remains of Herbert C. Crosby, an Army captain missing for 37 years, an outpouring of sympathy went to his grieving mother and sister in Titusville.

One message especially was touching -- from Teresa Stamm of Cincinnati, who had kept a POW-MIA bracelet in memory of Crosby for more than 30 years.

The woman had read a small article in a newspaper about the development and asked her priest, who planned to visit relatives in Titusville, to return it to Crosby's family. He did so Sunday afternoon.

"I'm still in awe of how I spotted that little tiny blurb," Stamm said. "But I knew the name immediately. I almost froze."

Two others have contacted the family with the hopes of returning the bracelets, which sold for \$3 in the 1970s as a way to remember U.S. prisoners of war and those missing in action.

"I never expected this," said Crosby's 88-year-old mother, Jane Crosby Wesley. "I can't believe someone would keep it that long."

She put it on her wrist immediately and says she'll wear it every day.

Crosby had been missing since Jan. 10, 1970, when bad weather caused his UH-1C Huey helicopter to crash in the Quang Nam Province.

A search for his crew was conducted, but the helicopter was never found, according to U.S. military records.

In November, military officials used one tooth and identification tags to confirm Crosby's death. He is among more than 850 servicemen the military has identified since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, according to the U.S. Defense Department's POW/MIA office. Nearly 1,800 are still missing in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and China.

The bracelets were sold in the POW/MIA Bracelet Campaign for Voices in Vital America, or VIVA, a Los Angeles-based student organization, beginning in 1970.

Veterans organizations continue to sell the bracelets, and groups estimate hundreds of thousands have been distributed, each engraved with the name of one person still unaccounted for in Southeast Asia.

Mary Lou Wade, Crosby's younger sister by eight years who also lives in Titusville, said she felt blessed to make contact with one of the people with her brother's bracelet.

"I hope this gives other families the sense of hope that they would get closure," she said. "Other POWs, their parents are now dead and it's left to siblings and cousins."

"It's so lucky that (our mother) is alive to know this."

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