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"INCOMING"

APRIL 1998 NEWSLETTER
101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION VIETNAM VETERANS
PO BOX 5614 DOTHAN, AL 36302



PRESIDENT: JIM JOINER
TELE/FAX

THE REUNION IS GETTING CLOSE
PLAN ON MAKING IT !!!!!!!

Mid Air by Bill Crabbe

Dedicated to (Lt. James R. Poggemeyer) and (SP4 Douglas Noel)

On 7/31/03, Tuy Hoa, Viet Nam the 188th assault helicopter company was supporting American and Korean infantry in the central highlands of Viet Nam.

My name is Bill Crabbe and I served as a door gunner in the 2nd platoon from 11/66 to 11/67. I was part of the original 82nd Airborne Division infantry division out of Fort Bragg, North Carolina who volunteered to go the 188th bound for Viet Nam. The evening of 7/31/67 the 2nd platoon was getting ready after a day of flying assault missions and re-supply to attend the birthday party of SP4 Doug Crain from the gun ship platoon, at the EM club. Doug was also one of the original 82nd Airborne Division volunteers. As one would expect we were a very close knit group with esprit de corps and brotherhood. Buddy Fetner was the first of our group to be killed in action and it impacted on us all at varying degrees. For the most part we grieved as a first stage and then we graduated to revenge. Everyone was excited to have something to celebrate and looked forward to getting to the EM club across from the flight line. It was Crain's 21st birthday and we all planned to make it the best damned party we possibly could i.e.; we were going to get fallen down drunk. After a day of flying we would all shower and change to our evening party uniform. In the midst of the jubilance our platoon sergeant entered our hooch and needed a volunteer to fly gunner on a night mission over the river not far from Tuy Hoa. Charlie used the river to move troops and supplies to support their guerrilla war against the American and Korean troops in the area. Since most of the celebrators had left for the EM club and I had flown this mission several times before I was elected to fly the mission. Needless to say my mood had taken a 180 degree turn as I trudged off to the flight line to find the slick I was assigned to fly. To my surprise Lt. Poggemeyer was assigned to fly left seat. All flight crews who flew with him knew him to be one of the "good pilots". He was safety conscious, professional and had our respect. As I indicated I had flown this mission many times and except for flying at night, which always ratcheted up the intensity of the mission, it was fairly routine. We flew at a high altitude compared to assault and re-supply missions and basically threw flares. The flares were hooked to a ring on the ship floor via a line. The gunner's job was to toss the flares out the door that would pull the pin. When the pin was pulled a few feet below the ship a parachute would deploy and the flare would be ignited.

It would light up the river and the gun ships would look for enemy movement.

As I was preparing the flares and setting up the guns Lt. Poggemeyer headed toward Headquarters. Upon his return he was accompanied by Doug Noel. Noel was a SP4 who was a supply clerk in the company. I was surprised when Poggy asked me if Noel could fly in my place as door gunner and if I would show him how to throw out the flares properly.

My first reaction was one of concern since Noel had no combat experience nor was he qualified on an M60. I asked Poggy if he thought this was a good idea since I was reluctant to relinquish the crew to a supply clerk. It became clear that Poggy and Noel were home town friends and were on a first name basis. Lt. Poggemeyer told me that they were home town buddy's that went to High School together and he promised Noel he could fly door gunner. Since this was routine flare mission would I let Noel fly in my place? It occurred to me that I could go to the Crain's birthday party so I relented and gave Noel a short block of instructions on firing a machine gun and tossing flares. I got him suited up in bullet proof plate, flak vest, and helmet. Lt. Poggemeyer said he owed me one and they took off.

I headed over to the EM club where I found Crain's birthday bash going full steam. I commenced to play catch-up because it was blatantly obvious that I was far behind as far as imbibing and celebrating. To be honest I don't remember much about the party but I do recall my automatic pilot kicking in as I staggered toward the 188th area specifically the 2nd platoon. As I got close to the hooch I did notice that the 2nd platoon hooch had its lights on. Even in my condition I knew it was after lights out. As I entered the hooch every single man in the platoon was sitting on the end of their cots with their eyes in shock looking at me. I asked out loud what the hell was going on and somebody said your dead. I responded the hell I am. That is when I was told that the two crews who went on the flare mission had a mid air collision with all eight crew members killed.

Thirty Five years later I found the Black Widow web site and contacted Dick Detra. We talked at some length since we were both in the same platoon. We went through the KIA list when Dick asked if I remembered anything about the mid Air in Tuy Hoa. As it turned out Doug Noel's family could never understand how Doug had been killed in a Helicopter flying a night mission. I communicated the facts to Dick who informed the family. The response of the family was reported in last year's newsletter which was grateful to finally understand how Doug met with his fate.

Shopping Spree Gone Bad – Dick Detra

From June 1967 through March 1968, the company had already been a part of some of the heaviest fighting of the Vietnam War. Places we will never forget... Phu Hiep, the Horseshoe, Iron Triangle, Song Be, the Rung Sat Special Zone with Seal Team One, Fire Support Base Burt close to being overrun, the Tet'68 Communist Offensive, Ap Cho, Cu Chi City and FOB Tay Ninh East with Project Rapid Fire's B-36 along the Cambodian border. The good news...if you could believe it, was that the company was in the process of a Permanent Change of Station move north to LZ Sally...seven miles north of Hue. The siege of Hue and Khe Sahn was over and the 188th would soon be supporting the 2nd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, commanded by LTC John Cushman.

On March 13, 1967 Spider crew chief, Sp5 Tom "Black Bart" Bartleson was in charge of a work detail loading pallets on Air Force C-130 aircraft for the 450 mile flight north to I Corps. He worked us late and by the time we finally finished up Black Bart, Sp4's Bill Sondey, Joe Boyd, Dennis "Point" Pierpoint and Dick "Cherry Boy" Detra were tired, hot, thirsty and hungry. Bart invited us over to his hooch to drink some beer and to feast on some C's he had stashed. We were feeling no pain by the time we finished up all the beer but still hungry.

Even though it was late Point and Bill Sondey said they knew where we could get some beer and C rations. We piled into the gun platoon's 1/2 ton truck with Bart behind the wheel and drove across the active runway towards the north end of Camp Rainier. Little did we know that on several previous trips Point and Bill had appropriated over thirty cases of C's from this same motor pool and there hadn't been any guards. That would (Con't page 11)...

WITHOUT AN UNDERSTANDING OF OUR PAST, THERE IS LITTLE HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE! WITHOUT OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE THINGS OF THE PRESENT, WE ARE CONDEMNING OUR CHILDREN TO AN ATTEMPT TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THAT WE CREATED. WE CAN TUNE OUT, TURN OFF AND DROP OUT... BUT THAT IS THE COWARD'S WAY. Get involved!



Black Widow 49 (April 1971)

John Fair, jtexfair@tstar.net writes: Are you in contact with any of the crews that CA'd A Co. 2/501, 101st, Apr. 12, 1971? We were flown into an extremely hot LZ, suffered about 75% casualties, & were extracted out by Black Widows also. We threw a party for them when most got out of the hospital & returned to Co. AO in Phu Bai. I have an original Black Widow 49 patch that I ripped off one of the guys at the party. I would not be alive today along with 29 other people from our platoon, had it not been for the courageous (crazy?) Black Widows. We were CA's into a Battalion sized NVA base camp in the Ashau, not far from FB Bastogne & Vegel. I would like to contact any of the guys that were involved in this CA if possible. Thanks for your help. John Fair, Sr. Vice Cmdr., Dept of Texas VFW

Those Who Served...

One of our BW brothers played an NVA soldier in the movie "The Green Beret". He was punched out by John Wayne at the bridge in one scene. He's a good friend and keeps in touch and a likeable cuss if there ever was one. He got serious on me recently after a comment I made about a poem he had forwarded to me! I liked what he had to say, and I think that you will also. Thanks Neil Jocsing for lowering the boom!

"Dear RAG, There are those that serve and those that write about those that served. I don't have any problem with those that write, as long as they do it respectfully. A very good friend of mine (we were drill sergeants together) was in the IaDrang. In 1967 I went to OCS and he went to the 2nd of the 7th (Gary Owen). For years he was after me to go to his reunion with him (They get together every Veteran's Day in Alexandria, VA). Finally he lent me his copy of "We were soldiers once and young". I was crying at the end of the book; I now recommend it to everyone that asks me about Vietnam.

In 1998 I went with him to his reunion and it was an overwhelming emotional experience. These guys came to this reunion in wheelchairs, on crutches and with canes or crutch canes. There was no pity here, there was no blame being laid, these guys were just glad to be alive and wanted to share their love for life and their respect for their fallen comrades with each other. It was at that reunion that I learned that my friend's company had gone into the Valley with 106 men in the field on the morning report. Eleven men walked out. My friend's platoon went into the field with twenty-four men and he was the only one that walked out.

The second morning we all gathered at the wall at 0530. At 0600 the Color Guard from the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood posted the Colors and Ret LTG Hal Moore and Joe Galloway began to read the Honor-Roll (I don't recall now exactly how many names they read that morning (I think 365), they are all on the same panel). I stood there looking around at about 160 to 180 men, women and children gathered there and almost all of them were crying, hugging and/or consoling each other.

After the reunion I read the book a second time because now I could put faces on the names of the people in the book. When the movie came out I bought it and think it was well done, however the movie only focuses on the 1st of the 7th and ends when the relief arrives. There was a whole other battle after LTC Moore's battalion was extracted. It was that battle that my friend was involved in.

There was also a large group of aviators there (many VHPA members), these were the aviation units that took them in, supported them while they were there and brought them out.

New topic: For Christmas Linda got me the "Band of Brothers" tapes. I had seen the series and remarked that the 101st was the unit I had served with in VN and she bought it for me.

Richard, I hope all is well with you and that you had a good Christmas. I pray that the "c" is still in remission. Linda and I are planning to be in Dallas this July and hope to see you there. Take care and God Bless! Warmest Thoughts, Neil (Neil, I could not agree with you more! "We Were Soldiers" was great. I rented it a couple of times, then bought it and have watched it several times since. No flashbacks for me, just pride in knowing that I served with the same kind of guys when I was in Nam. As for the "c" in remission. It is not in remission, it is gone. Prayer works! God heals! AS for "Band of Brothers" I have not seen it yet.. Maybe I should. God bless!

Another Association To Join

(Editor's Note: I'm not sure I understand all I know about this, but Dick Detra wants to be sure that everyone knows of the opportunity to join the SOA. So here is his message to me. If you are interested in joining, or helping those that want to join the SOA, contact Dick Detra. Contact info is on the roster.)

Message reads as follows: Ted Alley, Ron Carpenter, Jeff VonBeltz and I have been accepted into the SOA. Jeff had submitted his Silver Star statement that mentioned the team and Laos in the statement. He was turned down at first and just yesterday accepted. Frank Linster and Sam Smith are having problems obtaining the right documentation for getting accepted. Sam sent in his DFC statement and orders with the names of other C/101 guys who were in the company at the same time. He has three guys who can verify that he was in the company and on CCN missions. They would not accept Frank's flight records as proof...Frank told me as much. I told Sam and Jeff to go through the National Archives and get the 101st AB Daily Journals for C/101 for the time frame they were in the company. Our C/101 guys are having problems proving that they were on the CCN missions into Laos. I can only confirm to the SOA that whoever is filling out an SOA application is a current member in our BW Ass. which helps. We need to address this in the newsletter so that the C/101 members and commanders who may still have copies of documentation

Notice, Week of the Eagles, 2004

To troopers of the 2d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, 1967-68 (1/501 Inf, 2/501 Inf, 1/502 Inf, and Bde HHC) The 101st Abn Div (Air Aslt) is expecting to return from Iraq to Fort Campbell in about March 2004 and is making plans for a WOE celebration 14-19 June. We are organizing a WOE Reunion of the 2d Brigade. Schedule: Thu 17 Jun: Assemble Holiday Inn, Oak Grove, KY; supper as desired Fri, 18 Jun: Morning, division review, barracks tour, lunch Bde Mess Hall. Afternoon - 2d Bde veterans barbecue at Jim Hallums' farm; Evening - 101st Abn Div Normandy Banquet in Field House Sat, 19 Jun: Super Saturday, Campbell Army Airfield; Evening: 2d Bde dinner, Holiday Inn. Call 877-439-0022 ASAP for 3 nights at the Holiday Inn Express. Mention "2d Brigade" for special rate of \$75.00 per night. HHC & 2/501, contact Jim Hallums: [REDACTED] contact Jack Justice: [REDACTED]

/s/ John H. Cushman, Lt Gen Ret; Cdr 2d Bde/101, '67-68



from Nam and can help verify who is eligible. We need to know what teams they supported and dates of that support. The team members of CCN must remember the Black Widows, we are mentioned in the book SOG. Sam Smith has three guys who will verify that he flew CCN but I don't know if he's been accepted yet. Please write something up for C/101 to get the word out in our next newsletter. I have all the documentation for our 188th guys and have the AAR's from Rapid Fire V, morning reports and Daily Journals for the 269th and 308th CAB's. I can verify and sponsor the 188th guys who were up at Tay Ninh East with us and want to join but I really feel badly that I can't help the C/101 guys. Please help me out with this problem. Another question Rag, do you know where we can get copies of our DA form 759 flight records? Ron Carpenter and I want to get copies of our flight hours. They were not in our personnel files. I have copied those who's names are mentioned. Jeff and Sam...would it be OK with you if we print your awards statements in the next newsletter. I have a copy of Sam's but would need Jeff's. I am sure that all the brothers in the BW Ass. would love to read them. Clear right! Dick Detra"

Operation Rapid Fire V

From December 8, 1967 through January 24, 1968 volunteers from the 188th AHC "Black Widows" and "Spider" gunships provided tactical air movement and close-in fire support for teams A-361 and A-362, under the command and control of Detachment B-36 of the 5th Special Forces Group, commanded by Major Bo Gritz. Special Task Force Rapid Fire was under the control of II Field Force and during its existence provided intelligence information during a total of nine Rapid Fire operations in the III Corps Area of Operations and Cambodia. A-361, call sign Marauder, was commanded by SFC Bernie Newman and A-362, call sign Maverick, was commanded by Captain Stanley Krasnoff. This particular operation was for the purpose of gathering intelligence on VC/NVA movements across the Cambodian border northwest of Tay Ninh in the fishhook area of War Zone "C" where the Vam Co Dong River serves as the border between Cambodia and Vietnam. The 188th committed five UH-1H slicks, one Command and Control (C&C) and three UH-1C gunships (heavy fire team) daily for this operation. The Forward Operating Base (FOB) was set up at Tay Ninh East airfield. B-36 presented all the flight crews with their coveted red, white and blue scarf's that we wore with great pride.

Utilizing low level insertions at first light, teams from A-361 and A-362 were inserted into multiple LZ's in AO's Bear, Mongoose and Cub to preclude the Viet Cong pinpointing their exact location and strength. By the close of Rapid Fire V the 188th had flown 45 separate airmobile operations ranging from single ship insertions and extractions to multiple ship operations. Types of missions included, ambush, interdict VC and capture POW's and documents, area assessment, recon, aerial observation-targets of opportunity, armed aerial recon to engage targets of opportunity, destroy bridges, search for caches and B-52 bomb damage assessment. POW's were interrogated at FOB Tay Ninh East for immediate useable information and then evacuated to Company "A" headquarters in Bien Hoa. Some of the captured documents were of such importance that they were flown directly to Washington D.C. This intelligence was crucial because of the upcoming Tet'68 communist offensive.

The 188th flew a total of 1,185 sorties and 621 flying hours in support of Rapid Fire V. The 188th killed 36 VC, wounded 3, captured 3, and destroyed two VC vehicles and three bridges. Corporal Ron Carpenter, Sp/4 John Newcomer, Captain Gerald Doht, Sp/4 Tim Wingerd and Warrant Officer Wes Gager were wounded, and eleven helicopters were hit by ground fire; of these, three were totally destroyed on the ground.

Sp/4 Ruiz (A-362), Sgt. David R. Simmons (A-361), Sp/4 Theodore Taylor Jr. (A-361) and Pvt. Frank Taboada (A-362) were killed in action along with ten Khmer Serci Cambodian mercenaries. The after action report stated that 47 Special Forces soldiers and 56 Cambodians were wounded in action during Rapid Fire V. Enemy losses were 139 killed, 41 wounded and 11 POW's captured.

SFC Bernie Newman said, "that B-36, Project Rapid Fire, was the last bare knuckle outfit in the Army, if that was the case, then the 188th was the last bare knuckle aviation company the Army had." The teams agreed that the 188th gave B-36 the best helicopter support they ever experienced. Those of you who remember volunteering for this Top Secret operation and were up at Tay Ninh East airfield are eligible to join the Special Operations Association. If you are interested in joining get in touch with me and I'll help guide you through the application process. Dick Detra.

(Continued from Page 9) Shopping Spree Gone Bad – Dick Detra

not be the case tonight. We bought two cases of warm beer from a friend at the artillery company and drank a few more before heading over to the motor pool.

Around 11:00 pm Black Bart drove into the 25th Infantry Division S&T motor pool and backed the 3/4 ton up to the pallets of C rations. Everyone except Point, who was sitting in the front seat, jumped out of the truck. We were watching Bart as he tore away the protective cardboard covering on the cases when out of nowhere a security guard yelled, "HALT!" Bart immediately bolted as the guard fired two warning shots into the air, in hopes of getting him to halt. Bill Sondey, Joe Boyd and I froze...extending our arms over our heads. Point, who hadn't been spotted by the guard, slouched down flat on the front seat and waited. We pleaded with the guard not to arrest us...that we only wanted some C's to eat, but he wasn't going for it. He marched us over to the motor pool office and turned us over to the officer in charge who then called the 188th orderly room.

Rising up off the seat, Point watched as his buddies entered the motor pool office. As soon as we were out of sight, he fired up the truck and with the headlights off drove slowly out of the motor pool. Hoping that his buddies wouldn't give him up, he drove back across the active runway to the company area. Trying not to draw any attention Point parked the truck down the road from the orderly room and made his way back through the company area to his hooch, got under the covers where he waited and finally passed out.

Black Bart never stopped running. Wearing a blue sweatshirt with Panama written across the front, checkered shorts and tennis shoes, he charged through the motor pool's perimeter concertina wire like it wasn't there. Cut up and bleeding from his encounter in the wire he kept running back along the road. As he crossed to the other side of the active runway he looked back just in time to see a C-130 touching down on the runway close to where he had just been. As he staggered through the shadows in the company area he tripped over some piss tubes (round plastic tubes driven deep into the ground at an angle and used by the soldiers to urinate in) cutting up both of his shins. He picked himself up off the urine soaked ground and moved on. As he neared his hooch Bart heard the voice of our gun platoon leader, who was talking very loudly as he made his way to the orderly room, "I can't believe men from my platoon were stealing." Bart thought to himself, "Where was this guy when his men came looking for food because they were hungry...after working all day in 95 degree heat like hired hands." Bart figured he'd be loosing a stripe for sure. He made it back to his hooch without being seen and waited...hoping his buddies wouldn't give him up.

A truck from the S&T motor pool pulled up in front of the 188th orderly room where Bill Sondey, Joe Boyd and I were handed over to our gun platoon leader. Captain McMillan read us the riot act and ordered us to stand at attention until our Commander, Major Jack O. Johnson arrived. We knew that we were in deep shit now. After getting our young asses chewed on by our platoon leader we were sent before Black Widow 6. It wasn't pretty; Jack chewed on our butts some more, he wanted to know the name of the guy who had last been seen fleeing from the motor pool. We decided amongst us that we would not give up our brothers. Since Jack hadn't mentioned anything about a fifth man, we new Point had slipped away clean. Jack must have thought that whoever ran away must have returned for the truck. Black Widow 6 was not happy with (Con't page 12)

(Con't from Page 11) ..his gummies..." Why tonight when we are in the process of a major move". He told us we were damn lucky that the guard hadn't mistaken us for VC and shot us. We were given non judicial punishment, an article 15 and forfeiture of \$75.00...for unlawfully entering the 25th S&T motor pool with the intent to commit a criminal offense, to wit: depredation of C rations. He then ordered us to report to our motor pool where we spent the rest of the night cutting pipe as part of our punishment. It turned out to be a very long and sobering night.

The next morning as we headed slowly back to our hooch for some much needed sleep, Bart was on his way to the 154th Medical Detachment to get his wounds from the night before treated by our medics. When he entered the dispensary, Bart looked like he had been wounded in a fire fight or mortar attack...dried bloody cuts from his encounter in the wire covered both of his arms and legs, plus the gashes on both shins from the piss tubes. The medics couldn't believe their eyes and wanted to put him in for a purple heart. He said "It wasn't anything like that". When they kept pressing him about what had happened and why he was so cut up, He got pissed off and said "I don't want to talk about it!" (Con't page 9) Without another word being said they bandaged him up and he left.

Point came by my hooch the next morning and I filled him in on what had happened and told him that he was in the clear, but we wanted Bart to cover our fines. Later Bill, Joe and I stopped by Bart's hooch to find out what had happened to him. We told him that because we hadn't given him up to Black Widow 6 he should pay our \$75 fines. He refused to pay our fines because he felt that he had already suffered enough after his charge through the wire and his encounter with the piss tubes. Looking back I know it was a stupid thing to do...but hey we were young, in a combat zone and people were trying to kill us...we did a lot of stupid and crazy stuff to take the edge off. One thing I know for sure is that the thirty-two guys who made up the gun platoon were a wild bunch who always hung together. I will always be proud of the fact that I had the opportunity to fly with the Spiders (Bart, it's not too late to make things right old buddy. Get out your check book and send me a check for \$75. Just so everyone knows that there were never any bad feelings between us I'd like to say that in 1997 Bart was my best man when my wife Karma and I were married in his swimming pool in Fort Meyers, Florida.) ...guns up! /s/ Dick Detera

SPECIAL OPERATIONS ASSOCIATION

Those Special Operations veterans from the 188th Assault Helicopter Company who may be interested in applying for membership in the Special Operations Association (SOA) are asked to contact the chairman of the SOA Membership Committee, Tyler Furbish at [REDACTED]. For those of you who don't have a computer can write to Tyler at: PO Box 237961, Cocoa, Florida [REDACTED] or call him at [REDACTED]. He will be able to provide membership criteria and applications.

The SOA is presently a 2280 plus member, fraternal military veteran organization comprised of veterans of special military operations in combat theaters, primarily during the conflict in Southeast Asia. The SOA also includes veterans from WW II and the Korean Conflict as well as those from more recent conflicts including Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines. Membership is limited to US Special Operations veterans of the US military who personally participated in combat Special Operations missions around the world in a combat capacity. The largest constituency in the SOA is from US Army Special Forces. However, the SOA is also comprised of many other Special Operations personnel such as US Air Force Air Commandos, US Navy Seals, US Marine Corps Force Recon, US Special Operations Command, the 195th AHC, the 281st AHC and veterans of other elite military organizations who participated in Special Operations. The SOA welcomes applications from qualified 188th Assault Helicopter Company "Black Widows" and "Spiders" personnel to round out our association. Annual dues are \$30.00 plus a one time filing fee of \$5.00. Those of you who participated in Operation Rapid Fire V, during December 6, 1967 through January 29, 1968 are eligible. Those of you who were up at Tay Ninh East will most definitely remember B-36. I am the first from the 188th to become a member of the SOA and have been designated by the SOA as the contact person to verify applicants. My membership # is 2289-GA. You can use me as a sponsor since I am now a member of the SOA. I have copies of the 269th Combat Aviation Battalion Daily Journals and the 188th Morning Reports and rosters for the dates listed above to help those of you who are interested in joining.

I know that C/101 supported CCN and SOG during 1968 through 1971. Any Black Widows with information needs to let Tyler Furbish know about the inclusive dates of those operations so that the C/101 guys have the opportunity to join. I remember at one of our reunions that Bob Crow mentioned numerous missions with CCN and SOG out of Mai Loc and Khe Sahn. I'm hoping that Black Widow 6, Major Henry Dreher, who was the Commander of the 188th and C/101 during the transition period and served up until December 1968 can help verify inclusive dates for 1968 that the Black Widows supported special operations into Laos. If you get a chance check out their web page at: www.specialoperations.org. The SOA has already added our 188th/C/101 web page to their web links. I was bouncing off the walls when Tyler e-mailed me with my confirmation number. This is better than all those medals we were promised and never received during our tours with the Black Widows. I want to especially THANK Master Sergeant Bernie Newman, who commanded A-361 and Sp4 Bill Miller who walked point for A-362. I was honored to have them as my sponsors.

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