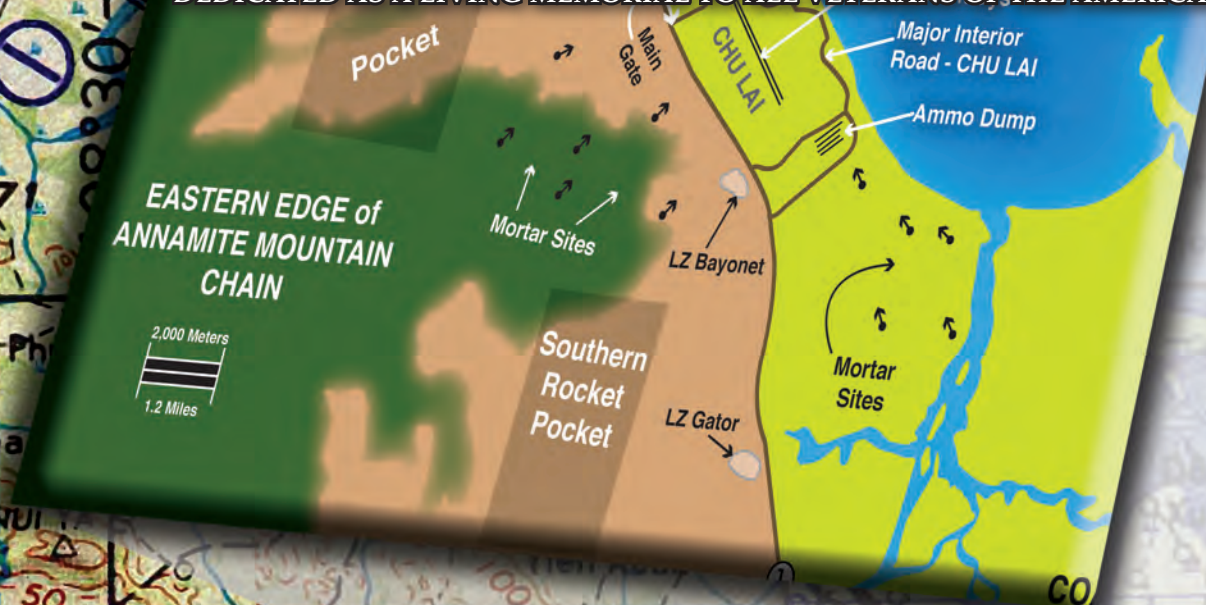


April • May • June
2007



AMERICAL JOURNAL

DEDICATED AS A LIVING MEMORIAL TO ALL VETERANS OF THE AMERICAL DIVISION



The Rocket Pockets

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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Commander's Comments
By Larry Watson

We have had two changes in our Executive Council. PNC Rich Scales resigned from the Executive Council to pursue a post at the state level with the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Illinois. Rich has been involved with both the Americal Division Veterans Association and

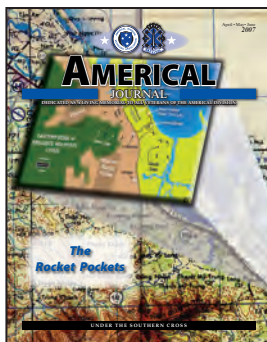
the VFW for several years and he felt he could not give the time required to the ADVA and his new post in the Illinois VFW. We thank Rich for all his past service to the ADVA and wish him well in his new duties with the VFW. The second change is the resignation of John Riley from the position of commander of the Far West Chapter. His resignation created a second vacancy on the Executive Council.

It is my pleasure to appoint two of our members to the Executive Council, one as a member at large and the other as Commander of the Far West Chapter. I have appointed Tom Packard to complete Rich Scales term of office. I have also appointed Richard Ropele to the post of Far West Chapter Commander. I thank both these men for their willingness to step up and take on the responsibilities of these jobs. When you see them at the national reunion in Buffalo please congratulate them on their new positions and thank them for becoming involved.

The national reunion in Buffalo is nearly here and I hope each of you will attend. You will enjoy the whole experience from the banquet, the tours, and the membership meeting.

Speaking of the membership meeting, I hope you will attend. You will learn what is taking place in your association. You will hear the reports and comments from the officers, standing committees, special committees, the current and future association business, etc. I realize not everyone enjoys committee reports, but this is really an important facet of our organization and I hope it is important to you too. Please attend this meeting.

Please consider getting involved in the business of the ADVA. You can be slightly involved or deeply involved, it is up to you. There are various committees that would welcome someone with enthusiasm and energy. Any involvement by you will make our association stronger and more enjoyable. You will have fun, make new friends, and help our ADVA.



The Rocket Pockets



Editor's Comments
By Gary Noller

The Americal Journal would not be a success if it were not for the contributions it receives from the members of the ADVA. The journal is a magazine by and for the members. Your continued support is as necessary as it is appreciated.

We may wish to live forever but we will surely not. But we have the opportunity to leave behind the true history of an important part of our lives. Specifically, we can help write the record of our military service and the involvement of the Americal Division in our country's wars.

It is not sufficient to leave the writing of history to others. History is too big a picture to paint and cannot be left to just a few professional and recognized artists. Thousands of stories need to be told. And most of these stories can only be accurately told by the veterans who were there and personally involved.

Every attempt must be made to correct errors and distortions that are the result of history being written by people who lack a full understanding of the events of war. It is not hard to find that some generally accepted facts are in reality myths and legends. These may come from well intentioned sources but are none the less harmful to the complete and true understanding of events.

For example, a story may circulate that American soldiers were observed taking food away from needy civilians. This is certainly a serious charge. But what if the truth was more involved than this?

Consider the following version which is the complete and true story. American soldiers gave food to two groups of needy civilians. After the Americans left the area one group of the civilians took the food away from the other group. But the American soldiers found out about this and took the extra food back from the greedy group and returned it to the others. If one only observed part of this event it would be easy to go away with a somewhat true but mostly false account of what happened.

This is where veterans must step in and give their accounts of what happened. The Americal Journal has published and will continue to publish stories by Americal veterans who wish to correct historical inaccuracies. All resources, including veterans' oral and written histories, must be included in any attempt to truthfully tell the story of what happened in the difficult times of war.

But stories do not have to be always so serious. All accounts of life in the war zone are needed to fully depict the way it was. Stories in this edition of the journal are good examples of accounts of combat action as well as accounts of what happened during lighter and less stressful moments.

Journal editors are happy to help you prepare your story and edit it for use. Please contact an editor and get your stories told. Be a part of telling the history of the Americal Division.

From The National Adjutant

The June Reunion in Buffalo, NY is not far off! I'm certainly looking forward to seeing old friends and meeting many new ones at Buffalo.

The Association continues to steadily add new members. During the past weeks since the First Quarter Americal Journal issue, we added 43 new members to the ADVA roster. Of particular significance for our new member additions, seven joined as Paid Life memberships.

I'm also pleased to report we had four WWII Americal Veterans join as first time members. This is great for the association because our nation loses a number of our WWII veterans daily. To have surviving WWII Americal veterans join our ranks promotes the great legacy of the Americal Division.

This quarter, ADVA members Rich Merlin and Russell Miles sponsored buddies for their first year membership.

Annual pay renewal notices for May 2007 annual pay members were mailed the end of April. If you are an annual pay member with a May 2007 renewal date, and have not received your renewal notice with new membership card, please contact me at the National Adjutant Post Office box address listed in the bottom left corner of this page.

For annual pay members with renewal dates of Jan07 or earlier in your address block on this publication who have not paid your dues, please mail your payments to the Assistant Finance Officer, PNC Ron Ellis. Ron's mailing address is listed on the outside back cover of this publication.

In closing, I remind all members to notify me when moving to a new mailing address so you will have no interruption in your Americal Journal delivery.

Roger Gilmore
ADVA National Adjutant

Change of Address

1. Permanent Change of Address
2. Temporary Change of Address (Snowbirds)

Please send address change information to:

Roger Gilmore
ADVA National Adjutant
P.O. Box 830662
Richardson, TX 75080

Specify effective dates of the change.

NEW MEMBERS

Robert F. Allen, Jr.
1st Sqdrn, 1st Armd Cav
Columbia, SC
★ Jay Flanagan

Kenneth H. Anderson
247th FA
Elgin, IL
★ David Eichhorn

Richard Begeal
11th LIB 1/20 Inf
Parksville, NY
★ NRC 2007

Art L. Bethea, Jr.
196th LIB B/1/46 Inf
Dillon, SC
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

William R. Bevins
198th LIB A/1/52 Inf
North Ridgeville, OH
★ NRC 2007

Rolla S. Cavanaugh
23rd Recon – Panama
Lexington, KY
★ Leon Doutrich

Manuel D. Chavarria, Jr.
198th LIB C/1/6 Inf
Big Spring, TX
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Donald Close
11th LIB C/1/20 Inf
Lynnwood, WA
★ Russell Miles

John M. Corte
198th LIB HHC
Goodyear, AZ
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Ronald F. Dobiesz
198th LIB B/1/6 Inf
North Tonawanda, NY
★ David Eichhorn

Terry M. Dove
11th LIB C/1/20 Inf
Pittsburg, PA
★ NRC 2007

John W. Enterline
196th LIB B/2/1 Inf
Waterford, PA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Franklin C. Frable
132nd Inf Rgmt Co. K
Lehigh, PA
★ David Eichhorn

Edward B. Froelich
11th LIB C/3/1 Inf
St. James, MO
★ Self

Phillip Gates
11th LIB B/4/21 Inf
Placerville, CA
★ Sid Staton

Ronald C. Hadley
198th LIB D/1/6 Inf
Hudsonville, MI
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Richard Hess
196th LIB 1/46 Inf
Salt Lake City, UT
★ Dan Young

William E. Hiser
11th LIB HHC/4/3 Inf
Lexington, OH
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Charles E. Johnson
196th LIB E/2/1 Inf
Rome, GA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Joseph V. Johnson
196th LIB E/3/21 Inf
Thompson Station, TN
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Robert L. Johnson
198th LIB A/1/46 Inf
Kennewick, WA
★ Bobby Albers

David A. Lawrence
198th LIB
Masury, OH
★ Self

William R. McRae
132nd ASHC
Marietta, GA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

William H. Meehan
11th LIB B/4/3 Inf
Browns Mill, NJ
★ *Self*

Howard Mortimer
723rd Maint Bn HHC
Arlington, TX
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

Michael J. Murphy
196th LIB C/3/21 Inf
Daphne, AL
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

James R. Peterson
11th LIB A/1/20 Inf
Coon Rapids, MN
★ *John McKnown*

Volney B. Phillips
196th LIB C/2/1 Inf
Joplin, MO
★ *Self*

Charles M. Radcliff
174th ASHC
Glouster, OH
★ *David Eichhorn*

Harold R. Sargent
132nd Inf Rgmt
Hermitage, PA
★ *David W. Taylor*

James D. Schindele
11th LIB A/4/3 Inf
Royalton, MN
★ *David Eichhorn*

James H. Tarver
3/18th FA Srv Btry
Leesville, LA
★ *Jay Flanagan*

William J. Trapanese
245th FA
Ft. Myers, FL
★ *Self*

Joseph H. Wolfe, Jr.
196th LIB D/1/46 Inf
Charleston, SC
★ *Lanny Gilliland*

Rich Yarbrough
23rd MP Co.
Fremont, NC
★ *Rich Merlin*

Dennis N. Zimmerman
11th LIB E/1/20 Inf
Ft. Wayne, IN
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

NEW PAID LIFE MEMBERS

James Briscoe
198th LIB D/5/46 Inf
Powderly, TX
★ *Leo Pillow*

John L. Carey
11th LIB 4/21 Inf
Douglasville, GA
★ *Self*

William H. Covell
123rd Avn Bn
Hyannis, MA
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

Edmund De Jonghe
196th LIB A/3/82 Arty
Genoa, IL
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

David J. Degou
198th LIB A/5/46 Inf
Burlington, MA
★ *Self*

Harold E. Gray
57th Engrs Co. C
Hubbardston, MA
★ *Bernie Chase*

Billy D. Hughes
198th LIB B/5/46 Inf
Burnside, NC
★ *Gary M. Crosby*

Dennis C. Hunt
11th LIB C/4/3 Inf
Harrison, TN
★ *John R. Green*

Jearld W. Karr
198th LIB A/5/46 Inf
Lawrence, KS
★ *David W. Taylor*

Donald L. Lackey
196th LIB B/1/46 Inf
Chandler, OK
★ *David Eichhorn*

William B. Meek
196th LIB D/1/46 Inf
Monroe, MI
★ *Self*

Thomas G. Mendonca
11th LIB E/1/20 Inf
Honolulu, HI
★ *Don Ballou*

Paul A. Terry
196th LIB 4/31 Inf
Baldwin, NY
★ *Rollie Castronova*

RE-INSTATED MEMBERS

Robert S. Abrahams
196th LIB 1/46 Inf
Raytown, MO
★ *Fred Cowburn*

John W. Babine
23rd MPs CID
Hurst, TX
★ *Rich Merlin*

Roger Grazioplene
196th LIB B/2/1/ Inf
Batavia, NY
★ *Rollie Castronova*

James T. Hurd
16th Arty Hdq 3/16
Lakewood, OH
★ *Bill McLaughlin*

Robert Verlezza
11th LIB E/4/21 Inf
Drain, OR
★ *Dan Young*



101st QM Corp

Lindon Martin
Brentwood, NH
Date Unknown

132nd Inf Rgmt

Lawrence L. Burton
Tucson, AZ
February 13, 2007

Everett W. Arnold
(Regt HDQ)
Ridgeway, MO
October 5, 2005

182nd Inf Rgmt

Charles A. Confalone
(Co. E)
Wakefield, MA
February 5, 2007

George V. Voci
(Co. L)
Pittsburg, PA
Date Unknown

Frederick R. Wonson
(Co. M)
Rockport, MA
March 8, 2007

21st Recon

Edgar W. McCombe
Feura Bush, NY
November 9, 2006

246th FA

Robert Soukup
Centereach, NY
Date Unknown

11th LIB 6/11 Arty

Patrick J. Duffy
Pittsburgh, PA
September 20, 2006

198th LIB HHC/5/46 Inf

Kenneth S. Mink
Gettysburg, PA
February 14, 2007

Americal HDQ & Band

Millard P. Heistand
Charleston, SC
March 10, 2007

Americal Unit Not Known

Stanley P. Steber
Massachusetts
January 30, 2007

Melbourne Florida Reunion

By David W. Taylor



Southeast Chapter Commander Paul Stiff and 2008 National Reunion Chairman, Lee Kaywood at the Americal recruiting booth in Melbourne.

booth with canopy that allowed us to recruit new members into the ADVA and meet and greet many of the Americal veterans who were at the reunion. Over 40 came by to say hello and we recruited 18 new members to the ADVA! (They will be listed in the 3rd quarter 07 issue).

We flew into Jacksonville and spent our first night at the Wyndham Riverwalk Hotel, site of the 2008 annual Americal reunion. Reunion Chairman Lee Kaywood gave us a tour. We took a water taxi (\$3.00 round trip) over the river to the Jacksonville Landing for dinner; On Thursday as we departed for Melbourne we stopped at the Mayport Naval Base which will be the site of the reunions' Friday night "Chu Lai Beach Stand-down" at the base beach recreational center; an Hawaii Luau on the beach, entertainment and other surprises are planned for Friday night of the reunion. Thanks Lee for all the hard work you are doing and thanks to the Southeast Chapter for hosting next year's reunion!



Some of the many Americal vets pose for a photo at the Melbourne reunion. Back row 4th from the left is Jerry "Doc O" Anderson, who organized the Americal camp site and recruiting booth at the reunion.

National Commander Larry Watson and I attended the annual Melbourne, Florida Vietnam & All-Veterans Reunion April 26-29, 2007. Over 40,000 vets were in attendance. I want to thank Jerry "Doc O" Anderson for setting up a

DeGroot Nears Retirement

By Gary L. Noller



MSgt. John (Dutch) DeGroot has announced his retirement from the United States Air Force Reserve. A retirement ceremony is scheduled for June 9, 2007 at General Mitchell Air Reserve Station, WI.

Dutch served as National Commander of the Americal Division Veterans Association in 1993-94. He is currently the Creative Director of the Americal Journal. He and his wife Jan reside in Mt. Prospect, IL.



Jan and Dutch DeGroot in 2004 as they accept the Wisconsin Military Achievement award in the State Capitol Dutch's home base is in Wisconsin.

Dutch volunteered for the draft in 1968 and completed training as a Military Policeman in the U.S. Army. After a brief assignment stateside he volunteered for duty in Vietnam. He was assigned to the 23rd M.P. Company and served closely with the 198th Lt. Inf. Bde. at LZ Bayonet. In addition to his police duties he also served as a helicopter door gunner. He separated from the Army in 1970.

DeGroot joined the U.S. Army Reserve as an M.P. in 1988 and transferred to the U.S. Air Force Reserve in 1990. He initially served in Chicago until transferring duty to Milwaukee. His final assignment was with the 440th Communications Flight at General Mitchell ARS, WI, where he filled the role of Multimedia Manager.

In 2006 MSgt. DeGroot volunteered for another deployment. He was assigned to an undisclosed location in the Middle East and worked in an intelligence section. He is credited with 22 years of military service which has taken him to numerous assignments and countries.

When asked to comment about his military service, DeGroot said, "I feel it is a privilege to have served and that is benefit enough. I never did it for the money or the retirement pay." He adds, "All my awards should go to Mrs. Dutch. She puts up with a lot."

National Recruiting and Retention

David W. Taylor – Sr. Vice Commander

“Operation Reach Out”

In the 1st quarter 2007 issue of the *Americal Journal* each member received a copy of our new recruiting brochure. I hope most of you have mailed it to a comrade who is not yet a member. Several ADVA members have asked me for extra copies, from 15 to 40 copies, to mail out to their buddy contact lists they have developed over the

years. With great support like that we will definitely see our membership grow. If you have a list of buddies you keep in contact with, and they are not ADVA members, please let me know.

As mentioned in recent issues of the *Journal*, we have many tools for you to use to recruit members to the ADVA. If you have a good e-mail list of Americal vet contacts, let me know and I will e-mail you a **recruiting brochure by e-mail attachment**, which you can send to your e-mail contact list, saving you the cost of postage! We have “recruiting kits”, including large banners, for “County Fair Recruiting” at smaller veteran reunions; “Sponsor a Buddy” program where members pay the first years’ dues for a friend, to get them started. Some of you have been kind enough to do that; also don’t forget our member retention efforts; if you have time on your hands contact our National Adjutant, Roger Gilmore, to help him in his efforts at member retention for those who have allowed their membership to lapse and just need a reminder.

All of these programs come under the heading of “Operation Reach Out” which will be the top priority of the ADVA over the coming years.

ADVA Unit Chapters

Another membership initiative is to include unit organizations as chapters in the ADVA, in addition to our present geographical chapters. For some of you there is a greater camaraderie with your company or battalion affiliation than Americal vets in a particular geographic area; this goes both ways. For some being able to attend Americal events in a close geographical area has greater value. For others, getting together with their unit, regardless of the location, is of more importance. Company or battalion-level organizations who would like to explore becoming an ADVA Chapter, should contact me to discuss this option.

The major advantage for a unit organization to join the ADVA is two-fold: First, the organization will have an opportunity each calendar quarter to communicate with its members through the “Chapter News” section of the *Americal Journal*. Secondly, they can take advantage of the ADVA’s annual national reunions to meet, perhaps with their own hospitality suite, rather than work each year to develop a reunion themselves. Members of unit organizations will have to join the ADVA, if they are not yet a member. Currently we are working with three unit organizations who are discussing within their membership the possibility of joining the ADVA.

Data Base Recruiting

During the Americal Division’s time in Vietnam approximately 40,000 orders were issued. Presently we have copied about 8,000 and intend to copy all of them; we will need help from ADVA members down the road who can place names & addresses on excel spreadsheets for mass mailing to prospective members; if anyone can lend some time, perhaps a few hours per week, to do this please let me know; the more vets we contact the better chance our members will have to reunite with past comrades in the coming years.

WELCOME TO THE AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION

Join A Lasting Bond of Brotherhood!

The Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA) is a fraternal and social organization and is the only officially recognized organization representing the Americal (23rd Infantry) Division from its formation in World War II, its service in the Caribbean during the Cold War and its service during the Vietnam War. Anyone who was assigned or attached to the division (regardless of branch of service) is eligible to become a member of the ADVA.

OUR HISTORY... The association was founded in Boston, Massachusetts in November 1945. The National Headquarters is located in Henderson, Texas (chartered in Massachusetts) with chapters located throughout the United States. The Americal WWII Museum is located in Worcester, MA. Vietnam members are encouraged to donate memorabilia and documents to Texas Tech Universities Vietnam Center (Lubbock, Texas) through a cooperative arrangement the ADVA has established, to perpetuate the Vietnam history of the Americal Division.

FAR WEST CHAPTER

AZ CA CO HI NV NM UT

COMMANDER

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246 Coronado Dr.
Corona, CA 92879
951 • 735 • 7316
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SEC/TREAS

Tom Packard
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Galloway, OH 43119
614 • 878 • 5197



National Commander, Larry Watson, has appointed Rick Ropele as the Far West Chapter Commander. This became necessary due to the resignation of John Riley. Rick is a Vietnam veteran who served with the 1/6th Inf., 198th LIB in 1967-1968. Larry also appointed Tom

Packard to fill a vacancy on the ADVA National Executive Council. Tom is a Vietnam veteran and served with the 23rd Military Police Co, 196th LIB in '72.

Under Rick's leadership the chapter has undertaken an aggressive membership recruiting campaign along with a 100% membership renewal goal for 2007.

Final arrangements have been made for the 2007 Far West Chapter Reunion. It will take place at the Riverside Marriott in Riverside, California beginning Sunday, September 30 and ending on Oct 3, 2007.

Reunion Chairman, Rich Merlin, has arranged for a registration and hospitality room with food and beverage available, beginning on Sunday. On Monday, plans are for a bus tour of the Riverside National Cemetery where we will be given an official tour of the grounds, the Medal of Honor Memorial, and the Fallen Soldier/Veterans Memorial. We will then visit the March Field Air Museum, home to over 70 aircraft and more than 29,000 historical artifacts. After lunch at the museum, we'll visit the War Dog Memorial and Freedom Wall.

Our annual chapter meeting will be conducted Tuesday morning followed by a tour of the historic Mission Inn, which is located next to the Marriott. Festivities end Tuesday with a dinner at the hotel with music and dancing.

More information and reservation forms will be available soon. You can reserve a room before August 31, 2007 at the Riverside Marriott for a reduced rate of \$109 per night, by mentioning that you are with the ADVA Far West Chapter. To book your room, call the Marriott at (951) 784-8000. The hotel is easily reached, for those driving, off I-215. If you are flying in, the Ontario International Airport is the closest to the hotel and about 20 minutes away.



ARTHUR R. WOOD SOUTH EAST REGION CHAPTER

AL GA FL TN VA NC SC

COMMANDER

Paul Stiff
Sec/Treasurer
Jerry Nichols

VICE COMMANDER

Lee Kaywork
Sergeant-at-Arms
Jerry "Doc" Anderson



Chu Lai Stand Down – 2008 Reunion

Those of us who have fought in wars understand the great contradiction that is war. One moment you are bored to tears; the next you are terrorized. A beautiful jungle becomes a maze of booby traps and

ambush sites. One day someone sells you a cold coke; the next day they are shooting at you. It is all part of the great contradiction.

Chu Lai was the epitome of that contradiction; it was a major airbase, a fire base, it housed infantry battalions, hospitals, helicopter gunships, Marines, Seabees and everyone else. It was chaotic, noisy and home. It was constantly being fired upon and often attacked.

In the midst of all the chaos the USO ran a beach club. On Stand Down you could relax, swim in the South China Sea, or soak up the rays on the beautiful white sand beach. The club had a stage and often hosted their famous USO Shows. This tranquility was often interrupted with the occasional mortar or RPG attack; but generally it was a brief respite from the strain of war.

The SE Chapter Jacksonville 2008 Reunion hopes to recreate a Chu Lai Stand Down for you. We plan on having a beach party at the Ocean Breeze Club on the Naval Station Mayport base. As the name suggests the club is located on the beach fronting the Atlantic Ocean. The evening will start with a memorial service lead by a Navy chaplain to include placing a wreath in the ocean in memory of our fallen comrades. We will then have a great dinner followed by a show. We are confident that this will be a memorable evening and we are equally confident it will not be interrupted by incoming.

The Naval Station Mayport was commissioned in 1942 and is the third largest fleet concentration in the USA. Until recently, it was home to the Aircraft Carrier USS John F. Kennedy. But "Big John" was recently decommissioned. The base still host more than 70 commands and is capable of accommodating 34 ships and its 8,000 foot runway is capable of handling any aircraft.

So as you are planning your vacation for 2008 make sure you hi-lite the ADVA 2008 Reunion from June 26 through June 29, 2008 in Jacksonville FL. Until then, I will see you in Buffalo. If you have any questions send me an e-mail at elkaywork@hotmail.com.

E. Lee Kaywork, Chair 2008 Reunion Jacksonville FL

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CHAPTER

IL IN MI MN WI

COMMANDER

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Adjutant

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Senior Vice Com.

Gary Gardner
Jr Vice Com.
Harold Waterman



The Great Lakes Chapter has been involved in and attended many reunions over the past years. Listed below are some of the upcoming reunions for 2007 and 2008. It is a great time for veterans to get together for camaraderie and for remembering those that have made the ultimate sacrifice.

LZ/DC 25th Anniversary of the Wall Reunion – November 9-12, 2007: The Great Lakes Regional Chapter has organized a reunion in conjunction with the 25th Anniversary of the Wall National Reunion. The LZ/DC 25th Anniversary of the Wall Reunion will be held November 9-12, 2007. A registration form listing the calendar of events is available at www.americal.org/reunion.shtml.

We would like to thank the following organizations for helping sponsoring the D.C. Reunion for the 25th Anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Great Lakes Americal Chapter, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Assn., VietNow National, Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Chapter 3, and American Legion of Middleton, WI. This is a special event commemorating the 25th Anniversary of the Wall. Everyone is encouraged to attend this event.

Americal Division Veterans Association National Reunion – June 21-24, 2007: The Americal Division Veterans Association National Reunion will be in Buffalo, New York on June 21-24, 2007. Check your Americal Journal for updates.

Kokomo Vietnam Veterans and all Veterans Reunion – September 13-16, 2007: The Great Lakes Chapter will be at the 25th Anniversary of the Kokomo Vietnam Veterans and all Veterans Reunion on September 13-16, 2007. We will be set-up at the same campsites again this year. Look for us again by the camping gate for our set-up.

All Veterans Winterfest Reunion in New Glarus, Wisconsin – January 17-20, 2008: Our next 2008 All Veterans Winterfest Reunion in New Glarus, Wisconsin is on January 17-20, 2008 in New Glarus, Wisconsin. All have a great time; don't miss out on attending this one.

For those of you that may not be a member of the Great Lakes Chapter yet the dues are \$10/year or save and pay \$45 for five years. This covers the cost of three newsletters a year. For all current members please check your mailing label on the cover the chapter newsletter to find the expiration date of your dues. If you have no date, we welcome you to join us. Please fill out page 2 of Great Lakes Chapter newsletter and send back to: Great Lakes Regional Chapter, c/o Terry Babler, Adjutant, W5889 Durst Road, New Glarus, WI 53574.

EASTERN REGIONAL CHAPTER

DC DE KY MD NJ NY OH PA VA WV MA NH VT ME CT RI

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937 • 492 • 1908
mdeam@woh.rr.com



The East Chapter is excited about hosting the National Reunion in Buffalo, NY. Our committee is still working hard to put all the finishing pieces in order. Everyone should have a great time.

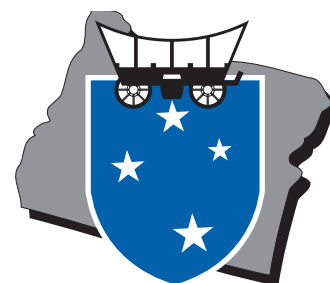
As a reminder, we are having the Chapter's annual meeting immediately following the National meeting. Since the New England Chapter has merged with the Eastern Region we would love to see the former New England Chapter members attend the meeting so we may all get acquainted in person. There will be a short business meeting and elections; leaving plenty of time to meet and greet our new friends.

**NORTHWEST CHAPTER**

AK WA OR ID MT WY

COMMANDER

David Hammond
3015 SW 116th Avenue
Beaverton, OR 97005
503 • 644 • 3623
pacwesthi@aol.com



An informal gathering of Northwest Chapter members will be held at the national reunion in Buffalo, NY in June. Watch for information posted near the registration table. Ongoing discussions on the merging and realignment of chapters are in process. For more information or questions please feel free to contact Dave Hammond, Chapter Commander. There are no current activities are planned for the Northwest Chapter at this time. We hope to see you in Buffalo.



DONATIONS

To the Americal Scholarship Fund (2006):

Jack Warkow, in memory of William Gold and Alice Mullen

To the general fund of the ADVA:

Albert Nirenstein; Co. B, 5/46th Inf.
Jeffery W. Keyworth; Co. D, 1/6th Inf.

LETTERS

Dear editor,

This is just a note to say that an old Americal soldier is headed back to Iraq in mid April. I returned in September 2006 from my last deployment to Iraq. A colonel friend of mine wanted me to make another trip and I couldn't say no to him.

CSM Royce Davis
23rd MP Co., 69-70
army1@casscomm.com

Dear editor,

My father's WWII unit was the 251st Coast Artillery Regiment attached to the Americal Division. I remember my Dad talking about being with the Americal on Fiji, Guadalcanal, and through the Solomons. I have my dad's discharge paperwork and other records that shows that my dad went to the 951st AAA AW Bn. when the 251st CA Regiment was broken in battalion elements.

I have a copy of the book Under the Southern Cross, the Americal's Division WWII history. I do not see any reference of the 251st in it. Is there any information on where in the Pacific Theater the 251st CA was attached to the Americal? For some reason I keep thinking of Guadalcanal as I remember my Dad talking about being with the first Army elements (164th Inf.) into Guadalcanal.

I also have a picture of my dad in Class A uniform in early 1945 at Camp Chaffee, AR, after he returned from the Pacific. He passed away from a massive heart attack on 12 March 1966.

Alan T. Jones, SFC, USA
atj1id@charter.net

Dear editor,

My grandfather served in Vietnam and I have been studying and researching all that I can about his service. He was part of B Co., 4th Bn, 21st Inf, 11th LIB, from January 1967 to May 1968. I've also been looking for photos of Bravo Island. I'd really like any pictures of the guys in the platoons.

Michael Neal
jkmjd@yahoo.com

Dear editor,

I would like to obtain information on the September 13, 1968 battle of Song Re Valley. This action was during Operation Champagne Grove and involved Co. A, 4/3rd Infantry; Co. B, 1/46th Infantry; and Troops A and B, 1/1st Cavalry.

I am especially trying to confirm the KIA count that day. The total KIA number for the entire operation was 43, but I think most might have been on September 13.

Richard K. Kolb; Editor-in-Chief
VFW Magazine, 406 West 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

Dear editor,

Is there a list of those who were awarded Bronze Star medals while assigned to the 196th LIB in Vietnam? I am trying to locate orders for medals believed to be awarded to John L. Simpers and James Parker Van Duzee for actions in December 1967.

Van Duzee received his orders dated January 28, 1968 but these orders cannot be located. The medals were to be awarded in-country before Simpers and Van Duzee left Vietnam on December 31, 1967. The commanding officer was called out during ceremony so the medals were not presented. They were later "sent home".

Van Duzee did receive his Bronze Star later but Simpers did not get his. We would like to correct the oversight and have the medal presented to Simpers in November along with presentation to 1,000 other veterans.

John Simpers was born on July 7, 1944. He was a helicopter pilot (class 66-11) and was with the 196th LIB in 1967.

Mary and Chuck Schantag
info@pownetwork.org

Dear editor,

I am the eldest son of PFC Rito V. Ogas. My dad served with the 182nd Inf. Regt., 3rd Bn., Co. G. I have been trying to find as much info on my dad's participation during the Philippine campaigns.



Thanks to the americal.org website, I have been able to piece together some idea of where my dad served. His records were destroyed in a fire at the St. Louis records center. I got a copy of his discharge and some medical records from Camp Carson, CO. The VA has replaced his ribbons and medals.

If anyone has any information on my dad, or even knew him, please contact me at the following address. Thank you for your assistance. I am also retired Navy (Submarines), 1960-1979.

Rudy Ogas, 304 W. 8th St., Staunton, IL, 62088
lexis@madisontelco.com, 618-635-2852

Dear editor,

I'm writing this for my brother, Roger Louis Brouillette. He was with the Americal Division in Vietnam from May 1970 to May 1971. He was awarded the Bronze Star, Purple Heart, and Army Commendation Medal for his service there. All his records of service were lost in a flood. He was with Co. E, 2/1st Inf. based at LZ Hawk Hill and was wounded at Kham Duc in 1970.

He contacted the National Personnel Records Center for copies. They wrote back and told him that his records were burned in the 1973 fire. He has nothing to show for his service to his country. Is there any way anyone can get his records? Do others have the same orders that can be copied to us? We tried calling the government and all we get is a run around.

Robert Brouillette; 1st Inf. Div, 67-68
bb22ss@localnet.com

Dear editor,

I received the Silver Star in August of 1967 while assigned to Co. B, 39th Combat Engineer Bn. I was a dozer operator.

I would like to know how many dozer operators received the Silver Star. I do not believe there were that many.
Alan George; 39th Combat Engr. Bn.
rachaeldumaway@yahoo.com

Dear editor,

After my article in the last edition of the Americal Journal was published I was contacted by others who had information about the Battle of Tra Bong. I received a phone call from Gene Chenault. In the article I said that the "Duster guys" went out and captured an NVA soldier. In reality the "Duster guys" was only one guy, Corporal Gene Chenault. Gene left the firebase and single handedly captured one NVA soldier. The NVA soldier confessed as to where their unit was.

CPL Chenault counted over 80 dead NVA outside the perimeter of our base. The enemy KIAs were members of the sapper battalion and were killed by the Dusters, Quads or Cobra gunship. For his bravery, CPL Chenault received the Silver Star.

Chenault was threatened with a court martial by Captain Washington if he did not quit firing the Duster. Gene went ahead and fired anyway. Later, when CPT Washington saw the enemy through the Starlight scope, he gave permission to Gene to fire and withdrew the threat of disciplinary action. Raymond Oglesby; 3/18th Arty.
wrojr@cox.net

Dear editor,

I am writing to request one copy of the book *Under the Southern Cross* written by my father, (Captain) Francis D. Cronin, in 1951. I am his only child and would like to pass along a copy to our oldest son, SSGT Mark Francis Kissinger, USAF, which I know he will treasure.

My dad died in 1973 so our sons (we also have a son David who served in the USCG) never met their grandfather. Dad was always very proud of his book and his army career. There have been many times when I know he is with us as we've watched our sons bloom and grow in the military. Last year they were the pall bearers and flag folders at my father-in-law's funeral, another WWII veteran, who was buried at Carsile, PA. It was a very moving, spiritual experience.

I am enclosing a check for \$15 as stated on the website. Thank you so much for providing this service.

Deborah (Cronin) Kissinger

[The above letter was originally sent to Wayne Bryant, ADVA Product Sales Director. -Editor]

Dear editor,

My father passed away on November 9, 2006 at the age of 86. He served with the 21st Recon in WWII. In the process of going over some of his belongings I came across his beloved Americal Newsletters.

A little over three and a half years ago my father became a paraplegic. He was always a very active person and frankly up until that day (*his 83rd birthday*) he had never willingly seen a doctor. Needless to say that his life took a sudden and dramatic change and he experienced what most people would expect to experience.

His bouts of depression were never easy for him or anyone else around him. After coming across his Americal Journal I was reminded of what a gift this magazine was to not only

my father, but to his family as well. He looked forward to receiving it in the mail and would read and reread over and over. God help you if you asked if you could toss the old one in the trash!

Linda Whipple

Dear editor,

I recently purchased a notebook from an antiques dealer. The book was kept by a soldier from the 182nd Inf. His name was Sgt. James J. McGranahan. It had all his poems and his attempt at learning Japanese. I feel I should at least try and track the man or his family down to try and get it back to them if they want it. It is just a fascinating read. One of his poems is included below.

"Can we go back?"

**By SGT James J. McGranahan
Anti-tank Co., 182nd Inf. Regt.**

**A soldier back from the lines,
Far-staring, dirty, worn, thin,
Sat musing of war in the islands,
And what it can do to men.**

**His outfit had been in the thing too long,
Too long for men to stay,
In the jungle's hell of mud and heat,
Where three hours mean decay.**

**In the hills where machine guns sputter,
And mortar bursts spread wide,
He'd fought until his arm hung useless,
And something within him died.**

**Kill or be killed is the way it goes,
It's always him or me,
There's no other way to live up there,
It's the way things have to be.**

**Keep down the fear that gnaws inside,
When a sniper's shot hits near,
Damn a man you can't even see
And hit when a man breaks clear.**

**For fear a man can't live with,
It's blind madness that makes him go,
Into the face of fire and hell,
The Lord must have made it so.**

**We ask no mercy and give none,
And a rifle's butt of steel,
Will knock out teeth so easy!
God, we've lost our power to feel.**

**We shoot when danger's right on us,
And when a man's asleep,
Who gives a damn how we kill them,
As long as death will keep.**

**They've made all of us killers,
And we've laughed at the sight of blood,
I wonder if ever we'll know again,
The sweetness of a white rosebud.
Can we go back to the polite old ways?
Can we change to a civvy suit?
And smile and be tender and thoughtful
After eating forbidden fruit?**

**Can we be refined and decent?
Like most of us had been?
War in the islands is ugly,
And it does strange things to men.**

Anyone with any information about the author is asked to contact me.

Chris Kelly *unionport98002@yahoo.com*

Dear editor,

I have been told that a special detachment from Companies C and D, 52nd Inf. was assigned to Saigon to support the 716th MP BN. Most of the 52nd Inf. troops who were assigned to Saigon were wounded and rotated from field duty to Saigon for easier duty. Their duties were to patrol Saigon in MP jeeps with M-60 machine guns mounted on a pedestal. A historical account states that those men of the 52nd/MP took part in the TET 68 offensive in Saigon and fought at the US Embassy as well as other locations. I would like more information on this.

Mike Kelley; 1st Cavalry Division
Warriorsstory@aol.com

LOCATORS

Looking for: Anyone, *4/31st Inf., 196th LIB*, 1967-68. I was at LZ Baldy as supply SAG from September to October 1968. Contact: Rhett Goodman, 1191 Clack Rd., Madison, GA 30650.

Looking for: Anyone, *HHC 211st Inf., 196th LIB*, at Hawk Hill, Camp Perdue, or Hill 251, 1969-71. Contact: Michael P. Parker, 501 Baltimore Ave., 2nd Fl., Cumberland, MD 21502; phone 301-777-0596.

Looking for: *S-2 Major Sluka* (sp) or anyone who knows him. I was a team leader of a LRRP team that operated for the 198th LIB off LZ Bayonet in the fall of 1968. We worked with the major. Contact: Tom Robison, tomsharonrobison@msn.com.

Looking for: Anyone from the *1182nd Artillery* in Chu Lai. I was with HHB, ammo section, and drove five-ton trucks. Contact: David G. Hannaford, SFC USA (RET)., hannafordd@bellsouth.net.

Looking for: The son of *1LT Ronald D. Brown* wants to know about his father. His father was a KIA with D/1/46 on 10/01/68 near Tien Phuoc. Contact Les Hines, pelican. 123rd.avn@worldnet.att.net.

Looking for: Anyone who knows me. I played a guitar during stand downs from September 1969 to September 1970. I was with *Co. D, 116th Inf., 198th LIB* and was at Chu Lai, LZ Dottie, and the Rocket Pocket. Contact: David A. Lawrence, 7792 Alexander St., Masury OH 44438; 330.448.8951; joanl621@yahoo.com

Looking for: Anyone who knows me. I was wounded in October 1968 while serving with Co. C, 1/52nd Infantry. I believe we were in the mountains northwest of Chu Lai. Contact: Anthony J. Hosemann III; P.O. Box 904, Blackfoot, ID, 83221; kotanidaho@msn.com, 208-782-0272

Looking for: Information about my friend *PFC Ricardo Serenil* and how he met his end. All I know is that he died from fragmentation wounds on January 9, 1970 while serving with the 198th LIB. Contact: Fred Garcia, fagarcia@utmb.edu

REUNIONS

Co. C, 1/20th Inf., 11th LIB is having its second annual reunion June 8-9, 2007 at the Cincinnati Airport Hilton. Complete details are posted at www.1-20infantry.org. Anyone interested may contact Dan Malin at DanielMalin@hotmail.com. Please note "Charlie Co. 1/20th" in the subject line.

26th (Yankee) Division will have its 88th Annual Convention and Reunion at the Best Western Olympic Inn, Groton, CT, on June 12-14, 2007. Contact Robert R. Raney, 27 Forest St., Peabody, MA, 01960, 978-531-2257.

3/1st Inf., 11th LIB, June 66 to December 68, will have its fourth annual reunion at the Marietta Conference Center in Atlanta, GA on October 19-21 2007. This reunion covers those who served in the battalion in Hawaii and/or Vietnam at any time from June 1966 to December 1968. Other veterans with connections to the battalion during this time are welcome. Please contact Tim Cook (701) 774-0598, thirdfirstreunion@yahoo.com.

26th Engineer Battalion will be holding a reunion in Indianapolis, IN on October 18-21, 2007. Contact Robert W. Kasting, 574-753-4375 or e-mail to ffgris@myvine.com.

Co. B, 1/46th Infantry will have a reunion on June 28 – July 1, 2007. For more information contact D. M. (Woody) Woods at 563-391-3702 or e-mail dmwoods5716@hotmail.com.

178th Assault Support Helicopter Company (ASHC) Boxcars will hold their 17th reunion in Savannah, GA on June 21-24, 2007. The reunion will be held at the Masters Inn Suites, 800-344-4378. For more information see www.theboxcar.org or contact Steve Niedbala, 912-352-8456 or e-mail boxcar1@yahoo.com.

196th LIB Assoc. will hold its bi-annual reunion at Fort Mitchell, KY (Cincinnati area) on July 26-29, 2007. Additional information at www.196th.org. Warren Neil (317) 984-3853; Grunt196@insightbb.com

Editor's note: If you wish to reply to a letter but you do not have e-mail please contact me and I will relay your message.

Call Gary L. Noller

at

816-695-6390

or write to

1662 Landmark Rd., Kerrville, TX, 78028.

Still Serving: LTC Emory Clifton

By Gary L. Noller



LTC Clifton proudly wears the Americal Division patch while on duty in Baghdad, Iraq.

Combat operations in Vietnam ended in 1972. Some of the last troops to serve were with the Americal Division and the 196th LIB in the DaNang area. Most of these veterans have long

since left military service. But a handful of them still serve in the United States military.

Emory Clifton went to Vietnam in June 1971 and was assigned as a clarinet and trumpet player with the Americal Division Band. He was present and performing his duty at the deactivation ceremony for the Americal Division in November 1971. But, like many others in the division at that time, he did not come home with the colors. He and the band were reassigned to the 196th LIB. He finished his Vietnam tour as a Specialist Fifth Class on March 13, 1972.

After returning from Vietnam he remained in the Army Reserve and was promoted to Staff Sergeant. In 1977 he received a direct appointment to the rank of First Lieutenant. He served many of his military years as a Terminal and Marine Transportation Officer in the United States Army and the United States Army Reserve. He served twice as a company commander of a Transportation Corps Heavy Boat Company and once as company commander of the Headquarters Company of a Transportation Terminal Service Battalion. He activated and deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Storm from August 1991 through December 1991.

Clifton also served as the S-2/3 of the Transportation Terminal Battalion and in numerous other assignments as a trainer and evaluator of Transportation, Quartermaster, Adjutant General and other types of Army units. He is a member of both the Transportation Corps Regimental Association and the Adjutant General Corps Regimental Association.

He was commissioned in the California State Military Reserve (California's State Defense Force) on 13 October 2001. He has served in various roles to include Director of Logistics, Director of Personnel, and Acting Director of Recruiting and Retention.

Clifton was called back to active duty in 2006 and is currently deployed to Iraq. He serves as Deputy Corps Transportation

Officer, Multi-National Corps - Iraq. His duties deal with setting policy and procedures for transportation within the Iraq Theater of Operations for the Multinational Corps Iraq. He works near Baghdad International Airport at the former Al Faw Palace in Camp Victory.

His tour in Iraq is scheduled to end in November 2007 and his activation orders are due to end in January 2008. He will turn 60 years old in June 2007 and has almost thirty-eight years of combined active and reserve military service.

The Americal Division patch that Clifton wears on his uniform draws selected attention from time to time. "Most people do not recognize it," he says. "Most of those that do are either generals, a few older colonels, students of military history, or other retirees that have been recalled to active duty. The number of people that recognize the patch is limited."

Some observers comment on his service and longevity. "Were you really with the Americal?" and "Can you really be that old?" are two of the questions that he has heard. But he also notes, "You would be surprised how many Vietnam patches that I see. I have noticed a couple dozen individuals in the "Palace" and dining facility wearing combat patches from units that have not existed since Vietnam."

Clifton has observed many changes in the Army since the end of the Vietnam War. In particular, the Army transitioned from a force with many draftees into a force that relies totally on volunteers. Of today's soldiers, he says, "From what I have seen, the majority of troops in Iraq are more motivated to be here than troops were in Vietnam. Soldiers believe in what they are doing for the Iraqi people."

With respect to conditions in today's Army, he remarks, "The troops are better taken care of, partially due to the need to keep volunteers happy and partially due to the availability of better services for the troops due to changes in technology." Reflecting on his many years of service and his current deployment to Iraq, he states, "The greatest benefit of my service has been to be able to return to the country something of what I have received during my life. This last deployment has made me realize how much I love my wife, kids, step-children and grandkids."

In civilian life Clifton works as a tax advisor to a law firm specializing in estates and trusts. He earned a Master of Business Administration (Management) degree and a Master of Science in Taxation degree from Golden Gate University. He continues to maintain his musical skills and is currently the Principal Clarinetist with the American River Orchestra and is the E-flat Clarinetist with the American River Wind Ensemble. He and his wife, Ramona, reside in Antelope, CA.

Messages can be sent to the following addresses:

EMORY R. CLIFTON
MNC-I, C4 Trans
Deputy CTO
CP Victory, Baghdad
APO AE 09342
bob.clifton@us.army.mil



WWII Museum Update

David W. Taylo

Modernization Continues

Our work to modernize the Americal's WWII Museum continues in Worcester, Massachusetts. The entire building on 44 Salisbury Street is the Massachusetts National Guard Military Museum. The Americal Museum occupies ½ of the 2nd floor of the building. During our revitalization effort, which will take approximately two years, the Americal exhibit will be closed to visitors.

The photos on page 15 show the finished painting of the walls. Old and outdated wallpaper has been removed, to allow for a cleaner look. Some walls will have vivid graphics of the Americal's story in WWII to accompany the displays of items already in existence and others to be donated by Americal WWII vets. Our deepest thanks go out to Museum Advisory Committee member Nancy Murphy and her brother-in-law who donated over \$700 in paint and painting supplies from his painting and refurbishing company, to get the work done.

All Vietnam artifacts have now been shipped to Texas Tech's Vietnam Center in Lubbock, Texas where they will be carefully catalogued and categorized under the "Americal Collection". PNC Gary Noller will pick up the



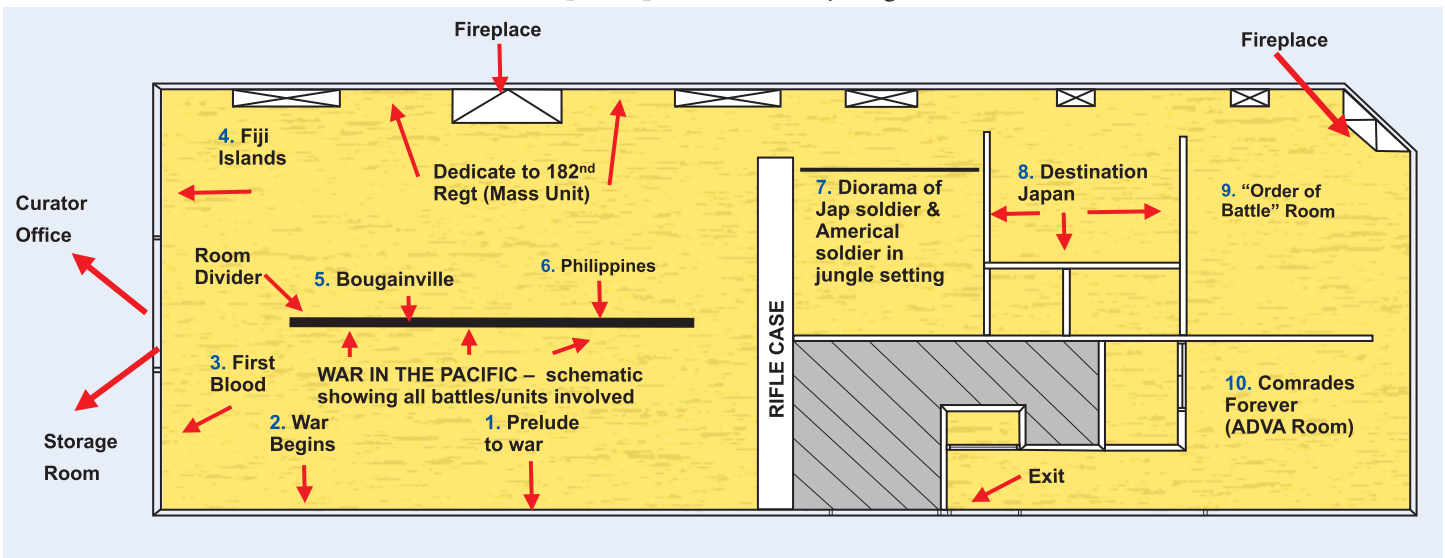
Americal WWII Museum is located on the 2nd floor of the Worcester, MA National Guard Museum.

responsibility for working with this collection from this point on.

Shown below is a preliminary floor layout of how the flow of the redesigned museum will look. The Americal story begins with the outbreak of war and ends with the post-war establishment of the Americal Division Veterans Association. The next step is to prepare the history and graphics plan, which will take some time to establish in detail; what will be depicted and how it will be displayed, before we begin expensive graphics planning and development. We will also begin the long process of establishing the museum on a national registry list; all of this will take us well into 2009 before completion.

Here is a rough outline, the flow of the museum, as we currently contemplate it (refer to the preliminary floor plan):

1. "Prelude to War". The conditions in the Europe and the Pacific leading up to Pearl Harbor, early training of National Guard units, etc.
2. "War Begins". The attack on Pearl Harbor, Task Force 6814, Australia, New Caledonia, arrival of the 164th Infantry Regiment.



3. "First Blood". The bloody fighting on Guadalcanal and the contributions made by Americal units to insure victory.
4. "Fiji Islands". The division continues to secure areas from possible Japanese invasion while it rests and refits.
5. "Bougainville". A detailed analysis of the deadly fighting on Bougainville.
6. "Philippines". The important role played by the Americal in retaking the Philippine Islands, Cebu, Leyte, Samar, etc.

"War in the Pacific". A dividing wall in the main exhibit room (does not extend across the entire room); The side which faces the visitors as they enter, will be dedicated to the enormity of the war in the Pacific Theatre (all battles-land & sea) and highlight where the Americal participated in it.

"Dedication to the 182nd". The building is dedicated to the Massachusetts National Guard, and the 182nd, having extensive roots in Massachusetts history will have a dedication area on both sides of the fireplace in the main room.

7. "Diorama of the Americal Soldier and the Enemy". A jungle scene, enclosed by Plexiglas, depicts the Americal soldier and Japanese soldier as they fought in the jungle. Both soldiers will be life-sized mannequins in uniform with actual weapons standing in jungle foliage. This will be our most expensive display in the museum.
8. "Destination Japan" The American during occupation duties.
9. "Order of Battle" Room. Complete description of all units assigned or attached to the Americal during the war; unit commanders from battalion to division; awards for valor, etc.
10. "Comrades Forever". The creation of the ADVA with many pictures of early reunions, the Americal Newsletter, Americal Journal, list of ADVA Commanders, etc.



One Last Campaign for the Old Guard!

MUSEUM

The Americal WWII Museum
All Donations Tax Deductible!



ADVA Vets (WWII & Vietnam)
Please donate to a worthy cause!

☒ **Yes! I want to help perpetuate the history of the Americal Division.**

Send your tax-deductible check
made payable to:

ADVA WWII Museum

Send your check to:
PNC Ronald Ellis
4493 Highway 64W
Henderson, Texas 75652

Your canceled check from the bank will be
your receipt for tax purposes!
Any inquiries for donating materials
(artifacts or documents) to the
museum please contact:

David W. Taylor
970 Kenner Drive
Medina, Ohio 44256
330-723-2517
dwtaylor@ohio.net

"Perils of Pauline" My WWII Memoirs

Fernando Vera

WWII Historian's note: This is part 2 of Fernando Vera's memoirs, which began in the 1st quarter 2007 issue of the Americal Journal and will be presented in edited form over the next several issues.

Bougainville (Continued)

One month after my short R&R on the Bougainville beach we got assigned to conduct a company patrol beyond the Sava River; that's the first patrol I missed. Thanks to my sprained ankle Sergeant Kinnon excused me. We lost Sergeant Grant and one new replacement that got wounded. He spent all night lying very still and he said the Japs walked all around him but didn't check him close. I was saddened because of Sergeant Grant getting killed, as we got along well. He even wanted me to transfer to his squad. At the time of this patrol I believe the black infantry regiment was still out on certain outposts. If I remember right, one of the small hills was Hill 65, which was one of their positions we took over shortly after their regiment was disbanded.

I remember when they were going to take our patrol duty area Captain Harris called our two southern officers. I remember one by name, Lieutenant Milburn. He frankly asked them if they would mind taking our black infantry outfit out to familiarize themselves with the area. He was well away of the prejudice of whites against blacks then. What impressed me was that Captain Harris gave them a chance not to volunteer; I guess that's why he was our company commander but later became our battalion commander in Cebu. Anyway they gracefully accepted the duty. I was at the Command post when he asked them.

Anyway, a little later we took over their outposts (Hill 65) and they left us all their goodies. They had a good source of food supplies. Here I must mention powdered eggs (yummy). I don't remember but I don't think we ever had fresh bread on the Island. From this post Sgt. Foley was sent out with a patrol and I was to be the radioman. This was another patrol I couldn't go on because of my ankles and again Sgt. Kinnon excused me. It was nice to be trusted and fortunately they met no resistance.

Nearby was the 155mm artillery piece that was used by the Japs during Hill 260's battle. It was spotted and knocked out by our Piper Cub artillery liaison pilots. We'd see them go over our lines flapping their wings so close you felt that you could knock them down with a rock. Oh yes, the forest there was also bare of foliage due to the barrages from our artillery.

We stayed in the area of Hill 65 for about two weeks. We were also ordered to go on patrol up the volcano to see if there were any traces of Japanese outposts. There were none since trying to climb up this volcano was almost impossible. Militarily it served its purpose. We spent one night out on this patrol and it rained; I mean we were wet and miserable! When we left we were relieved by another company. The engineers had built a well-graded road and bridges in this area. I wondered if the Japs knew that and that we also had eliminated our frontline defenses. They could have had a field day.

I don't remember the month but it was towards the end of 1944 our company was sent up the Laruma River to relieve

another company at Nip Hill. It was a hell of a climb and I think we were there about a week or two. I must mention that the 37th Division sure had some rough territory to fight in. The top of the hill was bare of foliage and I don't know what altitude it was but when we heated our Nescafe, if you didn't drink it fast it would get cold. We could spot Japs going into the dense jungle below us once a day with heavy packs. One Jap was shot at with our Springfield sniper rifle and tracer bullets. Apparently he didn't come close because the Jap just kept on walking nonchalantly on his way.

Also I remember a Navy Corsair came flying over where we were but he was lower than us. A squad patrol was sent around the hill but not into the jungle area. One of the guys said, "Man, there's a lot of Japs down there" as they just stared at one another. For whatever reason they didn't fire on our patrol. Also, I watched an Australian Coast Watcher going north with two Bougainville natives. Also I remember while we were up there, a Jewish religious holy day came up and our Jewish G.I.'s were allowed to go to the rear area for it. They didn't want to leave us because they knew something might come up but they were sort of ordered to. They were Haskell Saxe, Zol Zander (the gambling fool) Levine and Shwartz.

I believe we were relieved by E Company and we spent the night on a lower knob of Nip Hill. There were three of us in a shallow hole on all-night radio watch. It rained and we got thoroughly soaked with rain pouring in our hole. The only guy that was comfortable was the one in the middle; he kept warm by the bodies on each side of him. Whenever we went on watch and came back, the guy in the middle had to move to the outer edge to the miserable position; the guy that came back pushed the one on the other side to the middle "Sealy Mattress" position. God what a misery!

Next morning we went down to the base of Nip Hill where the temporary battalion headquarters was. As we stepped into the clearing we were greeted by a young Salvation Army Officer who smiled and handed us a hard donut and a roll of lifesavers and we returned to our company area at Hill 210 to rest. I guess that same week a squad from the company that relieved us went into the heavy growth; sadly all were killed except the Lieutenant with the squad. That probably made the division aware that there was a heavy concentration of Japs there.

A platoon from our company was sent back led by Lieutenant Smith. The guys that I remember going were Sergeant Standish and radioman George Vallinch. It was my turn to go and I mentioned it to Sergeant Standish but he said no; guess he saw my puny 125 pounds compared to George's 150 pounds and decided he would be more durable. They climbed the opposite side of Nip Hill on a very steep, untraveled area and reached a knoll and spotted some Japs. Apparently the Japs didn't think anyone would approach them from that side. From what George Vallinch told me Lieutenant Smith ordered them to open fire and one Jap was killed. The platoon dug in for the night and was furiously attacked. We lost our BAR man Watson and the rifleman Sanchez. The rest of the company went back up the next morning and we saw an ambulance coming our way and saw one of our guys, Lee Ponder. He waved to us with bandaged hands; he'd received some shrapnel wounds.

I think we went around Nip Hill and occupied a lower part of it but the heavy action was over. The area was devastated, I guess by heavy artillery hits and mortars. Also we saw a nice pile of Japanese mortar shells which were blown up by our Ordnance engineers – what a blast! Guess this was

an indicator that the Japs were going to make another large attack on our now non-frontline-defended perimeters.

The next day we were sent out on a squad patrol. Needless to say, we received a nice heavy rain for about half an hour on this familiar type of trail (quite well-worn but in heavy growth). We came upon an outpost squad who told us "the way."

Well, a few inches away this trail was on rocky hillside footing and about eight inches wide with a sheer drop of 50 to 75 feet into a rocky stream bed. Good thing the cliff was at an angle and we could lean on it away from the open space. Here I am carrying the SCR300 and a guy who's afraid of heights. I get a tendency to fall off; I only looked down once and glued myself to the side of the cliff and made it. We started down this winding trail, came across some "booby traps" and passed them safely. We next crossed this small stream bed and up a large cleared area of bamboo forest that had been knocked down either by artillery or bombing from the air. The bamboo was scattered all over and we couldn't avoid stepping on it. There was a lot of loud noise from our foot steps and one of the guys said, "Boy, this is a sure perfect spot for an ambush!" A few moments later single shots burst out.

I don't remember how many were ahead of me but one of the fellows, Thomas Vigil, came running back and dropped beside me and said, "I'm hit." When things quieted down and all the squad was back except Francis Boutin. Out Lieutenant verified from the fellows that had been with him that Boutin was indeed dead. He called the CO of our Company and explained our situation and we were ordered back because of the wounded man. We went back and spent the night in sort of an oval hole surrounded by dense bamboo. The Japs did not follow us so I guess there were not too many of them.

Next morning we took off through some dense bamboo-covered terrain toward Nip Hill; this was as-the-crow-fly's direction. Our wounded man was able to walk and he clung to me for support all the way back. As we went we heard constant popping and thought that the Japs were behind us. It was apparently a natural popping of bamboo in its "stages of life". The terrain was quite steep, and from the looks of it we were probably the first humans to have ever traversed there. We finally descended to a small stream and followed its flow. About half an hour later we reached Nip Hill and almost directly across from where our company CP was located on the hill. Our wounded man was taken away on a stretcher by, I guess, battalion headquarters medics. He was sent home later because of the severity of the wound.

I think the next day I was called to the battalion CP and for whatever reason I became the Company's Battalion Headquarters runner, replacing Nathan Gopen who took my place at the company. He bestowed me with his mosquito net hammock down at headquarters and the best night's sleep I had had in a long time. My duty was to bring to the company the night's password and also to lead the native Bougianvillians to bring supplies to the area. We climbed up the torturous trail then crossed over on a ridge before we got to the highest point of Nip Hill where the area was leveled by the previous action. When I used to take the battalion messages to the company I just wore my shorts and my M1 and only 24 rounds. I got smart and went by the river by myself and somehow it was now safe. No more combat action took place for us that I know of.

When we were replaced, I don't know what outfit it was but on our way back we saw some New Zealanders working on



Americal soldiers on board a ship heading for Leyte, getting briefed

(Photo source: Alexis Gable)

the opposite side of the river, building a road on solid rock. Apparently they and the Aussies took over our combat duties here for us for the rest of the war. Back in our Hill 210 bivouac area we went on some shipboard training handling 105mm shells, two to a bracket plus climbing down landing nets. We were preparing to go to the Philippines though we didn't know it yet.

The day finally came that we tore down our camp and somehow there was a nostalgic reason about leaving. I guess I wondered what my fate would be at the next combat area. Just before boarding our

truck I gave one last look around. I was standing by this very large tree about 90 feet tall. I looked at it and then I looked at it again, having passed it hundreds of times. What I had thought were leaves on the tree turned out to be millions of bugs; I think they were of the June bug species. At certain nights I guess it was them that made such a shrill noise. One thing I wonder is what kind of tree it was since you couldn't really see its shape due to the enormity of the bug colony clinging to its branches.

On our way to board the ship a small convoy of Aussie troops went by and we waved goodbye to each other. There was a dock built by either the engineers or Seabees, so we didn't have to climb rope nets. Before I forget, just minutes before leaving our area I looked in a trash pile and there and behold was a relief map of our area, taking in all the area of the 182nd. No defense information was on it. I have made copies of them but lost the original. Some of the original guys had left on rotation; my section sergeant, James Standish went on a quickie leave with the understanding he would return. It was a gamble on his part. He joined us later on Cebu after the war was over; he didn't have to empty his duffle bag and went home again.

I'm going back to some experiences that I forgot to mention in sequence. First, when we'd first take over the Marine positions, while messing around I lifted a board and low and behold, a healthy three-inch centipede stuck two of his feet on my finger and strung me. Ugly grey-looking thing, it hurt plenty. Its punctures were like a knife had been stuck into me. When we had eliminated our frontline trenches and moved into tents, we also had a mess tent. Two mornings in a row as I was walking the chow line I had the great fortune to have two more centipedes fall on my chest. I felt something cold and, having the presence of mind to be cautious, I slowly unbuttoned my fatigue jacket; had someone else knock them off and we squashed them. Good thing their feet fell facing the cloth of my jacket! They fell from the ceiling of the tent. Why me?

Also, when we returned from our last Nip Hill encounter and I went to my plush company battalion runner job at

headquarters, lo and behold there had been a rainstorm and I found another rotten tree had fallen across my bunk. Talk about luck!

The only company runners I remember in our elite group were a guy named Houghton from Massachusetts and two others I remember only by appearance. One was about my size, 5'6", blond and blue-eyed with a missing front tooth, full of a lot of funny BS, and the other guy was a skinny fellow, I think from Massachusetts as well. He spoke French fluently; wrong theatre right? Oh yes, there was another guy named Tramell from Arkansas.

Another humorous event was that in the Stars and Stripes an article came out that one of our black relief soldiers, guess it was somewhere around Hill 65, was walking down a trail and he heard someone singing, "You are my sunshine." He met this singer eye to eye and said, "Hi!" The singer was a Jap soldier; both spun around and took off! The end of this.

Leyte - Philippine Islands

Leaving Bougainville, January 10, 1945; while sailing north we came upon a sailing swoop out there all alone, quite a serene sight. I often wondered if it was one of our coast- watcher functions like the one depicted on the TV series that I saw a number of years ago. Strange, but it's funny that we can't recall every day of what took place on such voyages. We were on an English ship, and in one of the passageways someone had graffitied "Blackpool Gang" on it. It was neatly stenciled. Also, in their mess, my first experience with black tea. I almost choked on it thinking it was coffee. I had taken a big gulp. Another time we were given perfect orange-colored grapefruit – another surprise and it was bitter, bitter! Also, in talking to one of the sailors he said "this was Britain's share of the war effort." I guess he was aware of the tremendous military contributions we were making in personnel and military hardware.

We arrived at Hollandia, New Guinea and again we stopped. I don't know why; you see the ships captain didn't always consult me. Anyway, while we were there we were looking down at the water and a nice big shark was spotted, slowly swimming by; someone shot at it, don't know if it was hit. Also, we could see a lot of movement on the base ashore. I think at this time the New Guinea battles were over. On our way to the Philippine Islands there was a GI who had gotten a baby pet parrot that perched on his shoulder. We were at the stern deck of the ship and it decided to take a little flight. It couldn't make it back even though it tried. His master was quite saddened.

As usual, there was always gambling among the GI's; this ship was no exception. Well, our company gambling wiz, Saul "Zol" Zander, was involved in a dice game that started in the morning and they went below deck that night and continued, I guess, most of the night. Next morning someone said that Zol had lost all of his money, borrowed a dollar and ended up with his fatigue pockets bulging. I was going to say he was a gambling fool but he wasn't. While on

Bougainville at the dice games he would give 20 to 1 odds, and most times he would win. That man didn't need loaded dice.

I don't remember whether we were in a ship convoy this time or not but on one I remember we were in a twenty-six ship convoy; it just was widely spread out and again it made me aware of how immense this historical effort was being implemented. Aboard the ship we always wore our life belts, a reminder of how vulnerable we were at open sea.

We arrived at Leyte, Tacloban, January 18, 1945, around noon again. We could see some of the previous battle's devastation in the forms of battered coconut trees. We were delayed in docking as a ship ahead of us had tangled its propeller with some anchor chain and there were some divers going down, I guess, to free it. Also, there were a few flying boats lying at anchor nearby. We finally landed and went to an already



Americal soldiers planning operations on Leyte
(Photo source: Alexis Gable)

prepared bivouac area near Polompom. If I remember, I think part of the 77th Division was next to us and they were preparing to leave. I asked one of the guys if there was anybody from Oxnard, California. He answered no, but there was somebody from Moorpark, about 20 minutes away. I didn't get to meet him; but again the world was beginning to shrink.

In our Bivouac area there were already little bamboo two and three-man shacks. As I was still the battalion runner, I got to sleep in a tent where there were little one-man bamboo beds. I

got the one where the mat fell to the ground, its tie straps had broken.

My battalion "company runner" honeymoon was about to be over. That night as I fell asleep – as Charlie Brown's dog always starts out writing his novel, to quote—"It was a dark and stormy night." I woke up screaming with sheer agony, something had stung my right eyelid. It was dark and pouring outside and the pain was so severe that I felt like bashing my head on a coconut tree. The battalion's medical doctor gave me a morphine shot and I was sent to my company area and got to sleep with the other section guys. I moaned and groaned all night; the morphine didn't help much.

The next morning I looked in a mirror and then whole right side of my face was horribly swollen. I never did find out what stung me but I suspect that it was a scorpion; guess the bamboo legs that my bed had, were supposed to be raised up high enough and slick enough to keep such a bug from climbing up. I can still remember that.

We hung around for about two weeks, and then we were to go to Ormoc. Regiment sent a reconnaissance patrol. If I remember right, they had received some sniper fire at the hilly area. On the way to Ormoc, we came upon the hilly area where apparently there had been some very fierce fighting; the jungle was devastated and there were obvious defense emplacements. It's possible that this was part of the Yamashita line where there had been a great battle on our return to the Philippine Islands.

We arrived in Ormoc, whether it was the whole battalion or what, I don't know. Anyway, we set up in an abandoned home that was up on stilts, and didn't do much else for a few days. Ormoc wasn't a very large town. A lot of it, as I remember, was devastated but the people were beginning to get on with their lives. We went on a company patrol to an area called Valencia; there didn't seem to be any community around. We went through a large rice paddy toward a bush area where we were "sitting pigeons" as we approached the undergrowth. We wandered around, found no trace of Japs. On one place we had to cross a slow flowing stream that was chest deep to some of us, and about ten feet wide. One of our stalwart BAR men, Benny Wint, had to be helped across because of his physical size; it would probably have been nose-high to him. In a sense, it was sort of a humorous situation.

Benny may have been small in stature but he was a giant in performing his duty. Sadly, I must say, he was later killed in action; someone whom I'll never forget who gave his all! After scouring the area and no contact, we returned to Ormoc, walking of course.

While awaiting our next assignment, I was walking toward the beach one day and lo and behold here comes this biplane heading towards me, at about 200 hundred feet elevation and real slow; it didn't look friendly so I jumped into a street drainage culvert, a real stinking mess. It went over me and turned towards the beach where a couple of PT boats were tied up. The crews recognized it as a Jap plane and they tried to take off. He dropped one bomb and missed but the two PT boats collided. I don't think the damage was severe. I don't remember but I think that this one lone Jap plane made the news because of its biplane status and years later I read about him in an article in the Readers Digest. He was given a nickname but what it was I don't know as he had made some previous stunts before we got there. He came from Cebu and he was never shot down as far as I know. He flew so low and slow that he was a clay pigeon. At the time when he "dogged" me, I didn't have my rifle; did I ever feel "Nak-ked!"

Again we were sent on another company patrol, point of our departure was the Valencia area toward Villaba. The terrain was hilly but bare, and the first day we went one way, then the other, one foot in front, then the other. It was my radio-carrying honor that day and since we were traveling quite rapidly sometime in the afternoon our CO, Captain Dunham noticed my tongue hanging out, so he took over for a while. I reluctantly relinquished my life saver. That evening we bivouacked in a perimeter around Regimental Commander Colonel Dunn's small group. In looking at my condensed diary, this was supposed to be a three-day patrol. It lasted sixteen days.

After walking over hill and dale and seeing only a few farm huts along the way, all the terrain was bare and no large group could have hidden there. We finally reached a

Philippine Islands guerilla group; and a US liaison officer was with them. Here the area had more jungle cover and many small hills, some isolated in the middle of rice paddies of various sizes with good jungle cover. We stopped. I think a squad was sent out and they encountered some opposition. Oh yes, this little hill was about one hundred yards away from our cover in the middle of the rice paddy.

At that time word came that First Sergeant Ray Kinnon was to go home on rotation. He didn't want to leave us, but

was ordered to do so by our CO, Captain Dunham. He passed by us and we gave him a "happy to see you go", but wistful smile. He didn't have time to even say a few words; inwardly we were happy for him. He had been over there for a long time.

We went on to the island, and found two dead Japs if I remember right, the guys said one or two more ran off. Anyway we half-way covered them in their foxhole as we stayed there for three days. No action but a water detail was sent back over the open space and on the way the Japs fired on the detail. My good friend Anton Rosco was killed. He was our first casualty on Leyte.

I believe we spent three nights in the knob, possibly after our previous water mishap, and we had to get water from a buffalo wallow at the base of our little island. The company was pretty well bivouacked tightly on the knob, as the rest of the hill was thickly overgrown. One of the nights while going on my radio watch, I laboriously crawled to it only a few feet away, reason that I didn't want to wake any of the guys. Well, as I was sitting listening to our message-less radio, bang, bang! Someone got a little jittery and I made the cleanest and most precise dive for my foxhole. I never touched a soul; I could have gotten an Olympic Gold Medal for that! Thankfully, it was nothing.

The following day we went to another area nearby where again we had to cross through an open rice paddy to the low ridge which was quite overgrown. We reached an area where someone had been there before us as there were two-man foxholes already dug and we heard fierce firing nearby by but couldn't see anyone. A squad patrol was sent on the edge of a higher peak where it met resistance and our Sgt. Haskell Saxe received a severe arm wound. His elbow was severely shattered. He was able to walk to our local staging area but you could see he was in severe shock. I'm sure he was sent home as soon as possible. I certainly would like to see him again but I don't know where he was from, around Boston I think. A good man!

We went up the small peak and found two dead Japanese soldiers, one was rather young. As I looked at his sightless eyes, I sadly thought to myself, "We could have been friends." There was also a basket of rice with the husks plus many little paper-wrapped packages with Japanese writing. I unwrapped one; it seemed like it was burnt bone, possibly the remains of cremated soldiers. There were many and we left them as they were.



To Be Continued



Americal soldiers patrol through a village on Leyte
(Photo source: Alexis Gable)

Humor –In the Americal Uniform

Leonard "Sack" Owczarzak



Here are some humorous events that occurred in our unit during WWII. Our unit was the 251st Coast Artillery that was sent to Hawaii in October of 1940 to bolster anti-aircraft protection for the Pearl Harbor region. In February of 1944, the unit designation was changed to the 746th Anti-Aircraft Artillery

Battalion, consisting of four batteries each, armed with four 90mm anti-aircraft guns, four 50-caliber water cooled machine guns, one radar set computer and generator.

Almost "Missing-In-Action"

Shortly after Pearl Harbor our unit was sent to defend the airstrip that was being built near Lautoka, Fiji Island. One member of Battery "D" had volunteered to be the "Dog Robber", or wait on the officer when they were eating their meals. He was a middle-aged man of slight built, a mean-tempered non-smiling PFC names Scherer. One evening while playing cards he excused himself saying he needed to use the latrine which was located about 40 yards away. The other card players became concerned when he failed to appear for quite some time and were about to search for him when he appeared in the doorway covered with crap and pieces of toilet paper and a horrible stench!

Everyone scattered and he was banished to the shower for several hours. No one wanted to be anywhere near him for several weeks! Unknown to Scherer, when he went out in the dark night to relive himself, he was unaware that a new latrine had been built and the old site had not as yet been filled. Falling into the old latrine he was fortunate to not have drowned and then being carried on the "missing in action" list!

Bunny Butt

On Bougainville in the Solomon Islands in April of 1944 our commanding officer of Battery D had one of the gun crews set up to demonstrate to our battalion commander, Colonel Long, the speed in which the crew could respond to an air raid alert and show how many rounds could be fired in a 60-second time period. Our battery commander, Captain Nolen, was a very much despised officer. He was mean, nasty, belligerent, and always trying to catch anyone not doing their duty as he thought it should be done. He was known to everyone by the endearing term "Bunny Butt" for his nasty habit of continuously scratching his behind.

Bunny Butt forgot to inform the gun crew that only dummy or blank shells were to be used for the demonstration, and after he gave the gun crew the order to fire, 20 live 90mm shells were thrown into the sky arching and exploding over ships in the harbor. Frantic calls from the Navy were received at the battery switchboard informing Captain Nolen about his error. Luckily no one was injured but a lot of smiles were

observed on the gun crews' faces as "pompous" Bunny Butt was dressed down by the Colonel for his inexcusable mistake!

Stanley Our Driver

When the Australians took over control of Bougainville Island after we had been there over 10 months, our truck drivers were told that they would have to change their driving habits, and start driving on the left side of the road.

One of our truck drivers known only as "Stanley from St. Louis" had proven his ability as an exceptional driver, time after time, during our stay on the island. The day we initially landed, our LST had gotten hung up on a sand bar which left about 100 feet between the beach and the LST. All of our trucks had been equipped with snorkel tubes so that they could be driven through several feet of water without drowning out the engines. The water between the LST and the beach was about 4 feet deep, but Stanley was willing to make the run to the beach. We had a special truck – a cab over the engine with a military frame and wheels and a 22-foot bed to carry our height finder which was part of our anti-aircraft equipment. The truck had been loaded at Guadalcanal to the very top of the bows with gun ammunition, kitchen equipment and an all-manner collection of tools. Stanley revved up the engine, yelled "all clear" and Stanley came down the ramp and through the water and was up on the beach and headed for the jungle before we got him to stop.

Shortly after the Australians put the new driving rules out, a bunch of us were on the back of the truck mentioned above with Stanley driving down the main road, on the right-side of the road as we were accustomed, headed for the ammo dump. In the distance on the same side of the road an Australian truck was headed toward us head-on, and we were getting a little anxious as to which driver, the Aussie or Stanley would finally give in to avoid a head-on collision. At the very last minute the Aussie pulled off the road, bumped along into a ten-foot ditch along the side of the road. As Stanley drove "triumphantly" by, the Aussie was standing on the top of the hood of his truck yelling, "You bloody bastard". Stanley could be heard mumbling, "We built these G-damn roads so we make the rules, not you!"

Bunny Butt #2

We had 125 men in Battery "D" and that required setting up several 8-seater latrines around our gun position. I entered one of these latrines just as Bunny Butt was leaving. I discovered he had left his fatigue cap with Captain's bars on the next seat. It took me seconds to rip the bars from the cap and throw the cap into one of the empty latrine holes. As I was closing the cover, Bunny Butt came in demanding to know if he had left his cap behind. I said I hadn't seen it. I showed my buddies my "prize", very proud of the fact I had "de-barred" Bunny Butt



WWII Historian note: We would like to see more humorous stories from our WWII vets. Please contact me, Dave Taylor.

"I Am Ready": The 164th Infantry in WWII A New Book about the Americal is Being Researched

David W. Taylor – ADVA WWII Historian



(Note: This article is a reprint from The 164th Infantry News, March 20007 newsletter as well as further comments from Dr. Shoptaugh direct to the ADVA WWII historian)


Last November, the North Dakota Historical Society gave its annual award for the best article published in *North Dakota History* magazine to Dr. Terry Shoptaugh a professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead. The article, "Missing in Action: A Family's Experience During World War II" told the story of James Hagen, an Army Air Force flier who was missing in action during the war. "I think this recognizes the ordeal of the Hagen family more than it does my writing," Shoptaugh said when accepting the award. "And that's fine, because mostly I used the letters of the Hagen family as they tried to find out what happened to him, and an interview with Jim Hagen's sister, to tell the story. Their words were far more poignant than anything I could write."

The story of James Hagen (who had died in a bomb raid over Germany, and whose remains were found after the war) marked the second time Shoptaugh has written about the Hagen family, **in 1999, Shoptaugh published a two-part article about James' brother, John Hagen, who was with the Americal's 164th Infantry regiment at Guadalcanal.** "In John's story I also used his own words as much as possible. Back in the 1970's John dictated about twenty hours of tape about his army experiences for his nephew. I was able to listen to these tapes, and after checking them against published works and documents to insure the accuracy of John's memories, I wrote the article with extensive quotes from him."

Shoptaugh now hopes to interview other 164th veterans and write a book about the Regiment's actions in World War II. In conjunction with this book, he also wants to interview veterans from other support units in the Americal, such as the 121st Medical Battalion, the artillery battalions, etc., who were in support of the 164th directly or indirectly during the war.

"I want to do something similar to what Stephen Ambrose did in using interviews with veterans in his books, *D-Day* and *Citizen Soldiers*, letting their words convey what it was like to fight and survive in the Pacific campaigns at

Guadalcanal, Bougainville and the Philippines. I hope I can persuade 164th Regiment veterans to contact me so we could make recordings of their experiences, and publish something that could be part of the Regiment's Pacific service, and something that could be a permanent part of their family's histories."

Shoptaugh adds, "So much that has been published about Guadalcanal focuses on the Marines. There needs to be more from the 164th Infantry's experiences and contributions...not only there, but throughout the Pacific campaign." 



164th Infantry Association Records, collection #1278, were deposited in the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection of the University of North Dakota by James Fenelon, Marshallville, Iowa on May 27, 1998 (Acc.#98-2189). These files are open for inspection under the rules and regulations of the Department of Special Collections and will be used in Shoptaugh's manuscript as a timeline for the actions and campaigns of the Regiment. The individual stories descriptions and activities obtained from the 164th soldiers will be aligned with the official battle descriptions. Included in this collection are Special Orders, April 1941; General Orders, February 12, 1944- November 18, 1944; S-1 Journals, March 19, 1942- June 19, 1943; S-2 Journals, October 15, 1942-June 21, 1945; S-3 reports, June 21, 1945-November 9, 1945; Guadalcanal: Reports of Engagements, June 1943, battle of Henderson Field, June 1943; Battle of Koli Point, June 1943; Report of Operations in Leyte, 1945; Villaba, February 1945; V-2 Operations in Cebu and Negros, 1945; Blacklist Operations, Occupation of Japan, 1945; Bougainville: A/A Report; Night Operations in the Pacific Oceans, February 1945; Field Orders, 1945; War Departments Historical Records: 164th on Guadalcanal, 1943; Fiji 1943; Bougainville, 1943-1945; Bougainville, 1944; Upper Laruma Valley; Night Operations in the Pacific Ocean Area, 1945; Leyte, 1945; KIA, MIA and Award Reports, 1943-1944 A complete listing may be viewed at <http://www.library.und.edu/Collections/164inf.html>.

Dr. Shoptaugh asks anyone who is interested in being part of this historical documentation of the 164th Infantry Regiment during World War II to contact him at:

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Welcome to New Caledonia

Edited by David Taylor

What appears below is the second half of an edited version of the War and Navy Departments "Pocket Book Guide to New Caledonia", printed by the US Government printing office for soldiers arriving and stationed on New Caledonia during WWII. The editor wishes to thank Tom Howard, Secretary / Treasurer of the 754th Tank Battalion for providing a transcript of the source document. Photos used are courtesy of Howard Burroughs, 70th Coastal Artillery (Anti-Aircraft).

Eating and Drinking (continued)

There is no closed season on deer, or on wild pigeons, which are plentiful, or on wild duck which are slightly less so. The only limitation is a shortage of shotgun ammunition in the outfits. Soldiers are encouraged to roam far afield wither while hunting, or in mountain-climbing which in New Caledonia is a first class way to get legged up. Some of our troops have traversed the island in casual parties, and explored nearly every corner of the hinterland. It is worth the doing because the scene is one of rugged grandeur. The mountains are bold, rather than barren and precipitous. The passes through them – there being the three main routes from one side of the island to the other – follow the courses of the mountain streams. The mountain highways are suitable for trucks, and the hiking may be either relatively easy or extremely difficult, as one chooses. The interior is considered perfectly safe for our forces.

In addition to the oysters mentioned earlier, clams are plentiful in the rocks of the small islands in the numerous bays and harbors and motor launch parties may eat their fill on the spot, or take a supply back to the camp for chowder. Said an American Captain, "There is no better fishing anywhere than along the coast of New Caledonia." The most succulent specimen is a fish not unlike our own red snapper which the French call "loche saumone", and another popular variety is akin to the sea bass found along our own coast. In September some of the large fish become contaminated by the coral and, if eaten, will cause a bad skin irritation. The native fishermen will help you identify them.

One sport the New Caledonians enjoy is luring the large

spiny lobsters with dead squid. These lobsters abound in caves under the coral reefs. At low tide the fishermen go to the reefs in bathing trunks, with shoes to protect their feet from the sharp coral, goggles and gloves to protect their hands from the lobsters. The bait is dead squid on a pole. The squid is dangled in front of the cave. When the lobsters see the squid they lose all power to move. Another fisherman goes into the pool with goggles and gloves, and catches them by hand. Smaller shovel-nosed lobsters, confronted with the squid, throw themselves out of the water onto the reefs, where they can be picked up by hand. Both varieties of lobster are very good eating.

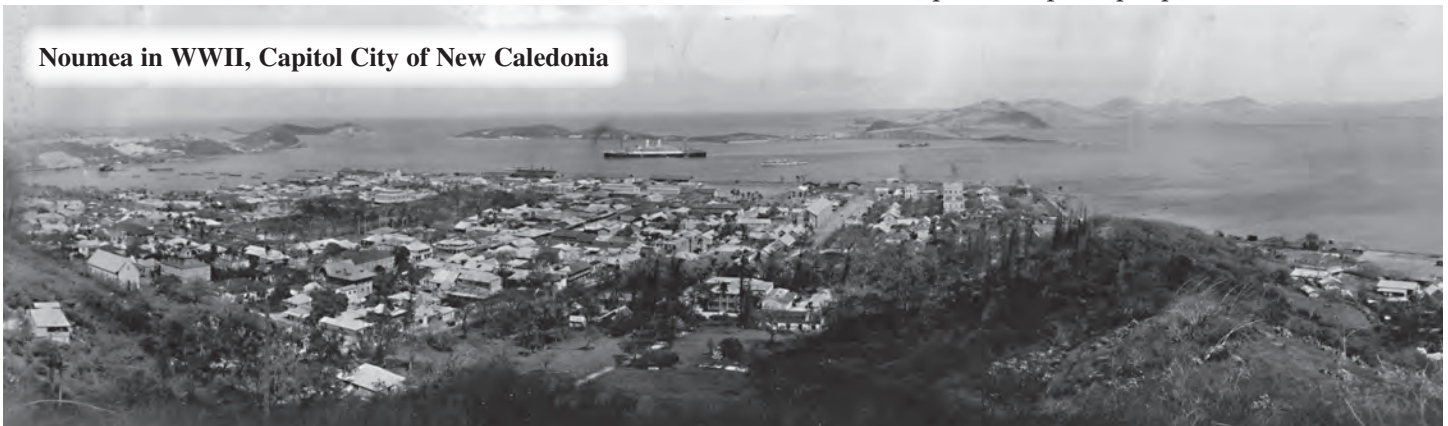
On last word on wildlife. If you see a small bird hopping along the country side but never taking off, give him a few kind words. The Kagu, called The National Bird of New Caledonia, can't fly and is therefore becoming extinct in an era which has little tolerance for forces which won't take to wings. All might stay well with the Kagu if he had studied the lessons of this military age.

The French Australia

Travelers who have visited New Caledonia usually say that it is more like Australia in climate and living conditions than it is like the South Sea Islands. Three kinds of local trees will catch your eye. The low niaoui (nee-ow-lee), also called the paper bark, is related to the Australian eucalyptus and yields a medicinal essence. The kauri (cow-ree) is in demand for lumber and the slender Captain Cook pine, which grows nowhere else in the world, is something like our tamarack. You will realize the climate never really gets cold when you see the coconut trees which thickly fringe the shores. Their fruit provides a delicious natural drink. However, New Caledonia is a sub-tropical rather than a tropical island and you will not encounter the extreme heat, humidity, dangerous animals, insect pests or fevers that make life so difficult in the real tropics. There is, however, one native tree, thin-barked and oozing a very black gum, which affects the skin like poison ivy.

New Caledonia is roughly 250 miles long – farther than New York to Washington – by about 30 miles wide, with a total area of around 8,000 square miles. It lies 750 miles from Australia, 900 from New Zealand and 6,500 from California. Near the southern tip of the island, slightly up the west coast, lies the capital and principal port of Noumea, with a

Noumea in WWII, Capitol City of New Caledonia





Central Hospital as it looked in WWII, Noumea, New Caledonia

pre-war population of around 12,000, a little more than half of them whites. Noumea has a landlocked harbor, one of the finest in the South Seas. It also has the island's principal nickel smelting plant.

Most of the other towns and villages of any size are also located on the coasts, and many of them have fine though undeveloped harbors. The island is fairly well surrounded by a barrier reef of coral, 1 to 10 miles off shore, which gives a natural protection against invasion. But this reef is broken in places, which means that certain points on the coast require alert watching. Down the center of the island runs the principal mountain range something like our Teton Range, but with magnificent views of the ocean. Wherever the eye roves in New Caledonia, it meets mountain peaks and their slopes come right down to the sea. In those mountains are found New Caledonia's rich mineral resources. Someone has called the island a solid block of metal.

Climate

The thermometer rarely goes above 90 degrees at any time or below 60. At Noumea, the average mean temperature in January and February (summer in New Caledonia) is 86 degrees. In July and August (winter) it is 75 degrees. Normally Noumea has about 43 inches of rainfall a year and 131 rainy or partially rainy days out of the 365. Most of the rain falls between February and April. From August through October is the driest time. About the only drawback to the climate are the tropical hurricanes, of which there are about three per year, usually between December and April. They are usually brief but can do a lot of damage in a short time. Sometimes torrents of water come down the rivers and destroy roads and isolate whole communities. Lately, New Caledonia has had "unusual" weather. For four years there has been little rain but bivouac commanders must still take care not to camp in dry washes.

New Caledonia mosquitoes are also very annoying so you had better take good care of your mosquito net. The giant cockroaches may startle you and also the giant lizards, which grow to be a foot or more long. They are fierce but entirely harmless. There are no land snakes. Your main dangers are in the sea, and where you have to be somewhat careful.

Never fool with a snake in the water if you happen on one, are you are likely to do near the little islands offshore. The sea moccasin, which is something like our water moccasins, is the familiar danger. People living in the tropics are likely to be exposed to hookworms and other intestinal parasites and to be bothered by dysentery. To check this later ailment, the natives eat a certain grass which is called the "dysentery grass" and is supposed to have an herbaceous effect. Our troops have made not a few noble experiments with this particular variety of hay and up to date nobody has been hurt, though our record is confused as to whether anybody has been helped.

There are two sources of infection – drinking impure water and eating uncooked vegetables. The Noumea water has been approved by American health authorities. Even so, it is wisest to follow the example of local people and always use bottled water or boiled water, or safer yet, drink water only out of chlorinated Lister Bags in American army camps. The water in the mountain streams (for hikers in the case of emergency) is usually pure. In the northwest of the island the water is said to have a high mineral content which is likely to have a soldier doing a marathon to the rear. So drink easy!

Agriculture and Industry

Parts of New Caledonia are very fertile, particularly the river valleys. Agriculture is somewhat primitive, though improvements have been made in recent years. Coffee is the principal crop. Coconut products come next. The chief domestic animal is the oxen. The slopes of the mountains hold large plantations and ranches for cattle.

Many fruits grow wild in the forests. There are banana plantations but just enough to provide for the local population. Some make a living by hunting deer and selling their hides to the Australian market. This hunting is often done by highly trained dogs, which run the deer into ponds or into the sea where they can be caught and dispatched with the knife.

Mining has been intensified since the war by the introduction of additional machinery. Nickel is mined in huge open pits in much the same way that we mine copper in the western USA. Chrome is mined underground, whence comes 8 percent of the world supply and there is also an inexhaustible amount of chromite in the sands along New Caledonia's beaches.

WWII Historians note: This article does not purport to tell the truthfulness of the conditions found in New Caledonia by American soldiers, only to historically present what they were told. Tom Howard of the 754th Tank Battalion "fondly" remembers regarding mosquitoes, "At nightfall, from out over the ocean water a cloud began appearing and heading for shore. It was not a mist or fog but a cloud of mosquitoes of the fiercest nature ever encountered by man. It was virtually impossible to be out of doors without a mosquito net over your hat and face and neatly tucked under your shirt, jacket or coat to keep the critters off of you. They could literally drive you insane."



Four Comrades in My Young Life

Dr. Fred F. Drew



My Americal memories stem from four guys who were part of my young life when I was a replacement troop on Cebu, May of 1945. I applied for pilot training in mid-'43 but the air war in Europe was winding down and not much need for pilots in the South Pacific. Hundreds were washed out for minor problems; I taught .50 caliber machine guns at the gunnery school at Harlingen, Texas but in November of '44 they had too many instructors, so 60 of us were transferred to the infantry and had three weeks of basic training. Most went to Europe in time for the Battle of the Bulge. A train load of us were shipped to the South Pacific.

I was a replacement in Luzon, Manila and the Laguna Bay. We repaired roads and bridge crossings. I came down with malaria or whatever and was in a small tent hospital on a cot. In the middle of the night the tent wall came up and Roy Carter and Woody Gibson whispered, "We are shipping out some where, we've got your bag, your pack and rifle, let's go!" I couldn't walk. The medical doctor was going to call the MP's. Roy explained things and the doctor told him he didn't know for sure what was wrong with me. Carter, a good talker, said "fine, we'll get Fred on the ship, let the Navy doctor figure it out." They carried my pack, rifle, etc, up the gang plank past the guard who asked, "What's wrong with him?" Carter said, "Geeze, he just started to get the chills." We got by the guard and into the ship.

My fever let up and in a day or so, the Navy threw our bags in the water to be hooked out with a grappling hook; I still have the bag, hole and all. The guys on the beach were a scruffy looking bunch, beards, rag-tag fatigues and no helmets or gas masks. The orders were, "get your bags, and throw your helmet in this pile and your gas mask there."

Woody Gibson and Roy Carter came with me on the beach. One guy who seemed to be in charge told me I was a medic and to go with a redheaded sergeant, Art Bevore. I told him I didn't like blood but I could shoot having been the only one in basic training to qualify as an expert with the M1. He responded, "Mac you are a medic and get your ass over there with Bevore". I did. We got up from the beach into some stratus-layered sandy and rocky soil with some brush and trees; Carter and I scraped an area clean to spend the night.

Roy was above me on a shelf of dirt. I was exhausted from my fever and carrying all my gear. I woke up at dawn to relieve myself. I stood up and looked down at Carter who had grown a reddish brown beard overnight! Or at least that is what it looked like until he wiped a hand over his eyes and face. A jillion mosquitoes on his face and hand turned him into bright blood red. Carter went off to relieve himself when one of the scruffy guys with a carbine climbed up to me, sat down and asked if I slept well. I told him I had except for the mosquitoes. This guy had a fatigue hat on and

I noticed he had wooden sticks for buttons on his jacket. "You got a cigarette?" he inquired while looking around. I held out a pack, he took one and put the rest in his pocket, with no "thanks" just a "take care" and he was gone.

Sgt. Art Bevore came up and through the brush, sat down with me and asked if the Major said where we were going. I told him I hadn't seen any officer. Art pointed out that the guy who bummed the cigarette was a Major. That was my introduction to the 1st battalion, 164th Infantry Regiment, Americal Division above the beach on Cebu. I stayed in Art's hip pocket as we chased Japs up ridges where the Filipinos reported seeing them.

I recall it was hot and humid and the mosquitoes were not bad after the B-17's sprayed DDT on the lower parts of the island. I was impressed with Art and an older guy everyone liked. If anyone was wounded or had some need they always asked to be taken to Tracey. I don't have any idea if Tracey was his first or last name. I thought he was like the assistant battalion surgeon in his demeanor and his knowledge. He helped in every way possible.

After the Jap's surrendered following the dropping of the A-Bombs, older guys were counting their points to see if they had enough points to go home. They were some of the original of the 164th who took part of the relief that greatly helped the Marines on Guadalcanal. After the older guys realized that their time in the service was ending, they got their Class-A uniforms. Tracey, Art and some of the "old guys" (24-25) were dressed up in 1st class uniforms with lots of fruit salad on their chest. Bronze Star, Purple Heart, that sort of thing. However instead of having rank on his shoulder, Tracey was carrying something else on his epaulets. I asked Bevore if Tracey had been broken from an officer. Art laughed at me and said no, he is really a warrant officer; he's not an "all-over doctor", but a podiatrist in civilian life. I responded, "Wow, what is that?"

Those of us who were new were put into on-site training. Little did I know in the years to come that I would be a podiatrist. Because of the respect I had for Tracey I tried to find his name listed in the National Association of Podiatrists, but to no avail. After returning home I attended San Jose State and took pre-med. I have practiced podiatry and foot surgery in San Jose, California for 44 years.

The weeks that followed involved mopping-up operations. This was mostly pushing Japanese survivors up into the higher mountains away from the Filipinos' food and water. Macarthur declared the island secure long before it really was, as many GI's and Marines realized he would do; guys were still fighting and getting killed but it made him look great because he had secured the islands ahead of time.

Bevore and Tracey applied for a combat badge for me, going twice to Captain Decker but were turned down saying I hadn't been in combat long enough because the island had been secure. It doesn't make a difference now but would have looked nice on my blouse for my kids and grandkids to look at; (I don't think Decker figured in my time on Luzon). The most impressive site I recall coming out of the hills in Cebu was a huge American flag flying above the tall pine trees. The support forces had set up tents in rows and placed nicely on a gradual slope. Even though we were in training we still went on patrol up the ridges. Some small mortars fell and I do remember hearing the distinct rattle of the Namboo

machine guns. I think the Japanese who were retreating up into the hills were trying to keep us from getting close to them. Bevore, true to his pledge, kept me in his hip pocket and safe as our patrols gradually extended higher as we prepared for the invasion of Japan.

We continued to have cases of malaria even with dropping DDT from the B-17's; we were dumbfounded. Our patrols carried tanks and we sprayed any open or settled area of water including the buffalo wallows. We sprayed with oil and even then we found new cases of malaria until someone found that the mosquitoes were living in coconuts that had fallen and cracked open; the mosquitoes gained entrance into the coconut milk. We made sure that the people would open the coconuts with machetes and dry them out around the village compounds. We cut down a few of the palm trees and then the Filipinos realized we were in earnest about the problem. The message got out and soon every little village we went through had the copra cut open on all the coconuts around the compound.

As we prepared for the invasion I received my first training to become a medic. I had been nearly two years in the Army Air Force and three weeks training as an infantryman only to be appointed as a medic. When I was up with the guys on patrol I was more of a litter bearer than anything. I remember trying to carry men out on litters with all their gear. As a medic in the Philippines we were required to carry a rifle or sidearm. I had an M1 with 90 rounds of ammo along with first aid packs on each hip as well as a pack on my back with food. The first young guy who came out on a litter had a carbine so I slipped my M1 on the litter, gave him my ammo and took his carbine. The Filipino men, barefooted, who relieved us with the litters on the way out seemed very careful and strong and were more surefooted on the slopes. It was wet, hot and slippery.

The battalion had setup a bamboo hut as our aid station. The hut was about 25 feet by 35 feet. On one side of the hut was our training area. We started opening boxes with all kinds of medical equipment. Tracey, Bevore and I opened the medical supply boxes and placed them against the wall. The front wall had a large open front like a big garage door. There was a small back door with a regular size door opening but without the door. This little detail, I think, saved my life later. As we unpacked equipment we set up kerosene autoclaves.

The autoclaves were to sterilize syringes and needles and surgical instruments as well as surgical drapes; this was on-the-job training as we went through to learn new words and lingo of the medical department. Art and Tracey went over and over the names and we would get them straight from forceps to clamps to sutures to needle holders, etc. Then we practiced on each other how to get an IV started. It wasn't easy for an ex-air force guy with infantry training and only twenty years old. On mornings we had sick call and Captain Decker, the battalion surgeon, was there to sort out the various problems.

Most of the GI's had fungal infections of the feet, groin and ears along with a few other problems. The first surgery I ever did was on a PFC with a greatly swollen area involving an infection from his left ear down to the underneath of his chin. Captain Decker took out a number ten surgical blade out of cold sterilization and put it on a scalpel shaft

and gave it to me. He sprayed the side of the guys face with Merthiolate and then he sprayed a certain area with a freezing agent that turned the skin white. He pointed to that part on the jaw and said, "Incise here Drew." I didn't think I could do it. I made a small incision and Captain Decker said, "deeper, deeper, push it into the start of the scalpel shaft." The patient was feeling the pain even with the freezing and he was groaning. Decker said sharply, "Drew cut deeper!" Suddenly I was sprayed with copious amounts of smelly pus. The incision continued to squirt blood and pus all over me and the odor was terrible and nauseous. The patient almost collapsed from the relief of the pressure and the pain he had had for ten or twelve days. Captain Decker diagnosed this as an abscess from an ingrown hair. He told me, "You did good" I will never forget my first surgery and after that, every time I went into surgery at the hospital or in my office there was the thought of that first incision, now many times past.

About the back door that was in the hut. At about this time we were issued some new C rations. These were the very best and newest. Most of us had had the old C rations that tasted of tin and had to have been stored from WWI. The new rations contained beans and hot dogs, a combination that was delicious. I recall vividly Art Bevore was unpacking stuff in the back of the hut near the small door. I was just inside the large door on the right side. A young guy came in shouting and demanded that he wanted his beans and hot dogs. He was pointing a cocked Japanese Namboo pistol at me. We weren't five feet apart and I said, "I didn't steal your beans but I know there are some here in these boxes". I turned away from him and shuffled through some trunks while I watched at the corner of my eye Art slipping out the back door. The guy kept yelling, "I want my beans, I want them now" and then I heard a shot at close range. Art had sneaked in behind the guy and grabbed him, coming up under his arms, forcing them up so the round went through the roof. The kid collapsed and fell on the floor crying. Art told me which bag to get a white canvas, which turned out to be a strait jacket. Four or five guys came running after the round went off and helped us put the straight jacket on. A couple of MPs arrived and lugged him off. Art and I looked at each other in relief. We hugged each other and laughed. In 1960 Art, who went home to Oregon, came down with his family to go to Disneyland. We relived that incident and laughed and our wives thought we had gone nuts.

We had sterilized hundreds and hundreds of needles, cleaning them with a little steel stylet and we stacked them in trays with the pointed needles down. We were getting ready for injecting guys going into Japan or Korea. As they lined up outside the hut several passed out because they had been told by their buddies we had corkscrews and they were blunt needles. We still gave them their shot and rolled them out the back of the hut. Each man was to get a 1 cc shot whatever the inoculation was for. Behind me Art whispered in my ear each guy deserves a new clean needle. I realized that I had hit about 5 guys with the same needle concentrating on that they received 1cc and not more. No one was harmed by my slip up which was really a big goof. It wasn't long after that we landed in Japan on occupation duty, my final posting with the Americal.



The “Rocket Pockets”

David W. Taylor

The Reach of Death

The Chu Lai Defense Command (CLDC) was composed of the Americal's division headquarters, some supporting organizations, such as aviation units, as well as other Army, Navy and Marine Corps units situated on the massive and sprawling base. This large coastal base, supported by the 198th Brigade headquarters at LZ Bayonet, opposite its front door on the western side of Highway 1, contained massive fire power which could be brought to bear on any Chu Lai ground attack.

A major vulnerability, however, which plagued the CLDC throughout its tenure at Chu Lai, was rocket artillery. Rocket attacks on Chu Lai were a problem since the inception of the Americal Division in 1967. By early 1969 elements of the 2nd NVA Division, operating in the Southern Quang Tin and Northern Quang Ngai provinces had infiltrated to Main Force (MF) and Local Force (LF) and Sapper Units of the Viet Cong. With them came a steady supply of 120mm and 140mm Soviet rockets which gave the enemy a significant “reach” to attack and destroy facilities in Chu Lai.

Accompanying the long range rocket attacks were mortar attacks as well, as Viet Cong units north, west and South of the Chu Lai base would “shoot and scoot” on a regular basis. In April 1969 the 198th Light Infantry Brigade, responsible for the defense of the Chu Lai tactical area of responsibility (TAOR), developed Operational Order 69 (OPORD69), “Primary Defense Against Rocket / Mortar Attack.” Responsibility for stopping the aerial attacks fell largely to the 1st/6th and 5th/46th infantry battalions. Outside the perimeter of the CLDC, two belts of influence were mapped: a “Mortar Belt”, that area extending to 5,700 meters (roughly 3-1/2 miles); and a “Rocket belt”, that area within 6,000 to 12,000 meters (3-1/2 to 7-1/2 miles) from vital installations.

While rocket attacks could be launched from virtually any location, patterns developed that demonstrated certain zones where rockets were launched with frequency and deadly accuracy. These zones or “pockets” provided stealth and security for the NVA/VC.

The “Northern Rocket Pocket” existed west and northwest of the Chu Lai base, five to seven miles from the center of the Chu Lai complex. The western range of this rocket pocket included the mountainous Annamite chain of mountains which opened up to the narrow Piedmont, small hills with slight slopes, dense underbrush and an occasional open and fallow rice paddy. The mountains offered security for the transportation of rockets from the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the Piedmont the cover and concealment to use them. The northern pocket initially became largely the responsibility of the 1st/6th but other units would be employed in both rocket pockets during the tenure of the Americal in Chu Lai. The eastern edge of the area comprising the “Southern Rocket Pocket” lay 1-1/2 miles northwest of LZ Gator, the home of the 5th/46th infantry battalion and roughly the same distance southwest from LZ Bayonet. The southern rocket area was strictly in Piedmont terrain but the mountains to its west provided a fast track for rocket supplies when needed.

Key targets on the Chu Lai base were the Americal's division headquarters, air base runways, aircraft, equipment and storage areas (hangers), petroleum-oil-lubricant (POL) storage areas and ammunition storage. That the base employed so many Vietnamese civilians, gave an excellent opportunity for infiltrated VC or their agents, as part of the “work force”, to observe the landing location of rockets and report back through the VC infrastructure on where aiming adjustments should be made. Then too, the VC could also observe the impact of rockets during daytime attacks from their mountain observation posts. The fact that the 91st/312th Evacuation Hospitals were located very close to the division's headquarters placed them in a

highly dangerous target area. On one occasion, June 8, 1969, a Soviet-built 122mm rocket slammed into ward 4 of the 312th, killing LT Sharon Lane, the only female service member killed by hostile fire in the Vietnam War.

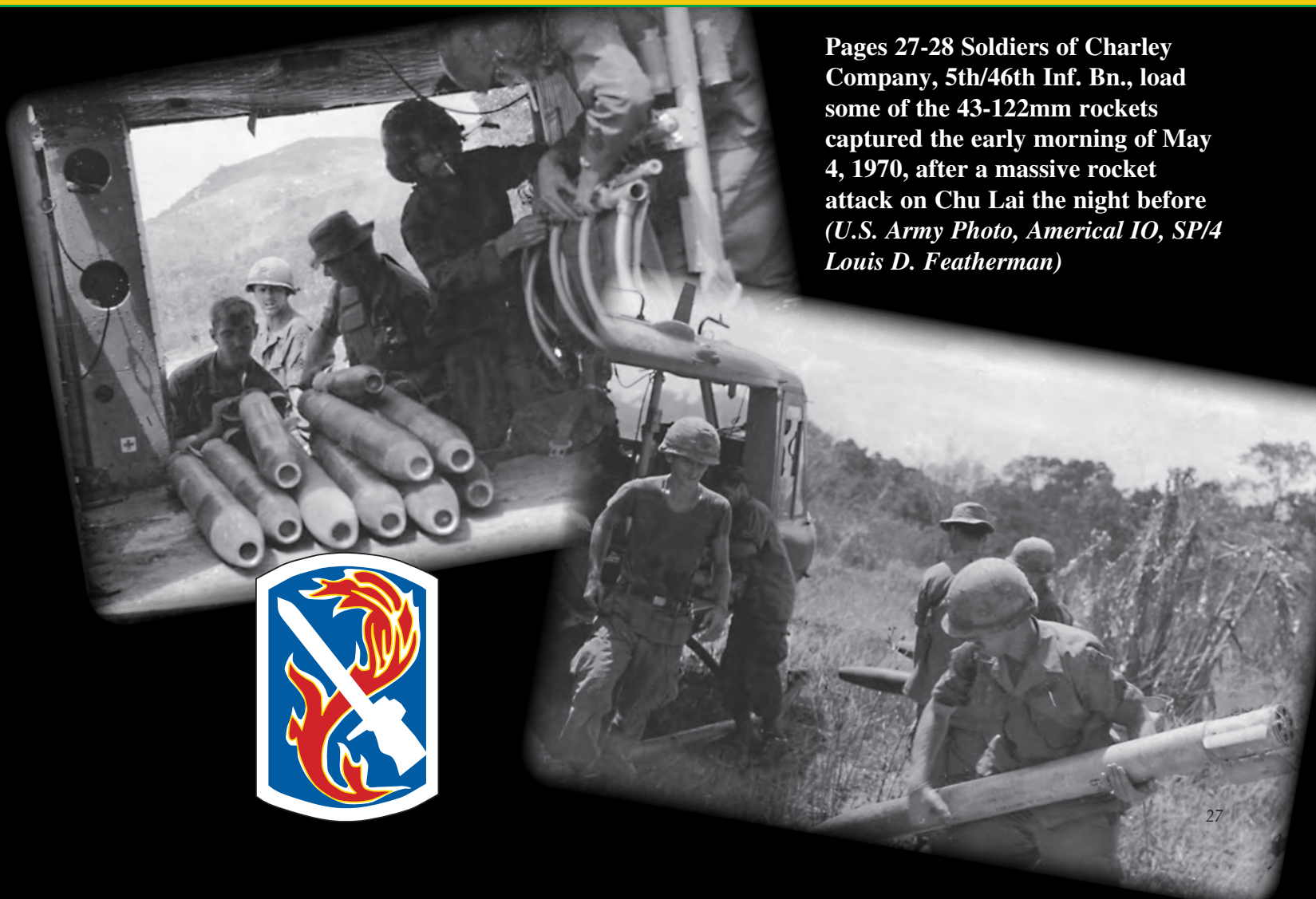
A brief review of the rockets' capabilities will offer insight into their flexibility of use and deadliness:

122mm Soviet Rockets

The 122mm was a fin stabilized rocket with a length of 6.2 feet. Its weight was 101 pounds and offered a maximum range of 11,000 meters (approximately 7 miles) at an elevation of 45 degrees; its minimum range was 4,000 meters (approximately 2-1/2 miles) at an elevation of 10 degrees. Its warhead carried 15 pounds of explosives and used an instantaneous or delay fuse. The launcher length was 8.1 feet and weighed 55 pounds.

The 122mm rocket was first introduced in the Vietnam War with an attack on Camp Carroll, adjacent to the DMZ, in early May 1967. After that attack it was used against installations throughout South Vietnam. The first 122mm rocket attack against the CLDC was January 31, 1968 when fifty rockets were fired. When fired from its designed launching system the 122mm was extremely accurate. A type theodolite or transit, mounted on a tripod, was used to determine the correct firing data. This survey in conjunction with the spin/fin guidance system an “empied” sighting system and the tripod mount gave the rocket system a high degree of accuracy.

The Americal soldiers sent to seek out these rockets found that many of them were fired using a less sophisticated system. These launching “systems” could be nothing more than a dirt mound or a tripod made of bamboo poles. More attacks on the CLDC were from 122mm rockets than 140mm rockets. One of those reasons is that, when using improvised launchers, they can be rapidly replaced during the attack with each launcher capable of firing three to five rockets per launcher, with four or five minutes preparation time for each rocket.



140mm Soviet Rockets

The 140mm rocket was also a fin stabilized rocket with a length of 3-1/2 feet. Its weight, with fuse, was 90 pounds and offered a range of 6-1/4 miles. Its warhead held 9-1/2 pounds of explosive and also used an instantaneous or delay fuse. The designed launcher was 45 inches in length and weighed 22 pounds.

140mm rockets were used extensively against targets in South Vietnam. Launching positions were usually prepared after dark with minimum effort by scooping shallow holes and piling the dirt forward to provide launching ramps of the desired elevation. The rocket could be launched from launcher tubes mounted on wooden boards approximately four feet long. However, for "shoot and scoot" operations, rockets were launched just by laying them on dirt piles and firing them. For area-type targets such as the Chu Lai base, this method could still guarantee that something hit be hit, even if it was not a high value target.

Small aiming stakes were placed at the front or sides of the rockets to give its direction of flight. Soldiers patrolling

the rocket pockets might be lucky to find the pre-positioned aiming stakes, giving them an indication of what was being planned. It was typical that 2-3 140mm rockets would be fired in an attack but larger numbers were used as well. The largest attack by 140mm rockets was recorded February 27, 1967 where an estimated 134 launchers were employed in an attack on DaNang.

Preventing Rocket Attacks

The optimum way to prevent rocket attacks was the extensive use of day patrolling in the pockets, with night ambushes along trails or likely sites for launches. There was a direct correlation of few or no attacks when soldiers were patrolling the rocket pockets and when they were not. With the high tempo of operations in the division, patrolling was not always possible as units were moved from the rocket areas for other missions. Observation Posts were employed at high elevations as a stop-gap measure, in the absence of troops, with limited results. Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols were employed to try to detect the movement of rockets in the mountainous areas down to the Piedmont. Information from hamlet

villagers in or near the rocket pockets sometimes would provide intelligence of rocket sightings or the types of VC units in the area that could be expected to launch them. The CLDC eventually developed a reasonable counter battery program, but was dependant on the rockets being launched first to detect their firing site. The 1/14th Arty Radar Section, as apart of the CLDC, was very successful in limiting rocket attacks to short duration—a single volley—because of their rapid site detection once the first rocket left the ground. Artillery harassment & interdiction (H&I) was also used on likely launch sites and avenues of approach. Sensors were also employed to detect movement in the rocket areas.

The Americal had its successes in preventing rocket attacks but this tactic of guerilla warfare, like mines and booby-traps, was impossible to eliminate. The more success soldiers experienced the more determined and flexible the Viet Cong and their NVA advisors became. Early on May 4, 1970 (during darkness) the Chu Lai base received an attack of 57-122mm rockets, resulting in fifteen wounded. At first light a reaction force of Charlie

Company, 5th/46th Infantry air assaulted into the Southern Rocket Pocket and captured 43 more 122mm rockets in place and ready to fire. The next morning the enemy fired 24 additional 122mm rockets into the base, killing one soldier and wounding five. In the panoply of weapons & units used to protect the Americal's Division base in Chu Lai, nothing would ever be found that could eliminate this particular scourge of the Americal's enemy.



Making Charlie Pay

Al Simms

Radar Operations Bunker, Cherry Hill, Chu Lai, Vietnam

Our unit, the 1/14th Artillery Radar Section, was a tight-knit group of professionals. The Section Chief was WO-2 Anthony Trovato, known as "Mr. T". SP/5 Charles Bruce Day, known as "Weasel" was the Senior Radar Operator; His nickname owing to the fact he was the only really small guy in our section. I was a SP/5 Radar Mechanic, known as "Pops" because I was an "old" 25. The Radio operators were: SP/4 Jerry Abruzzino, 6'4", weighing 220 lbs. and hard as a rock. His nickname was "Whop" owing to his Italian heritage but we were the only ones allowed to call him that. SP/4 Bill Trent, SP/4 Richard Dickenson, known as "JB" and SP/4 Gary Boyd. We had no NCOIC because our previous one, Sgt. Parks, had been killed.

At 6:00 PM, May 22, 1968 Mr. T entered the bunker. His directions were short and to the point. "Intel says rocket attack tonight. Let's watch Azimuth 4000 mils (225 degrees). Weasel and Whop are on first shift and Pops and JB on second. Since this may be rockets keep your lower beam down in the dirt."

By 3:00 AM May 23, I was on the scope and JB was on the map and phones. I saw something on the scope and had no doubt what it was. "JB, I've got one! It's a 2 beam intercept and the blips are a click long. It has to be a rocket. Strobbing lower beam intercept; strobing upper beam intercept. Zero time input. Coordinates are Easting 245612; Northing 798200." Cool and professional, as he was trained to be, JB responded, "Altitude for those coordinates is 570 meters."

I input the altitude and confirmed, "Coordinates are Easting 246412, Northing 798944." JB responded, "Altitude is 680 meters." I input that altitude and responded, "Coordinates are Easting 246410, Northing 798941." JB again, "Altitude is still 680 meters."



Radar Operations Bunker, Cherry Hill Site – Chu Lai. The back portion, partially buried in the hill, is the operations portion with the radar control unit. The front were two sandbagged Conexes, one for storage and one used for sleeping when rocket or mortar attacks were predicted. We thought the bunker could take a direct 122mm rocket hit. Thankfully it was never tested.

(Photo: Al Simms)

JB turned and cranked the Chu Lai Defense Command (CLDC) field phone and reported: "Radar here. We have a high confidence there is a rocket firing location at Easting 246412, Northing 798944. Suggest you fire for effect immediately." The CLDC responded, "Roger, will contact FDC." I was still on the scope and told JB, "I've got 6 more all at once. Coordinates are almost exactly the same as the last ones; Azimuths are slightly different for each one. Looks like they're firing a spread."

By now Mr. "T" was back in the Ops Bunker and told the CLDC that his section has multiple firing locations on the ridge that the first location was on and on a SE line for about 100 meters. He suggested the artillery saturate a 500km square centered on the first location. By this time the rockets are impacting somewhere near the middle of the airfield area, and another volley of 6 more were coming in from

the original locations. At the same time our section heard the 155mm Howitzers on the back of Cherry Hill firing repeatedly then very shortly thereafter we watched the artillery rounds coming thru their beams on the same azimuth as the rockets. As the artillery rounds come through the radar we see one more rocket rising but it is only one this time. Apparently the artillery ended the rocket attack.

In the morning the location of the rocket launch site was checked by grunts. They found 6 firing pit's about 20 meters apart and some blood and body parts. This time the radar section and the artillery were on the money and "Victor Charles" paid dearly for his attack. Later on that day we discovered that the MAG13 PX and an Americal NCO club were hit but the rest of the rockets had hit some CLDC interior roads and open ground. Four of them were duds and landed without exploding.



Q4 Radar. Al Simms, standing on the Q4 radar when his section was stationed on LZ Clifford. This picture shows what the upper portion of the unit looks like (Photo: Al Simms)

Fighting the Enemy with Radar

The AN/MPQ-4A is a mobile, intercept type (non-tracking) Radar set that was designed primarily to locate hostile mortars and other high angle projectile fire. With modifications to procedures and hardware it is also capable of locating lower angle 122mm Rocket firing sites. It cannot usually locate recoilless rifles because they are usually fired from close in and they also fire just above the ground as is done with a rifle. The rated accuracy of grid coordinates displayed by the radar computer is ± 50 meters but if it is carefully calibrated and used by skilled operators it can do much better than that. The range is from 170 meters to 10,000 meters and the radar can cover 360 degrees, 25 degrees at a time.

It is, of course, an "after the fact" operation but with good intelligence for the initial pointing direction it is possible to locate the weapon from the first round fired. And if Artillery fire is returned expeditiously and accurately

there will not be very many rounds subsequently fired by the weapon. I don't mean to slight the importance of air operations that go after the weapons too but in order to catch them in the act, fire must be returned immediately and the only way to do that is with artillery unless aircraft just happen to be in the area already. On at least one occasion we told a unit that it had incoming before the first round impacted. It was that occurrence in early 1968 that engendered some trust in what we were doing by CLDC and other units.

How Counter-Battery Radar Works

The radar had a Foster-Sealy cone shaped scanner with slots that acted as a waveguide and produced a scanning beam that was focused on the curved reflector; it produced two pie shaped beams from the radar that were 445 mils (25 degrees) wide and located one above the other. When an object

passed thru a beam the radar energy was reflected back to the radar antenna and was received by the radar. The equipment had a B-scope, not unlike a square TV screen and was orange in color. When nothing was being received the image on the screen was "snow" like on a TV set when it is not tuned to a station. One of the very large problems that we experienced was that looking at that featureless screen in the wee hours of the morning with the soft hum of the fans in the background was guaranteed to put one to sleep or at least in a daze where we saw nothing. For this reason there were always two people working on a shift and we changed positions between working the radar to working the maps and phones every 30 minutes. During the radar portion it was necessary to stare intently at the blank screen at all times so as to not miss a blip.

If the beam was close to the ground there were reflections from ground objects that cluttered the screen and obscured incoming targets and so the beams were normally lowered to the ground by depressing the antenna and then raised until the clutter just disappeared. When an object broke the beams two blips appeared on the screen from those intercepts. As the blips appeared the operator marked their position with a grease pencil and simultaneously hit a timer button with the other hand as the blips appeared. It was important to mark each blip in the same place and this was especially important with rockets which could produce an inch long streak. We generally marked the leading edge of each blip.

The next step was to "strobe" each marking with two crosshairs using 2 sets of knobs on the computer. This action entered the azimuth and range data into the electromechanical computer. The next input was the time recorded between blips – the amount of time recorded caused the computer to calculate using a curved ballistic path rather than a straight line. If the streaks were very long and a rocket under power intercept was suspected, then the time entry would be zero



MAG 13 PX after Rocket Attack on Chu Lai. The Marine PX after being hit by a 122mm rocket attack described in the beginning of this article. The rocket hit the center of the roof on the end closest to the camera. Much of the damage was due to the fire that started after the explosion.
(Photo: Al Simms)

Gary Boyd Operator Our Radar in our Operations Bunker at Chu Lai
(Photo: Al Simms)



which caused the computer to use a straight line calculation which is what the trajectory for a rocket was before rocket motor burnout.

From a map the altitude at the grid coordinates displayed were entered into the computer and then this was repeated with the new coordinates until the altitude and coordinates were stable. This usually took only one or two repeats. The final coordinates were then given to the Fire Direction Center (FDC) to be fired upon by artillery or other weapons.

How We Were Organized

At full strength the section consisted of eight people: A Warrant Officer Section Chief, Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) Staff Sergeant, Radar Mechanic (SP5), Senior Radar Operator (SP5) and four "Operators" (SP4). The reality is that, as with the Infantry, where all were riflemen, all of us were operators even though we had other duties as well. When operating 24 hours a day as we always did in the field and sometimes did at Chu Lai, even at full strength it could be difficult to get enough sleep with all of the maintenance, sandbagging and other duties that had to be taken care of every day. One of the plusses for

us was that we were duty exempt and never had to pull KP, perimeter guard and other such things. The reality is that we were on guard duty all of the time with the radar. Another plus was that we were a small unit and we were never stationed with our own 1/14th Headquarter Service Battery, and usually were co-located with one of the 1/14th Arty gun batteries. This gave us a certain amount of independence and freedom from some of the BS that others of you who were stationed too close to a headquarters experienced. Another plus was that because we had to have electricity for the radar there was also some available for things like lights, fans and refrigerators. We even had a small television, although we never had much time to watch it.

Making a Contribution

We'd like to think that we played an important role in the defense of Chu Lai and various LZs that we were later located on, and helped bring some GI's home during our 1967-68 tour. Besides the retribution we helped arrange for attacks by the enemy, we also shortened the attacks' duration and perhaps caused the enemy gunners to hurry so that they could move away before the artillery shells

began landing on them. This probably reduced the accuracy that they would have otherwise achieved. In the case of the above described attack, we got their location on the single registry rocket that they fired initially, before the rest were fired, and so they were stopped during the firing of their third volley by well aimed 155mm Howitzer high explosive rounds from our artillery.

Another contribution from our section was the simple procedure change that allowed rockets with a two beam intercept to be located accurately. The radar was designed to locate artillery and mortar ballistic rounds. The timer input caused the computer drawn straight line, between the two beam intercepts, to be curved since the rounds from any ballistic weapon begin falling towards the ground as soon as they leave the gun tube. Looking at the math done by the computer it was obvious that zero time would assume an infinitely fast projectile that did not curve. Since the first portion of the 122mm rocket flight is powered it is a straight line and so inputting zero gave an accurate location. We tried it, it worked and we passed the information along to other Q4 radar units in Vietnam.



Best Battery Busts Butts

By Thad Lindquist

The 11th Artillery was formed at Schofield Barracks in April 1967. Most of us took our artillery training at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. It was at least a month before we had a howitzer to look at. If I remember correctly we used a picnic table for a 105 howitzer until we actually got one.



VIPs arrive at LZ Center

Battery C owed its good training to the Vietnam veterans of the 25th Infantry Division that had just returned from Vietnam. We also owed our good training and preparation to our battery commander, Captain Percy, and our battery executive officer, Lt. James Rys.

The members of the 25th Inf. Div. who got us ready for Vietnam did not go there with us. Five of our six gun chiefs were draftees as was our ammo chief. The only person in our battery that had any combat experience was Captain Percy. He had served a previous tour in Vietnam.

It was the excellent training by the NCOs of the 25th Infantry, the leadership of Captain Percy, and the quality of the personnel that enabled us to be prepared for combat and for being awarded the best firing battery in the Americal Division for 1968.

On August 22, 1968, my unit, Battery C, 6th Battalion, 11th Artillery, received the award at LZ Center. The commanding general of the Americal Division, a general from the Republic of Korea (ROK) command, brigade commanders, other staff officers, and the media attended the ceremony.

The one millionth artillery round fired by Americal Division artillery was also fired at the ceremony. We took a white phosphorous round, polished the brass canister, and labeled it the one millionth round. Our centerpiece 105mm howitzer was given the distinction of firing the round.

The section chief was Gerry Smith from Renton, Washington. He instructed the two generals how to fire the howitzer for the ceremony. The two generals were to pull the lanyard to fire the specially marked round.

Captain Raebeck, our battery commander, told Sgt. Smith to demonstrate to the generals how to pull the lanyard and not to jerk it. Sgt. Smith first gave the generals verbal instructions on what to do. He then proceeded to give the generals a by-the-numbers demonstration. What Sgt. Smith had forgotten was that the special round had already been loaded into the howitzer. When Sgt. Smith gave the demonstration, the round fired.



Loading the 1,000,000th round

There was stunned silence on the LZ. None of the photographers were ready to take pictures and the generals were caught by surprise. The round landed several thousands yards away and exploded. It seemed like there was about thirty seconds of silence. Our battery commander undoubtedly could see his military career coming to a quick conclusion.

At that point the commanding general of the Americal Division exclaimed in a loud voice that Sgt. Smith had fired the round and the general started to laugh. The ROK general started

to laugh as did all of the other staff officers. The battery commander started to breathe again. The Americal Division commander really thought it was funny.



Photographers miss early shot

The news photographers and the rest of us got some belated pictures but I don't think anyone got a picture of Sgt. Smith firing the gun. The rest of the ceremony went off as planned. For the next several days our battery commander was absolutely convinced that Sgt. Smith had fired that round to intentionally embarrass him or damage his career.

But that was not the end of the saga. In late October and we were on LZ Thunder just south of Duc Pho. The Americal Division had recovered a 105mm howitzer that had been taken from the South Vietnamese by the NVA and then subsequently buried by them. The howitzer was recovered somewhere around Chu Lai.

A special ceremony was held to fire the gun back at the NVA. The commanding general of the Americal Division sent his personal helicopter to transport Sgt. Smith to the ceremony. He had Sgt. Smith fire the 105 howitzer. We encouraged Sgt. Smith to try to talk his way out of the field until we went home in December. But he came back to LZ Thunder and finished his tour of duty in Viet Nam with Battery C.



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Share your stories
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Typhoon Hester 1971 Rough send-off for the Americal

By Gary Noller

The Americal Division was the largest U.S. Army division in Vietnam. It had the largest area of operations (AO) and fought the most experienced enemy forces. Its four years in Vietnam came to a conclusion in November 1971. But it did not leave before Mother Nature dealt a deadly final blow.

Typhoon Hester formed in the Pacific Ocean in mid October 1971. It advanced in a northwesterly course and did severe damage in the Philippine Islands. Early in the morning of October 23, 1971 it moved ashore over Vietnam. Its eye passed directly over the huge military base at Chu Lai.

The U.S. Marines began construction of a base at Chu Lai in 1965. In 1967 Chu Lai became the headquarters for the Americal Division. Chu Lai airfield was one of the busiest air operations bases in the world. The U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, U.S. Army, U.S. Marines, and various other allied aviation units used the base to stage attack sorties and support flights throughout and beyond the I Corps war zone.

Not all of the aircraft could be moved out of Chu Lai before Hester



hit. Millions of dollars worth of aircraft were housed in hangars at the airfield. Winds reached the 100 mph to 130 mph range. Fragile buildings and equipment were destroyed as metal roof panels were sent through the air like whirling knives.

Contemporary news reports state that three American military members were killed as a result of the typhoon and that eleven more were injured. The winds destroyed 30% of the buildings in Chu Lai and heavily damaged another 40%. About 40 helicopters were a total loss and another 90 required some type of repairs. Monetary damage easily exceeded \$50 million.

Vietnamese civilians also suffered severe losses. It is estimated that 85 were killed by the storm and that 200,000 were made homeless. Hester

was the worst storm to strike the area in decades. President Nguyen Van Thieu personally directed Vietnamese relief efforts.

Kim L. Cantor, an air traffic controller with the 362nd Aviation Detachment, was in the control tower in Chu Lai as Hester approached. "We expected it to come ashore further north of us," he recalls. "A C-130 aircraft was the last aircraft to call. When I informed the pilot that we were getting gusts in excess of 80 knots he said, 'That's below my minimums, Chu Lai. We're continuing south. Good luck.'"

Cantor recalls the last radio transmission that was made by the air traffic controllers. "Attention all aircraft: Chu Lai Army Airfield is closed until further notice." Cantor and two other controllers then crawled down the tower stairway and ran to shelter.

After the storm subsided the airfield was quickly made ready for use. Amazingly, the 90-foot control tower was still standing. The airfield was immediately utilized as a staging area for relief supplies for the victims of Hester.

The air traffic controllers remained in Chu Lai long enough to see the division colors rolled up and put on a departing aircraft. On November 6, 1971 the Americal Division was officially deactivated and its colors were returned to the United States. The final big battle was with Mother Nature.



SP4 Melvyn (Mel) J. Lutgring evaluates damage to a Cobra helicopter that was caught in Typhoon Hester. Lutgring was assigned as a crewchief with the 174th Assault Helicopter Co. (AHC) from June 1971 to November 1971. The 174th AHC (Dolphins and Sharks) sustained heavy equipment losses as a result of the powerful storm. (Photo courtesy of Mel Lutgring. See more photos at www.174ach.org/lutgrn13.htm.)

Mung Chua Giang Sinh

By Michael H. Cunningham

The following story is the result of a chance meeting I had with Mr. Joe Bodanza sometime in 1996. I was the shift supervisor for U.S. Customs at Logan Airport in Boston. We were waiting for Korean Airlines to arrive from the Far East via JFK Airport.

It was brought to my attention that two gentlemen wanted to come into Customs Hall to meet the Korean Airline flight at the jet way. This is obviously forbidden and I was upset at the inspector who relayed the request to me. But then the inspector explained the circumstances and I understood.

The two gentlemen were meeting four children from Vietnam. The children were severely handicapped and confined to wheelchairs. When I heard this I personally escorted the men to the jet way. One of the men was Joe Bodanza. He and I have been good friends ever since.

Ten years later, December 13, 2006, four old grizzly Vietnam veterans made a visit to some Vietnamese kids to give them Christmas gifts and wish them a Merry Christmas. Bob and I met at the Veterans Outreach Center in Kenmore Square and then drove to the Riverside MBTA Station to get Tom and Dave.

All of us are Vietnam combat veterans and we still have strong feelings of commitment to the Vietnamese people. Although I have visited Joe and his kids many times in the past, this was the first time for the rest of the guys. I sensed a lot of anticipation, excitement, and nervousness among them as we engaged in small talk.

We set out for Joe Bodanza's place in Leominster, MA. Joe, an earthly angel, is a retired advertising salesman. During the past ten years

he has brought severely disabled and handicapped Vietnamese kids to this country for medical attention.

This gave us the reason for our trip. The four of us wanted to visit Joe and his kids and to bring some joy into their lives. Actually, it was more than that. Our visit was also extremely therapeutic for our scarred and tortured minds and souls.

We arrived in the early afternoon and were met by Thanh Nguyen. Thanh was outside on the front lawn barbecuing spareribs while wearing a New England Patriots hooded coat. I



Mike Cunningham visits with Luan, Thahn, and Tuan. The youngsters receive orthopaedic treatment at Shriners Hospital for Children in Springfield, MA.

yelled at him to come in with us and he said he'd be right in.

Joe greeted us as we entered the open door to his apartment. We exchanged pleasantries with others in the room. The group included Jim, a Vietnam veteran; Thao and Sang, the Vietnamese children; and Sang's aunt. Joe introduced us to everyone.

I met Thanh on previous trips to Leominster and am truly impressed with his courage and determination to succeed. He is 21 years old and came to America from Vietnam in 2001. He wanted to have his polio-deformed body repaired by the doctors and surgeons at the Shriners Hospital.

Thanh is studying at a local college and wants to stay in America and study to become a doctor. He plans to return to Vietnam someday and help his countrymen with their ever so many medical problems.

Thanh is from Ben Tre. His mother, Tuyet, and two brothers, Thai and Vu, are still there. Thanh is an inspirational speaker and regaled us with stories of Vietnam. He had a gleam in his eyes as he told us a memorable story about fishing for talapia in the Mekong River.

He explained how people in Vietnam work for \$1 a day and that a family of four considers a yearly income of \$300 quite acceptable. As Thanh spoke, we could only sit and shake our heads. Every once in awhile a grunt or groan was emitted from one of us as we sat spellbound.

Thanh hates communists. "They s---", he says, "they only take care of themselves. Bribery and corruption are everywhere." Thanh may not realize it but he has become more American than Vietnamese. I hope his dreams come true and he returns to Vietnam as a doctor. After all he has been through, he deserves it. Vietnam also deserves to have Thanh return as a young, promising doctor.

Sang, a recent arrival from Tra Vinh, is 13 years old and is suffering from severe

spinal abnormalities. He has undergone several operations at Shriners Hospital and has a tough road ahead. The operations have helped his breathing enormously. But he is still confined to a wheelchair and there are many more extensive medical procedures in his future.

Thao, a sweet disposition young lady of 17, comes from Ben Tre. She was severely burned over the majority of her body. Her injuries are indescribable and will remain private. The doctors will do all they can for her.

As we sat around and engaged in small talk, Dave and Tom suggested taking Thao and Sang's aunt to the mall. Thao smiled nervously but demurred. Joe interjected and said their suggestion "was a great idea." So, off they went. The girls were bubbling over with joy. Trips out of the house were infrequent for them. Trips to the

mall almost never happened.

Bob, Jim, Joe and I remained at the apartment with Sang. Jim and I talked about our experiences and bonded. Bob and Sang engaged themselves in a Sponge Bob jigsaw puzzle. Joe was on the phone making medical appointments and paying bills online.

Joe explained to us how appreciative he was for our visit. In the past 10 years he has brought more than 80 kids from Vietnam to the United States. The vast majority have received as much medical treatment as possible and then went back home to Vietnam. Sadly, one child died here in America while he was receiving treatment. Joe told us about his monumental bills and how appreciative he is to Shriners Hospital for offering free medical care for all the kids.

About one hour elapsed when Dave and Tom returned from the mall with the girls. They were even more excited now than when they left. A shopping spree and a couple of hot fudge sundaes did wonders for their dispositions. Just the look on their faces did wonders for our dispositions.

After a visit of about three hours we decided we had better be off. We presented Joe with a significant gift (more than a family of four in Vietnam considered to be a good yearly income) and began to say good-bye to each other. There was many a teary eye as we left. The girls were smiling and waving. Sang reached out his hand and shook our hands. I wanted to go but I wanted to stay. I had to go.

Joe walked us out to the lobby. Joe looked into my eyes as I left and said, "Remember Mike, Thao needs to be adopted. She has nowhere to go back in Vietnam." My mind was racing. Please Joe, don't do this to me. I left Vietnam over 35 years ago, but I was still there.

Would it ever end? No. And it shouldn't! What we experienced in Vietnam will remain with us for the rest of our days. That is why we were in Leominster this cold December day. Somewhere, deep in our hearts, we are all seeking answers. Someday, with God's help, we will find them. Until then, we hope we will find an answer to Thao's quest for adoption.

**[Mung Chua Giang Sinh means
Merry Christmas To All!]**

VIETNAM PORTRAIT GALLERY



Terry D. Babler
Troop A, 1/1st Cav., 1970



WO Mike Maskovich
Co. B, 123rd Avn. Bn., 69-70



Gary L. Noller
Co. B, 1/46th Inf., 70-71



SGT James W. Gales
Co. B, 2/1st Inf., 1968



CPT Richard V. Knight
Co. C, 1/46th Inf., KIA 28MAR71

Send us your photos while in military uniform for our Vietnam Portrait Gallery. We will publish the gallery from time to time. The photo should be of an individual soldier in uniform. It can be in color or in black-and-white and be from the Vietnam era, either stateside or in-country. Photos of those KIA are encouraged. Scanned photos should be at least 300 dpi and photos should be 2" x 2" or larger.

The Days of a Demo Man

By Maurice Hensen

Co. A, 26th Engineer Bn.



I saw photos of the Americal Division rear area in Chu Lai in an edition of the Americal Newsletter (*now Americal Journal*) last year. When I arrived in Chu Lai all I ever saw of the rear area were the Charger Academy, the sand beach, and the deep blue South China Sea.

About a week later most of my friends from combat engineering Advanced Individual Training (AIT) at Ft. Leonard Wood were in the back of a deuce and a half headed for LZ Baldy. Needless to say I never again saw Chu Lai up close and personal. I only saw it from a Huey helicopter that was hauling our tired, worn out, overly stinking bodies out of the mountains and triple canopy jungle after some demolition mission out there somewhere.

One lesson I learned was that the more you stank the better your chances were of not being discovered by Charlie. You did not want to get in the middle of the jungle smelling like clean fatigues and Ivory soap. Of course, us stinking may be the reason why the Hueys always flew with their doors open.

Many times we would get back to the LZ from one of our demo missions, drop our rucksacks, and get to the mess hall. We would then head to our hootches to clean up our gear. We would stock up our demo bags, pick up some ammo, and finally get into the shower.

After one mission in 1968 we were sent to the aid station to get a shot to help prevent us from getting the Hong Kong flu. That protection did not help me as I soon got slammed with the flu and for two weeks it was an effort to raise my head up off my cot. I did not care to eat and I sure did not want to move because I was afraid that my bucking and jumping cot was going to throw me.

I refused to go back to the aid station for attention. I sure was not much good on the work details that but I would weakly put forth an effort. At the end of the day I would return to my wild cot and climb on for another round of bucking and jumping. I knew that if Charlie showed up in my doorway I would have to tell him to go away and come back to fight some other day.

Although I was stubborn about getting medical aid all my fellow platoon members banded together to help me. When I needed help, when I didn't care one way or the other, they were always there making sure I had everything I needed.

I took about two weeks to get over this illness but I was then back with my demolition partners headed once again for the boondocks on another mission.

The 26th Engineer Battalion (Combat) was constituted as a unit of the Regular Army on December 1, 1954 and on December 2, 1954 was activated as an element of the 23rd Infantry Division at Fort Clayton, Canal Zone. At that time, the battalion was composed of Company A which was organized February 1, 1945 as the 2920th Dump Truck Company, Company B and Headquarters Company, the initial organization for each, and Company C which was organized on April 7, 1944 as the 406th Engineer Combat Company. The 26th Engineer Battalion (Combat) was inactivated on April 10, 1956.

On December 8, 1967, in the Republic

of Vietnam, the 26th Engineer Battalion (Combat) was again activated as the organic combat engineer battalion of the Americal Division (23rd Infantry Division).

The 26th Engineer Battalion is composed of four Combat Engineer line companies, a Float Bridge Company, and a Headquarters and Headquarters Company. Company A was formerly the 175th Engineer Company, organic to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. Its headquarters was at Fire Support Base Hawk Hill in direct support of the 196th Infantry Brigade. Company B was the 555th Engineer Company, organic to the 198th Light Infantry, and Company C was formerly the 6th Engineer Company, 11th Light Infantry Brigade. Company B was responsible



for direct engineer support to the 198th Infantry Brigade with headquarters at Landing Zone Bayonet. Company C was with the 11th Infantry Brigade at Fire Support Base Bronco in Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. Company D was formed primarily from elements of Company B, 39th Engineer Battalion (Combat) that was attached to the Americal Division at the time of activation. The 554th Engineer Company (Float Bridge) was transferred from the 39th Engineer Battalion (combat) and redesignated Company E, 26th Engineer Battalion (Combat). Headquarters Company was formed from elements of the USARV Engineer Command.



Americal Division DVD's

*Historical Tactical Operation Reports right at your fingertips
Plus*

*Don't miss getting your own copy of the movie "The Big Picture"
Vietnam era government production depicting the history of the Americal
as well as some operations that were taking place at the time of production.*

The Americal Division Veterans Association now has photo images of the Americal Division Tactical Operations Center (TOC) reports from October 21, 1967 through December 31, 1969. This material is available on digital versatile disk (DVD) as portable document format (PDF) files.

The ADVA is funding the retrieval of Division TOC reports through November 1971. Reports for 1970 will begin to be available in 2007 but may not be completed until early 2008. Funding will be requested to obtain Task Force Oregon reports (prior to October 1967) and 196th Light Infantry Brigade reports (subsequent to November 1971.)

Americal Division TOC reports are available on DVD through the ADVA Vietnam Historian. The cost for an Americal Division TOC report DVD is \$15.00. There is room on the DVD to add material from the Americal Division historical database. This can be customized if the member's individual unit, time, and location of service are known. For example, if the unit is the 1/46th Infantry in 1971 then the 1/46th unit photo album for 1971 can be included on the DVD.

It is also possible to do some limited research on a specific event or individual. For example, a search of the database was recently conducted to find information on PFC Gerry Gentry, an Americal soldier killed in Vietnam. The KIA information in the database was used to determine Gentry's unit, B/1/1st Cavalry. Then a search of transcribed documents found a memorial booklet from the 1/1st Cavalry from 1967. It listed PFC Gentry as a KIA and that he had been awarded the Silver Star.

Gentry was killed on November 7, 1967. A search of the Division TOC reports for this date and unit provided the grid location of the battle and the units involved. The action resulted in a large number of Americal wounded and 277 enemy KIAs after two days of battle.

The preferred media for use in copying these records is DVD. However, they can be copied to compact disk-read only memory (CD-ROM) for those who do not have a DVD reader. There will be an additional charge for this because it requires over ten CD-ROMs to provide all the Division TOC reports.



Division TOC/Big Picture orders can be sent to:
Leslie Hines
Vietnam Historian
817 41st St.
Des Moines, IA 50312-2609.
515-255-4807.
pelican.123rd.avn@worldnet.att.net

**Check or money orders should be made out to the
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Eligibility for Membership

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World WarII	1942-1945
Korean War	1954-1956
Vietnam War	1967-1973

Eligibility includes those who served with Task Force 6814 (WWII) and Task Force Oregon (Vietnam). Branch of service is immaterial.

DEDICATION



The ADVA is dedicated as a *LIVING MEMORIAL* to all veterans of the Americal Division and is pledged to foster true American patriotism, social and welfare activities for all members, allegiance to the United States Government, and its flag, and to perpetuate the traditions and history of the *Americal Division* of the United States Army.

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