On February 18, 1966, Myra Spencer of Earlham, Iowa, received a telegram delivering the news that her son Lieutenant Larry H. Spencer—a Navy radar intercept officer—was classified as missing in action after his plane failed to return from a mission to Thanh Hoa in North Vietnam. Later communications confirmed he had been captured by the North Vietnamese when his F-4 Phantom was shot down over the Gulf of Tonkin, and with these events the Earlham native became Iowa’s first Vietnam prisoner of war.

During the seven years of her son’s captivity,