

For Immediate Release Feb. 4, 2016

Media Contact:

Taylor Hathorn, Communications Manager
865-982-6626, taylor@marybethwest.com



Renowned Veteran, Former Vietnam Prisoner Col. Lee Ellis to Speak at RetroWeekend; Veterans to Receive Free Admission

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. – A retired Air Force colonel and award-winning author who served more than five years in Vietnam prison camps will speak in East Tennessee as part of RetroWeekend, April 29 and 30 in Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Colonel Lee Ellis will share stories of leadership and courage from the years he spent in Hanoi prisons after his fighter jet was shot down during the Vietnam War.

Ellis' speech is part of RetroWeekend's Veterans Appreciation Day, which will take place Fri., April 29. Individuals with proof of military service will receive free admission to Friday's festivities, which include a running class taught by Olympian Jeff Galloway, workshops covering everything from financial planning to home brewing and live music from the '60s, '70s and '80s played by well-known tribute bands. Day passes for non-veterans cost \$50, while tickets for the entire weekend start at \$89. A portion of every registration fee will go to charitable organizations in the area.

After retiring from the Air Force, Ellis became a nationally recognized presenter and expert on the subjects of leadership, performance, team building, mentoring and career planning. He has spoken on CNN, CBS, C-SPAN, ABC and Fox News, and at hundreds of engagements in various industry sectors throughout the world. His book, *Leading with Honor: Leadership Lessons from the Hanoi Hilton*, won multiple international book awards and includes a foreword by Sen. John McCain, a fellow Vietnam prisoner of war.

Ellis says he is eager to present his message at RetroWeekend, an event dedicated to celebrating culture, music and memories from the '60s, '70s and '80s.

"I'm really excited about this event in every way: seeing the people there, hearing the music, visiting with old friends and people who aren't friends but with whom I share a common bond," Ellis said. "I'm always honored to speak to veterans. When I look back at my [military] experience, many of those lessons fit right into life and leadership and impact us on a daily basis."

RetroWeekend Executive Director Steve Hall says he is glad to offer veterans a free chance to listen to Ellis and participate in Friday's events.

"When we think back on the memories we treasure, nothing is more valuable than the sacrifice our veterans have made on behalf of this great country," Hall said. "While we can never fully repay them, we are excited to give them free Friday admission as a token of our gratitude. We believe Col. Ellis' dynamic speech will resonate with veterans and civilians alike."

While Ellis' Veterans Appreciation Discussion will be a highlight of the day, his speech is one of many events on Friday's schedule. Galloway, a member of the 1972 U.S. Olympic team, will host a three-hour running school to teach participants how to get the most out of an injury-free training regimen. Other workshops will educate attendees on such diverse subjects as hiking, financial planning, dancing, elder law, biking, identity theft and home brewing.

Saturday's events include more workshops and speakers, as well as an optional race that winds through Pigeon Forge for more than five miles. The race features a unique "Run at the Front" format, which enables each competitor older than 40 to race exclusively against members of his or her age group.

Well-known television host and producer Rudy Maxa will fascinate and inform those with a keen interest in travel on Saturday. Maxa, a travel journalist for numerous publications and television channels, will recount his global excursions and offer advice to ardent globetrotters and novice travelers alike.

Live music will play throughout Friday and Saturday's festivities. Upbeat dance band Top Tier (Nashville, Tenn.) will perform Friday evening, and North America's No. 1 tribute band, Woodie and the Longboards (Riverside, Calif.), will take the stage Saturday evening to perform consecutive 75-minute tributes to The Eagles' Glenn Frey and The Beach Boys.

The charitable impact in the community and throughout Appalachia will be significant. At least 10 percent of all registration fees will go to charities that serve the needs of the area, including Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, Friends of the Smokies, Remote Area Medical and Wears Valley Ranch, among others.

Dolly Parton's brand new and exclusive DreamMore Resort serves as the host hotel for the weekend.

To register or receive more information about RetroWeekend, visit: <https://goretrorunning.com/>.

#

About RetroRunning and RetroWeekend

RetroRunning, Inc. plans, manages and promotes unique weekend entertainment experiences highlighting the culture, music and activities of the Boomer generation. Formed in 2013 by life-long runner and retirement planning professional Steve Hall, RetroWeekend focuses on the physical and financial wellbeing of its participants by creating and delivering fun, entertaining and informative multiday events. To learn more, visit goretrorunning.com.