

April • May • June 2013



# AMERICAL

## JOURNAL

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

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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## Commander's Comments

### By Larry Swank

#### News about Nashville

The Nashville reunion is shaping up as one of our larger events. Our reunion location, the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel, is full. They added 35% more rooms to our reunion block, but they still ran out of space for us. Demand is still high. We have made overflow arrangements at a very nice hotel just

2000 feet from the reunion site, with free shuttle service to and from the Millennium. I expect that we may need a second overflow hotel.

Our 1st overflow hotel is the SpringHill Suites Nashville MetroCenter, 250 Athens Way, Nashville, TN, 37228. It is a newly renovated all-studio suite hotel. They have king & double queen rooms. The special rate of \$109 is for reunion participants only. If you plan to attend make your hotel reservations quickly. There are no other close hotels to the reunion site. We want to fill this one up with ADVA members & guests.

The SpringHill Suites has set aside rooms for us and will add rooms as needed, until they are full. If you have a problem reserving a room please contact Ron Green at [ron\\_green46@yahoo.com](mailto:ron_green46@yahoo.com) or 423-716-5978. If you cannot reach Ron please contact Larry Swank at [lswank@aol.com](mailto:lswank@aol.com) or 301-892-0855 (call or text). We will have rooms added until the hotel is full. We are also searching for overflow hotel #2.

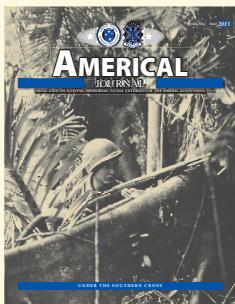
Here is how it works:

1) By Phone – our reunion Group Code is ADV. You can call the Springhill Suites Nashville MetroCenter reservation number is (615) 244-5474. The main hotel number is (615) 244-5474. They should quote the reunion rate of \$109.

2) By Internet - our reunion Group Code is ADVADVA. You can go directly to the Marriott web site: <http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bnasm-springhill-suites-nashville-metrocenter/> The Group Code ADVADVA will give you the \$109 rate. Both king and double queen options should show up if they are both still available.

The different Group Codes between the phone system and the Internet is a feature of Marriott software that drives the hotel manager nuts.

The SpringHill Suites has Complimentary Parking, Complimentary High Speed Wireless Internet Access in all suites, including public areas, and Complimentary Deluxe Breakfast. Accessibility is excellent and service animals allowed for persons with disabilities. Check in time is 3PM and Check out time is 12PM **See you in Nashville.**



#### Cover:

*Story page 24 Remembering Hill 260 Bougainville  
PVT. R. Dennis, 182nd Infantry, stands rear guard duty on Hill 260, using the jungle growth to camouflage his position (National Archives)*

## Update- May 21, 2013

### Nashville Reunion

#### Update on the reunion pre-sales:

107 reservations processed for 180 attendees (members & guest) - based on room reservations we only have about 50%, or less, of the reunion registrations and event reservations for folks who have gotten hotel rooms.

#### Hotel rooms available at the overflow hotel:

We still have rooms available as of today. I think 30 reservations have been made at the first overflow hotel and we can get another 40 reservations at the at that hotel. That will put us at about 950 room nights before we go to the second overflow hotel. I am checking on our current count. The SpringHill Suites only have 78 rooms. We will need that second overflow hotel if room reservations continue at the current pace. But there are no other nearby hotels. We are now at just about 800 room nights.

#### Event tickets (tours and hotel meals) still available:

- 79 tickets for Fort Campbell tour w/lunch - no cap
- 89 tickets for the Thursday Country Buffet - no cap
- 104 tickets for the Memorial Service/Ryman Auditorium tour w/ lunch - no cap
- 170 tickets for the Grand Ole Opry - block of 400 reserved for ADVA until 30 days prior to event
- 149 for Saturday Banquet - Ballroom limit of 500
- We must return any unsold Grand Ole Opry tickets by August 16th, making them available to the general public.

It is important that members make arrangements for room and event tickets as soon as possible. We are having a larger than normal reunion registration. We are happy with the great response but need to take adequate steps to provide accommodations as soon as possible for those who have not yet registered at the hotel or for reunion events.

## I Saw It On The Internet

### So It Must Be True

#### By Gary L. Noller

The [americal.org](http://americal.org) website was modernized a couple of years ago and has many improved security features. Although I no longer am the webmaster I do get questions from time to time about the location of information on the revamped site. Here are a few points on this topic:

Information about National Reunions, Scholarship Program, Legacy Committee, and the Americal Journal may be found under the tab called PROGRAMS. Click on PROGRAMS then click on the word that is the topic of interest.

A membership application is under the MEMBERSHIP tag. Click on MEMBERSHIP and then click on JOIN US. This will provide a page with a link to an application form.

The locator is under the COMMO tab. Click on COMMO then click on BLOG then click on LOCATOR. Unit reunion information is also in the BLOG. The COMMO section also has a CONTACT US tab that you can use to send an e-mail to an ADVA officer.

Although I retained the 1995-2010 locator and guest book messages they are not currently available on the [americal.org](http://americal.org) website. History items are not yet posted to the history pages.

If you wish to purchase ADVA and Americal Division clothing items and souvenirs they are found at the PX tab. You will need to print an order form and send it to Wayne Bryant as the site does not have on-line ordering and payment receipt capabilities.

## Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore



Our new member gains over the past three months dropped off slightly from the previous three month reporting period. The association added twenty-eight new members to the ADVA roster during the second quarter of 2013. This is a decrease of six new members from the first quarter 2013 reporting period.

New Life Members joining the Association or upgrading from annual pay status to Life totaled sixteen for this reporting period. Twelve annual pay members upgraded to Life status and four Americal veterans joined for the first time as Life members. Two former members were re-instated to the ADVA roster during the second quarter 2013 reporting period.

I am pleased to report on a recent National Adjutant project which will streamline the Adjutant record keeping procedures. With the help of National Commander Larry Swank, all paper copies of new member applications I've kept filed since mid 2004 (when I took over the office of National Adjutant) were scanned and loaded to computer disks.

The documents are stored on the discs by year and in alphabetic order in groups of letters A – L and M – Z. These are easily accessible for any questions about an application and are cross-referenced by the date joined field listed in the ADVA roster. At the close of each future year, I'll have that year's new member applications scanned locally for electronic storage. Should questions arise about any member's application, the copy is easily accessible on the disc. My thanks to Larry for lending his time and technical expertise to get this project completed.

As always, I close with a reminder to notify me when your mailing address changes for any reason. You can contact me by telephone or e-mail to give me an address change. My contact information is listed in the directory section of this issue, inside the front cover. If you mail your new address to me, please use the Adjutant post office box in Richardson, Texas listed on the back cover. You can also fax me your address change or any other membership changes to this telephone number: 972-412-0089.

Please advise the adjutant office about the death of any Americal Division veteran or ADVA member so the individual's name, unit and home town can be listed in the Taps section of a future Americal Journal issue.

## ADVA MEMBERSHIP

31 January 2013

World War II	390
Vietnam	2,481
Cold War	10
Associate Members:	176
<b>Total Members</b>	<b>3,057</b>

## New Members

**William M. Bako**  
1/1st Cav C Trp  
Tonawanda, NY  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Harry F. Baldwin**  
14th CAB  
Dothan, AL  
★ Self

**Charles Brisendine**  
23rd M.P. Co  
Quitman, TX  
★ Al Feser

**George Case**  
196th LIB HHC  
Huntsville, AL  
★ Bennie Seals

**Shannon Cole**  
B/1/20th Inf  
Columbus, NE  
★ Self

**Steve Cortines**  
D/4/21st Inf  
Nacodoches, TX  
★ Self

**James B. Daniels**  
196th LIB  
Mc Alpin, FL  
★ Self

**Peter C. Darby**  
635th MI Det  
Avon, CT  
★ Self

**Ted Dudley**  
C/5/46th Inf  
Brownwood, TX  
★ Cameron Baird

## Ed Durana

11th LIB  
Hanover, MD  
★ Self

**James P. Hansen**  
2/1st Inf  
Eagan, MI  
★ Self

**John J. Kubik**  
4/21st Inf  
Marquette, MI  
★ Self

**Mario Polizzi**  
11th LIB  
Sewell, NJ  
★ John Haas

**Hans Sadlack**  
65th Inf Rgmt  
Burnsville, MN  
★ Bob Kapp

**Frank L. Scholes, Jr.**  
C/1/46 Inf Rgmt  
Quakertown, PA  
★ Richard Malozi

**Arthur Short**  
D/2/1st Inf  
O'Fallon, MO  
★ Self

**Pat Spaunborg**  
196th LIB  
St. Clair Shores, MI  
★ Jim Markham

**Edward Suchodolski**  
23rd Admin Co  
Plaistow, NH  
★ Self

**Laddie D. Tabor**  
Div HDQ  
Columbus, KS  
★ Self

## Clifford Tholen

D/1/20th Inf  
Ada, MI  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**James J. Treacy**  
A/1/6th Inf  
Brookline, NH  
★ Self

**Larry R. Ward**  
71st Avn Bde  
Epsom, NH  
★ Self

## New Paid Life Members

**Jerry Anderson**  
B/5/46th Inf  
Reidsville, NC  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

**William T. Hill**  
D/4/3rd Inf  
Prudenville, MI  
★ Self

**Ernest R. Outten**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Powhaten, VA  
★ Jessie O. Gause

**Frederick C. Scott**  
A/1/20th Inf  
West Palm Beach, FL  
★ Self

**Philip L. Carpenter**  
2/1st Inf  
Gray, KY  
★ Fred Cowburn

**Charles J. Earl**  
E/1/20th Inf  
Patrick AFB, FL  
★ Bob Cudworth

<p><b>Eric J. Ecklund</b> A/4/31st Inf Stevens Point, WI ★ PNC Gary L. Noller</p> <p><b>George Farkas</b> 335th Trans Co Madison, AL ★ Wayne Bryant</p> <p><b>Robert J. Florkowski</b> 101st Sig Bn Chester, NY ★ PNC Rollie Castronova</p> <p><b>Warren P. Haugen</b> 4/3rd Inf Klamath Falls, OR ★ PNC Rollie Castronova</p> <p><b>Charles Holdaway</b> B/2/1st Inf Fountaintown, IN ★ PNC Gary L. Noller</p> <p><b>William A. Lupton</b> D/1/20th Inf Keaau, HI ★ Alan Conger</p> <p><b>Charles C. Mitchell</b> Div Asst IG Valencia, CA ★ PNC Gary L. Noller</p> <p><b>James R. Smith, Jr.</b> 3/82nd Arty HHB Reading, MA ★ PNC David W. Taylor</p> <p><b>Robert L. Snyder</b> 4/21st Inf Lancaster, PA ★ Bernie Chase</p> <p><b>Danny Walburn</b> 11th LIB Midland, MI ★ PNC Gary L. Noller</p>	<p><b>Re-instated Members</b></p> <p><b>Charles Maxson, III</b> B/1/20th Inf Clearwater, KS ★ Self</p> <p><b>Edward C. Van Lennep</b> A/1/20th Inf Garber, IA ★ John McKnown, Jr.</p> <p><b>Hilda Benkart</b> Cranberry, PA ★ Mark Deam</p> <p><b>Scott Broudy</b> Plano, TX ★ Roger Gilmore</p> <p><b>TAPS</b></p> <p><b>World War II Veterans</b></p> <p><b>Elon Bailey</b>* 721st Ordnance Det Sylacauga, AL March 8, 2013</p> <p><b>James M. Bales</b> 182nd Inf Co C Location Unknown April 8, 2013</p> <p><b>Martin S. Broudy</b>* 164 Inf Co K Plano, TX February 14, 2013</p>	<p><b>Thomas Copeland</b>* 182nd Inf Athol, MA February 14, 2013</p> <p><b>Patrick Farino</b>* 182nd Inf Co G Punta Gorda, FL April 20, 2013</p> <p><b>Warner B. Huck</b>* 132nd Inf Bluffton, SC November 15, 2012</p> <p><b>Andrew Kovel</b> 245th FA North Tonawanda, NY January 23, 2013</p> <p><b>Edmund Kueker</b>* 132nd Inf Waterloo, IL December 25, 2012</p> <p><b>Norman La Voie</b>* 164 Inf Co G Milford, CT March 26, 2011</p> <p><b>Edward R. Lombarski</b> Unit Unknown Forked River, NJ January 30, 2013</p> <p><b>Royal Loveridge</b>* 26th Sig Bn N. Miami, FL January 16, 2013</p> <p><b>Daniel Phelps</b> Unit Unknown West Pittston, PA January 11, 2013</p>	<p><b>Louis A. Rocha</b> 245th FA Bedford, NH February 1, 2013</p> <p><b>Ramon H. "Ray" Silton</b> Field Artillery Boca Raton, FL January 30, 2013</p> <p><b>Vietnam Veterans</b></p> <p><b>Richard Abel</b> Unit Unknown Willmantic, CT February 11, 2013</p> <p><b>Chalbert Burchett</b>* 23rd S&amp;T Hampton, VA March 7, 2013</p> <p><b>Gary Carder</b>* B/2/1st Inf Columbus, OH December 23, 2012</p> <p><b>William E. Chrest, Jr.</b>* B/2/1st Inf Owosso, MI December 1, 2012</p> <p><b>Charles D. Harper</b> 198th LIB Douglasville, GA September 14, 2012</p> <p><b>Ronald Lester Lamb</b> E Trp., 1/1 Cav Goodsprings, NV March 30, 2013</p>	<p><b>Willie Midgette</b> Co C, 1/52 Inf Farmville, VA Feb. 16, 2013</p> <p><b>Anthony J. Nicoletto</b> Unit Unknown Valparaiso, IN April 6, 2013</p> <p><b>Dan Roczniaik</b>* C/2/1st Inf Largo, FL January 12, 2012</p> <p><b>Donald Sheffield</b> A/5/46 Inf Lindale, TX June 3, 2012</p> <p><b>Harry Thompson</b>* A/1/6th Inf Austin, TX March 9, 2013</p> <p><b>John H. Wagner III</b> D/4/3 11th LIB Centerport, NY April 28, 2013</p> <p><b>Associate Members</b></p> <p><b>Lucille Barton</b>* Elgin, IL April 2012</p> <p><b>Aniceta Galpin</b>* Silver Springs, MD December 30, 2012</p> <p><b>*ADVA Member</b></p>
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The Far West Chapter's 2013 annual reunion will be held about 90 miles south of Las Vegas at the Aquarius Casino Resort in Laughlin Nevada. The dates of the event are October 13, 2013 – October 16, 2013. The hospitality suite will open in the late afternoon on Sunday, the 13th. You can pick up your registration package there and enjoy some beverages and snacks.

Call the resort to reserve your room now. Call 1-800-662-5825 and ask for Group code "C-AME13" when booking. Rates for Sunday – Thursday are just \$30.99+ tax per night. Friday – Saturday rooms are \$60.99 + tax. Don't let the price fool you; this is a great place with great well-kept modern rooms very similar to the large casinos in Las Vegas.

Laughlin is a small town with about a dozen large casino/hotels that offer many Las Vegas type shows and entertainment and some great restaurants to choose from.

Monday we'll tour the old gold mining town of Oatman, Arizona where wild burros still roam the streets. These animals are direct descendants of the working burros that the miners brought into the area during early 1900's and were set free about the time World War II broke out as the gold mines were closed. Oatman is on one of the longest stretches of old US Route 66 still in use today. It offers many shops where you can buy just about any souvenir related to Oatman's history or Historical Route 66. We'll be in town as when the Oatman Ghost Rider Gunfighters stage an old west gunfight on the main street and then take up a collection for a local charity. No trip to Oatman is complete without a stop at Jackass Junction just up the street from the Oatman Hotel. Actors Clark Gable and Carol Lombard spent their honeymoon at Jackass Junction back in 1939.

After a brief chapter meeting Tuesday morning you're free to explore the area. The reunion will conclude with a banquet that evening at the hotel. We will hold our annual gift and 50-50 raffles during the banquet. Remember to bring a gift to donate to the raffle from your area.

For more information contact Tom Packard at [tompack50@gmail.com](mailto:tompack50@gmail.com) or 720-635-1900.

You can also contact Tom for information about joining the chapter which encompasses the 13 western most states including Alaska and Hawaii.

Also, my contact information is not correct in the Chapter news section. My correct information is 8231 Edenwood Dr, Spring TX 77389.

Support your local chapter for a stronger ADVA

## GREAT MIDWEST CHAPTER

IA KS IL IN MI MN MO NE ND SD WI

**COMMANDER**  
Dale J. Belke  
[fe9adf5295f0037@live.com](mailto:fe9adf5295f0037@live.com)



The Great Midwest Chapter has been reformed from two different chapters. The Great Midwest now includes eleven states: Wisconsin, South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, Kansas, Iowa, Indiana, and Illinois. The chapter had its first meeting at Winterfest in Wisconsin.

The Winterfest Parade was again led by the Quad Cities Vets looking military sharp. First time attendees all said they will be back again next year because the comradeship makes everyone feel at home.

Our thanks to Dutch DeGroot for the great job of designing our new logo. We are now working on an e-mail blast to chapter members to gauge ideas and interest in having a chapter reunion this summer. If you received the e-mail message and haven't responded, please do. We need everyone's input. If you didn't receive it, please send me your e-mail address to me at [fe9adf5295f0037@live.com](mailto:fe9adf5295f0037@live.com) and I will send the message to you. E-mail addresses will only be used for chapter business and not be shared or given out to anyone else.

If anyone has any other ideas to have a get together, let us know. Small or big doesn't matter, because the men that will be there will enjoy their good time and be with other veterans who have "Been There, Did That!" If you are reading this, we are still here! Enjoy the life. Peace.

## SOUTH MIDWEST CHAPTER

AR LA OK TX MS

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The 2013 chapter reunion will be history by the time you read this. We expect about fifty members and guests in Fredericksburg, TX, and I'm sure that it will be a big success, just as our past several reunions have been. It's not too soon to start thinking about next year, so nominations are open for a location.

We mourn the loss of WWII veteran Bill Maddox, whose puckish sense of humor and devotion to the association will be sorely missed. I met a WWII seabee recently, and his battalion has had an annual reunion since 1946. They started with 1,200 attendees, now there are only five of them left. The old guard is a precious resource that is dwindling fast; embrace them while they're still with us.

I would like to establish a chapter website and/or presence on other social media. Unfortunately, I am a technological Neanderthal. If any of you have experience or advice in these fields, please contact me. I can do email.

## Legacy Committee Report

By Roger Gilmore, Chairman

### Artillery Monument at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

As of this issue of the Americal Journal, we are waiting for a cost estimate and designs from a monument builder located in the Fort Sill, Oklahoma area. Since this monument vendor is a small operation, the Legacy Committee has decided to solicit additional bids from two vendors who are larger operations and have extensive background in design and construction on veterans' monuments. One of those companies we will solicit a bid from is Columbus Monument Company of Columbus, Georgia. Columbus Monument Company did the design and construction of the Americal Division monument now in place at Fort Benning, Georgia.

We have confirmation from the Fort Sill installation command that their review of our plan is complete and our site request will be considered once a design plan from our vendor of choice is complete.

Look for more updates on the Americal Division Artillery monument design progress in the next issue of the Americal Journal. Please continue to support the Legacy fund for this very important Americal artillery monument.

### Monument Funding/2013 Americal Legacy Calendar

Through April 30, 2013 individual donations amounts for the 2013 calendar total in excess of \$18,000.00. Thanks to all members and friends who continue to support our Americal Legacy monument efforts.

Many of you have been very generous in your support of the Americal Legacy projects. Following is a breakdown by number of donors who have made significant donations to the Artillery monument project.

Individual Donation Amount	No. of Donors
\$50.00 - \$100.00	112
\$100.00 - \$200.00	7
Over \$200.00	2

Please continue your support for Americal Legacy initiatives and future monuments with a donation. The calendar mailing included a contribution envelope for mailing your check or money order. If you do not have a pre-addressed envelope, contributions may be mailed to PNC Ronald Ellis at:

**4493 Hwy 64 W  
Henderson, TX 75652**

### Monument Dedication Ceremony Video

We still have an ample supply of the 2012 monument dedication ceremony at the National Infantry Museum DVD available for sale through the Americal PX. The DVD price is \$15.00, which includes shipping, and all proceeds go to support ADVA Legacy initiatives.

To order a DVD, contact Product Sales Director Wayne Bryant, 4411 Dawn Road, Greensboro, NC, 27405. Wayne can be reached by phone at 336-621-8756 or email [wbryant@triad.rr.com](mailto:wbryant@triad.rr.com).

Wayne has remaining stock of the National Infantry Museum monument coins. The coin price is \$15.00. This very unique challenge coin will be a nice personal memento or a great gift for one of your buddies. Place your order with Wayne today.

### Gasdek Receives Honors at IUP ROTC Hall of Fame

By Gary L. Noller

On April 20, 2013 LTC (Ret.) Garry Gasdek became the Inaugural Inductee for Excellence at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) ROTC Hall of Fame. The university is located in Indiana, PA.

Gasdek served as a captain with Co. D, 4/21st Infantry, 11th Lt. Inf. Bde. In 1968. He was a distinguished military graduate at IUP in 1964 and received a commission as a second lieutenant upon the completion of his education. His first deployment was to Germany with the 4th Armored Division.

He served two tours in Vietnam, the first as a company commander with the 4/21st and the second as visual recon officer. On his second tour he was on two helicopters that were shot down and one that crash landed. After completing duties in Vietnam he returned to Ft. Benning for Ranger School and Pathfinder. He was the Distinguished Honor Graduate from both schools. At the end of his military career he was a Professor of Military Science at the University of Wyoming.

Gasdek earned the Distinguished Service Cross on September 22, 1968 while commanding his company on a combat sweep near Duong Da. During the battle he was wounded in the leg but continued to direct the action of his men, treat wounds, and move wounded soldiers to the safety of nearby armored personnel carriers. He crawled with one of the wounded on his back for over a hundred meters while under intense enemy fire. When his radio operator was killed Gasdek carried the radio equipment himself. He remained with his unit during the night and the next morning he lead an attack against the enemy. He was wounded in the back by shrapnel but refused evacuation to remain with his troops. The enemy was forced from the area.

Gasdek currently resides in Laramie, WY. He is a member of the Americal Division Veterans Association.



## Vietnam Historian Report

By Les Hines

I have had a pretty good volume of order requests for the historical DVDs since the last issue of the Americal Journal was published. I am printing labels instead using the lightscribe DVDs to save time. Normally it takes a couple hours or more to burn a set of labels with lightscribe. I like lightscribe labels better as they save a dollar or more per set of DVDS in ink. I am waiting on the finished transcription of our Division TOC reports from Conrad Geibel's team before I send out the 14 orders for DVDs I received in March.

I am expecting more Division TOC report transcriptions any day now. The transcription team consists of about ten veterans from the 1/52nd Inf. Bn. John Boyer, a veteran of F/8th Cavalry, is also doing outstanding at transcribing documents. With transcribed information we can now do searches. There is a way to put this into an Excel spreadsheet so that a person could filter the view of the information to only see the incidents for a unit that they were interested in.

One of the recent DVD orders was from a veteran from my company who had been in the crash with General Ramsey. He first served with 1st squad, 1st platoon of A 5/46th Inf Bn from 03 August 1969 – 03 March 1970. He then served from 03 Mar – 17 Mar 1970 (date of the crash) with 3rd flt plt of A/123rd Avn Bn. It is interesting is that one of the other DVD orders was from a veteran of the 1/6th Infantry who had secured the crash site.

I am working on Bill Egen to participate in a story about the air support provided by MAG-12 (A-4 Skyhawks). Egen was a Marine pilot based at Chu Lai supporting Task Force Oregon and then the Americal Division. I was surprised that the Marines weren't aware that the Army division was there. The main direction of the story seems to be developing into a look at his participation in the actions where he had received a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for actions supporting the Americal Division. He was able to match up the date of his award with our division reports.

Egen also provided information about Skyhawk pilot, Dale Luster, who was shot down and killed in the battle of 26 September 1968. This was in support of Co. D, 1/52nd Inf. Bn. in the Tam Ky area. I have not made contact yet with the pilot who flew wingman with Dale Luster on this day. He explained that the Marines were limiting the number of missions they would provide the Army so they could maintain Marine unit support. Most of their missions were going into North Vietnam. I looked at the A4 pilots lost in Vietnam. There seemed to be an awful lot of losses....

*On page 32 of the March 2013 issue of the VFW magazine is an article on Warrior Athletes. The story is called "Warriors as Olympians" by Katherine Dawson. The following is an excerpt about an Americal Division veteran, Lones Wigger, Jr. of Great Falls, MT.*

*A three time Olympian, Wigger won two gold medals with the small-bore rifle in three positions in 1964 and a gold for the 300-meter center fire (three positions) in 1972. He also earned a silver medal in the .22 rifle prone position in 1964. He competed in the 1968 Games and qualified in 1970.*

*Wigger served in Vietnam as a MACV adviser in the Mekong Delta from February 1967 to March 1968. On his second tour from March to December 1971, he established and led the Americal Division's Sniper Training School in Chu Lai. He retired from the Army in 1987.*

*His competitive shooting career was stellar, including 13 gold medals at five Pan American Games. All told, he won 145 medals, 91 national individual championships and 22 world championships (two individual).*

*Claim to fame: Called the "greatest competitive rifle shooter yet produced in the U.S.," Wigger holds or co-holds 33 world marksmanship records (individual and team). A 2008 U.S. Hall of Fame inductee, he also is a 1991 charter member of the USA Shooting Hall of Fame. A July 10, 2012 newspaper article about him written by Irv Moss is on the internet at [http://www.denverpost.com/classics/ci\\_21047808/colorado-classics-lones-wigger-multiple-olympic-medalist-shooting](http://www.denverpost.com/classics/ci_21047808/colorado-classics-lones-wigger-multiple-olympic-medalist-shooting)*

*On another note, the town of Breckenridge, MN dedicated its new Veterans Memorial Park on November 12, 2012. The park features a mounted display of a Vietnam-era Cobra helicopter gunship. Featured guests included two Cobra pilots- Nick Lappos and Mel Walker. Lappos and Walker piloted the helicopter named Cobra 650 in Vietnam while assigned to Trp. D, 1/1st Cavalry. Also a guest was Phyllis Resnow. Her brother Tom was killed in Vietnam while piloting a Cobra assigned to Trp. D, 1/1st Cavalry. Eight veterans of D/1/1 Cav. attended the dedication ceremony. In addition to Lappos and Walker, they were David Adams, Duane Sather, Gary Krehbiel, Dale McKnight, D.J. Miner, and Gary Hickman.*



I would like to thank the members of the Americal Division Veterans Association for their service to our country as well as the scholarship I have been awarded. I am pursuing a degree in Athletic Training at Central Methodist University in Fayette, Missouri. I plan on continuing my education until I receive a doctorate in Physical Therapy.

**Scholar: *Melissa Nienhuis***

Thank you for the generous grant the Americal Scholarship Program awarded me to attend the University of Neveda, Reno. I wish to thank you because the scholarship allows me to pay the ever increasing expenses of higher education. I cannot express how grateful I am for the help with my education in these tough economic times.

**Scholar: *Asher Moody***



I want to thank you and all the members of the Americal Division for your service. I am extremely grateful and thankful for the scholarship I received. I am a human resource development major at Northeastern Illinois University with a minor in Psychology. As a scholarship recipient, my goal is to continue being the best student I can and to carry my hard work and dedication to my career. I hope to be a training and organizational development professional when my schooling is complete. The Americal Division Veterans Association has been so very helpful in making this possible. Thank you so much for your support of my education. I am truly honored.

**Scholar: *John DeGroot***



I would, once again, like to thank all Americal Veterans and contributors for your contributions toward my pursuit in higher education at the University of the Cumberlands for the third year in a row. Thank you all for your service and great generosity. I wish the best for all of you.

**Scholar: *Patrick Parten***

### Purpose

The purpose of the Scholarship Foundation is to provide college and vocational scholarships to the children and grandchildren, including those by adoption, of current and deceased ADVA members, provided the deceased member held good membership standing at the time of death, and to any child or adopted child of an Americal Division soldier who was killed or died while on active duty with the Division.

### Trustees

There shall be six (6) Trustees comprising the Scholarship Foundation Board. Trustee/Officers shall be: the ADVA National Commander, who will hold office Ex-Officio, the Chairman of the ADVA Fund, who will be appointed by the National Commander to serve an unlimited term unless replaced by a vote of the Trustees, and the Fund Treasurer, who will be appointed by the National Commander to serve an unlimited term unless replaced by a vote of the Trustees. Four (4) other Trustees will be elected by the ADVA membership to serve a four (4) year term.

### Governance

The trustees shall direct and control the business management and affairs of the Scholarship Foundation. They shall have the authority to approve or deny any requests for grants or loans and to recommend the dispensing of funds.

### Scholarship Funds

The funds of the Scholarship Foundation shall be obtained primarily from donations and grants, gifts, devises, or bequests. All funds received must be unconditional.

### Applications

Completed application forms together with all required enclosures must reach the Chairman at an address he designates no later than 1 April of each year. The application form requires the following of the applicant: name, address, marital status, date of birth, place of birth, high school attended, high school graduation date; father's name, occupation, mother's name, occupation; if sponsored by ADVA member, member's name, dates with Americal Division, unit, and highest rank or grade; if parents are deceased, name and address of guardian; name and address of school to be attended; applicants signature. In addition, the following enclosures must accompany the application form: testament from ADVA member avowing applicants eligibility; letter of admission from school of choice; statement from current school principal attesting to applicant's character; two (2) letters of recommendation from current teachers; a 200-300 word essay on subjects to be determined by the Chairman. For 2013 the applicant may choose one of the following topics: National Pride or The Price of Freedom.

The Scholarship Chairman is Mr. William (Bill) Bruinsma. He may be contacted at [wb3379@gmail.com](mailto:wb3379@gmail.com) or 269-795-5237. Applications are to be sent to the Chairman at 5425 Parmalee Rd, Middleville, MI 49333.



**Dear editor,**

Thanks for the contact information for Gary Pratt's family. We had many phone conversations over the years-we always were laughing at the end. I will miss him!

I have some photos of the gold Americal Division patch being placed under glass in the U.S. Infantry Hall of Fame located in the marble building at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery. The photos show General Ramsey, Americal commander in 1969-70 and Americal veterans including me placing flowers at the Tomb. The Army gave us a VIP section and a full military ceremony with the whole contingent of guards. It was a very impressive!

The hall of fame is never opened to the public. I had been to Arlington many times -but didn't know what it was. I would like to contact anyone who has patches or unit crests to trade with me. My address is 163 Bayport Ave., Bayport, NY 11705.

Steve Miles

[stevenmiles19@gmail.com](mailto:stevenmiles19@gmail.com)

**Dear editor,**

Thank you for the article in the 4th qtr. 2012 issue of Americal Journal about Earl Brannon. Most of us who served in combat recognized that our "Doc" was the most important member of the squad or company. It was routine for our medic to wade into fire to assist a wounded soldier, even though he personally opposed killing or wounding another person. Earl Brannon is a hero.

Robert Best

[rbest3@kc.rr.com](mailto:rbest3@kc.rr.com)

**Dear editor,**

I was looking through January 2009 issue and read an article titled "3 Days Near Tam Ky" (22 Sept. 1968). The unit described in the article was Co. D, 4/21st Inf., 11th LIB.

On 23 Sept. 1968 I became an assistant machine gunner in this unit. I am wondering if there is anyone out there who remembers me? I was also in this unit in Schofield Barracks in Hawaii in 1968. I may be contacted at 65 Spruce Dr., Cynthiana, KY, 41031-5953;

Randall Watson; D/4/21

[janemarie59@att.net](mailto:janemarie59@att.net)

**Dear editor,**

Americal Division veterans are invited to "The Celebration of Service and Sacrifice" in Munford, TN on October 23-27, 2013. An 80% size replica of the Vietnam War Memorial Wall will be on display 24 hours a day. Opening Ceremonies will be Thursday, October 24. Special programs are scheduled each day and will feature a patriotic music performance by the U.S. Navy Band on Saturday. There will be displays of restored military vehicles and a fly-in of a Vietnam era Huey and Cobra helicopter.

We would certainly love to have the Americal Division represented with their own canopy space and unit flags proudly flying over it. Our county and citizenry are gearing up to give a proper "Welcome Home" and "Thank You" to all veterans and especially those from the "forgotten wars" of Korea and Vietnam. We have a Facebook Page titled Celebration of Service and Sacrifice and a website at [www.celebrationofserviceandsacrifice.com](http://www.celebrationofserviceandsacrifice.com). Thanks for the opportunity to "thank you" brother..

*MSG Randal "Mac" McKee; Chairman  
Celebration of service and Sacrifice*

**Dear editor,**

I was in the Americal Division with F Troop, 8th Cavalry from April 1970 to April 1971. We were in Chu Lai and the last part of my duty was at Quang Tri. That's when the sappers blew up the Ammo Dump. Both Chu Lai and Quang Tri we received Rocket Attacks. I have no contacts with any of my old buddies who made it back. I think about them every day. I was there when I was 18 1/2 years old.

*Stephen Panawash  
[ddb6081@rochester.rr.com](mailto:ddb6081@rochester.rr.com)*

**Dear editor,**

I was with 11th LIB, Co. D, 1/20th Inf. from March 1968 to March 1969. I am trying to find out about some of the units from WWII, specifically any MVA (Motorized Vehicle Assembly) units. My father-in-law was in a MVA unit in New Caledonia. Can anyone steer me to some information resources?

*Cliff Tholen  
[Woodcrew2@msn.com](mailto:Woodcrew2@msn.com)*

**Dear editor,**

I am the Chairman of the Bourne National Veterans Cemetery Joint Veterans Committee. I am looking for a POC for the Americal Division Veterans Association in Massachusetts or any Americal Division veteran who wishes to be on our mailing list. We would like to invite Americal veterans to special events and ceremonies at the cemetery. Anyone who wants to be on the list should contact me for further information.

*Frank McDonald  
[fmacdonald53@verizon.net](mailto:fmacdonald53@verizon.net)*

**Dear editor,**

I have a comment about the story on James P. Meade, Jr. on pages 32-33 of the Jan-Feb-Mar 2013 edition of the Americal Journal. Jame's father served as both the 196th Bde CSM and the Americal Division CSM. The Meade family sacrifices also included the loss of 1LT David Meade who served with D Co, 2nd / 503rd Inf. Bn of the 173rd Airborne Bde and died on 15 May 1970.

This is an article in the "Southern Cross" introducing us to our new CSM in early 1969. It was in the 19 Jan69- Southern Cross Vol. 2 No. 02 Page 8.

### **CSM MEADE ASSUMES POST OF COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR**

*Chu Lai--CSM James P. Meade has assumed the duties of division Command Sergeant Major. CSM Meade filled the position left vacant by CSM James D. Rogers who has been reassigned as Command Sergeant Major of the First Army area at Fort Meade, Md., First Army Headquarters.*

**With 196th And 198th**

*Before taking over his present position, CSM Meade was Command Sergeant Major of the 196th Inf. Bde. for eight months. During his first two months in country, he was Command Sergeant Major of the 5th Bn., 46th Inf. of the 198th Inf. Bde.*

*"It is truly an honor to be selected as the Command Sergeant Major of the Americal Division," CSM Meade said. "I intend to be a working Sergeant Major," he continued. "I would rather the men refer to me, not as the sergeant major, but as our sergeant major." Selected for his slot by MG Charles M. Gettys, CSM Meade is scheduled to rotate in June.*

**Decorations**

*During his 22 years of military service, CSM Meade has been awarded the Bronze Star for Valor, the ARCOM, Combat Infantryman's Badge, World War 11 Victory Medal, Asia-Pacific Campaign Medal, American Theater Campaign Medal, Philippines Liberation Ribbon, and the Presidential Unit Citation, Philippines. A native of Torrington, Wyo., he now claims Portland, Ore., as his home.*

**Comment:** General Gettys was pretty good at selecting his staff members. He also often remembered for choosing young Major Colin Powell for his staff.

Les Hines; ADVA Vietnam Historian  
[americalhistory@gmail.com](mailto:americalhistory@gmail.com)

**Dear editor,**

My copy of the recent edition of the Americal Journal was misplaced while I was in the hospital. Is it possible for you to send me a replacement copy? The magazine means a great deal to me and I do not want to miss reading it. I share each copy with my friends.

I wish to thank the editors and staff for making a fine magazine. I always look forward to receiving it.

Thompson Knott; Anti-tank Co., 132nd Inf.  
Santa Maria, CA

**Dear editor,**

I'm sorry to be the one to inform you of the loss of one of your soldiers. Richard Abel of Willimantic, CT died on 11 Feb 2013. He served in Vietnam as a young man.

Seth Russ CW3 USA ret.  
3ID/52 Avn/212 Avn/158 Avn  
[srusspilot@hotmail.com](mailto:srusspilot@hotmail.com)

**Dear editor,**

I am trying to contact Robert G. Fletcher or his family. He served in the Americal Division, 11th Light Infantry Brigade, 52nd Military Intelligence Detachment in Duc Pho, Vietnam in 1967-68.

Major Robert G. Fletcher was the Commanding Officer of that Detachment. I also served in that Military Intelligence Detachment in Vietnam. I and several other of his fellow Vietnam Veterans have been trying to locate him or, in the case of his possible passing, his family to verify if he has indeed passed away. We have located a tombstone in the Punchbowl National Cemetery in Hawaii with a similar name.

If he is alive we would like to know how to contact him. If deceased, we would like to confirm that it is his grave site in the Punchbowl Cemetery and we would like to contact any of his survivors. We are contemplating a 52nd MID unit reunion next year and would like to invite him or his surviving family.

My contact information is 2100 Retreat Court, Virginia Beach, VA, 23454; [trinity70@verizon.net](mailto:trinity70@verizon.net); 757-481-0715

Robert A. Perry; 52nd MID

**Locators**

**Looking for:** Robert Forester, Tony Kirby, and other members of A Battery, 1/82 Arty. from 10/69-11/70. Contact: H.J. Logsdon; [jackson.logsdon@live.com](mailto:jackson.logsdon@live.com) or 618-528-1180.

**Looking for:** A Specialist 5 with the last name Glass. He served in the FDC when we were on LZ Chippewa. He was with us a year but I never knew what happened to him. Contact: William Grady; [wiliam.grady67@yahoo.com](mailto:wiliam.grady67@yahoo.com)

**Looking for:** A list of names of veterans from Co. B, 1/46th Inf. from July 1968 to July 1969. The battalion started out with the 198th LIB and then was reassigned to the 196th LIB. Contact: Donald Reaser; [reaserd@oh.rr.com](mailto:reaserd@oh.rr.com)

**Looking for:** Anyone with Company D, 1st battalion, 52nd. infantry, 198th LIB, Aug 1969 - May 1970. Contact: Wallace E. Piland, Jr; [patandwally@centurylink.net](mailto:patandwally@centurylink.net)

**Looking for:** Anyone who remembers me. I was S/sgt Warren, US Air Force, 15th Aerial Port Sqn mobility team NCOIC that worked the airstrip at Tien Phouc from Sept 70 to Jan 71. I had three guys that would rotate in and out of Danang every 10 days that was my crew. We stayed at the B/Bty 3/16 and Special Forces firebase at night and worked the airstrip during the day. Our hootch was next to the VHF commo bunker. Contact: Mike Warren; [mike.warren20@verizon.net](mailto:mike.warren20@verizon.net)

**Looking for:** anyone who knew Tom Otte, Kaukauna, WI. I was with the 1/50th Mech. Inf. 1966-1968. A lot of guys from the Appleton, Wisc. area were drafted at the same time and took our training at Ft. Hood, Tx. We left on Sept. 1, 1967 on the troop ship Gen. John Pope. We then were part of the 1st Cav. and ended up with the 173rd airborne. One of my high school classmates and fellow soldier was Tom Otte. He was killed during Tet about Feb. 4, 1968. I have a letter that was returned to me from in-country which I had sent to him just a week before he was KIA. He was with the 1/52 Inf. C Co. 198th. Contact: Dennis Feldkamp; [dennisfeldkamp1@yahoo.com](mailto:dennisfeldkamp1@yahoo.com)

## Honoring Americal Veterans

By Ann Galpin Dreeland and Mary Ann Ford



Why do we honor the Americal Division veterans? We honor them as part of our lives.

Our father, Major Robert E. Galpin (deceased 2004), was a member of the Americal Division during his Army career. As a member of The Greatest Generation, he fought in the Asian-Pacific campaigns during WWII. He met our mother, Aniceta, after WWII, while stationed at the US Army ammunition depot in Rosario, La Union, Republic of the Philippines.

Our mother's college education was interrupted by the war. After the war our mother worked as a secretary at the depot to support her family (both parents died young, and she had three younger sisters to support, as well as extended family). Family lore says that the chaplain pushed our parents, both orphans, together. Our father found a home in the Army, and that meant our mother, and later we children, did, too. Our parents married in 1947, and our mother proudly became an American citizen in 1948.

After our father's retirement from the Army he worked for the government as a civilian. This brought us from Massachusetts to New Jersey, Germany, Rhode Island, Guam, the Republic of the Philippines, Okinawa, and Virginia, with final retirement after 45 years of government service, to Arizona.

Our parents stayed active in retirement, particularly with military veteran organizations. They continued to travel, most memorably to Guadalcanal for the 50th anniversary of the battles there. Some Americal Division members may remember our mother as the tiny lady who found cool drinks and cool cloths for them during the trip.

The military influence stayed important in their lives. They stressed the importance of service and education with all family members. They took great pride in the fact that all six grandchildren are college graduates. Two daughters, two sons-in-law, and multiple nephews served in the military, in the United States and in the Philippines.

After our father passed away, our mother moved into a retirement community in Maryland so that daughters could bring her to visit Arlington National Cemetery, where our father is inurned. As our mother became more fragile, her travels decreased. But one of her last trips was to visit the Americal Division Museum in Massachusetts. But it was closed but the kind curator of the museum on the first floor of the building let us in to see it.

Our mother died December 30, 2012, and her cremains will be inurned with our father's at a later date.

## Meeting Elon Bailey

By Gary L. Noller

Mr. Elon Bailey, WWII veteran of the 721st Ordnance Detachment, passed away on March 8, 2013. He was a resident of Sylacauga, AL.

It is fortunate for me that I know more about Mr. Bailey than the short notice posted above. By chance I met Elon just a few months ago at the dedication of the Americal Division memorial at the National Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning, GA. He came up to me at the close of the ceremony and asked if he could have a minute of my time.

Elon told me that he had not been to many veterans activities in recent years. He also stated that he could not pass up the opportunity to attend the memorial dedication ceremony. His two sons brought him from his home and helped him around the dedication site.

Elon marveled at the monument's design and the impact it had on everyone there. He expressed his gratitude that it was completed and that he could see it in person. His eyes sparkled as he glanced back at the polished granite that will forever remember those he knew.

I asked Elon if he had a particular memory of his times in the war. As is often the case, favorite memories are not of the combat of war but of some small incident that seemed insignificant at the time. He recalled a visitor they had in their ordnance repair shop one day.

He told me that someone brought a broken walking stick to the repair shop and asked that a small repair be made. The mechanic did not look up from his work but told the visitor to leave the item and come back later. The visitor came back later to claim his walking stick and again the mechanic did not look up but simply asked the visitor to return a bit later. After the visitor left Elon asked the mechanic if he knew the owner of the walking stick. The mechanic answered that he did not know who it was and did not really care who it was. He would get to the walking stick when he could. Elon simply said, "That guy is the division commander." The mechanic quickly made the needed repair.

This brought a smile to Elon's face and to the faces of his two sons who were with him and to my face as well. It is not a huge story. But of all the stories Elon could tell it is the one that he chose to me on that special day. It is the story that I will always remember about a WWII veteran that I had never met before. May he rest in Peace.



Ensure prompt delivery of your Americal Journal. Send all address changes to Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant, as soon as possible. This includes seasonal changes.

## SOUTH MIDWEST CHAPTER

AR LA OK TX MS



### COMMANDER

**Cameron F. Baird**  
 P.O. Box 211  
 Stonewall, TX 78671  
 830 • 644 • 2704  
[altdorf@ktc.com](mailto:altdorf@ktc.com)

## In Good Spirits

By Gary L. Noller

The South Midwest Chapter held its annual reunion in Fredericksburg, TX on May 9-11, 2012. The reunion was hosted by chapter commander Cameron Baird and his wife Lisa. Approximately 65 members and guests attended the gathering.

The Friday tour included all anyone would want to know about the making of beer, wine, and spirits. The tour began at Pedernales Brewing Company in Fredericksburg where Peter McFarlane described the brewing ingredients, equipment, and process. McFarlane has been a brewmaster for over 25 years and assisted in the opening of many new microbreweries. A favorite product sampled by guests was Lobo Texas Lager.

Tour participants ate lunch in the minuscule yet famous village of Luckenbach, TX. The skies were clear and the temperature was moderate. The picnic atmosphere and bucolic environment contributed to a soothing environment. The pulled pork sandwich seemed to be the most popular lunch item.

The next stop was Becker Vinyards in Stonewall, TX. Becker was one of the first vinyards to bring wine making to the Hill Country. Becker began crafting award winning wines in 1992 and they employ state of the art equipment and techniques to make a wide variety of pleasant wines. One could sample merlot, cabernet sauvignon, port, rose, and several other varieties of fermented grape juice.

The final stop of the day was at Garrison Brothers Distillery in Hye, TX. Dan Garrison, proprietor and distiller, hosted an in-depth exploration of the making of fine bourbon whiskey. At the end of the tour Garrison informed his guests of the proper way to sip a fine whiskey. Many in the group eagerly accepted his toast and found his product to indeed be a smooth and tasty delight.

A highlight of Saturday's activities was the rededication of the American Division memorial plaque at the National Museum of the War in the Pacific in Fredericksburg, TX. Ernie Carlson, then SMW chapter commander, championed the creation of the memorial plaque in 1999. Workers completed installation in time for it to be dedicated as part of the national reunion held in San Antonio in 2000. Unfortunately, Ernie passed away two months before his work was unveiled to ADVA members. I was delighted to say a few words about my good friend and mentor.

Plans are moving forward for a national reunion in Houston, TX in 2014. Chapter members discussed suspending a chapter reunion in 2014 and to come together at the Houston event. In any event the 2013 reunion was well organized and operated and will be remembered for lifting everyone's spirits.



## VolunTEARS

### Tears of Compassion, Appreciation

By Jan Heath, ©2013

What have I volunteered myself into? Two weeks after my retirement from a Quality Assurance position in an agency within the Department of Defense, I took steps to fulfill a long-standing commitment to perform volunteer work at a regional Veterans Administration (VA) Hospital. The first time I called the VA hospital to inquire about volunteering, a person in Volunteer Services directed me to "Show up at the hospital for orientation at 7:30 in the morning next Friday."

Friday morning, I arrived at a rather shabby "Volunteer Services" building, a stark contrast to the newer major wings of the hundred-acre hospital campus. I reported for duty to the gentleman at the counter. "I'm here for orientation," I announced.

"We got no orientation today - only wheelchair escorts. Are you willing to do that?"

"Sure," I replied.

He looked a bit surprised that I would agree to push wheelchairs. He handed me a clipboard with three pages of paperwork to fill out. Name, address, date of birth, etcetera.

Twenty minutes later three additional volunteers arrived so the Volunteer staff member led us to an adjacent room where we watched a video stressing the importance of protecting personal individual patient information. Actually, two of us watched and the other two volunteers half-watched while filling out the rest of their paperwork.

During the video, one volunteer who could see through the doorway from our video room into the lobby said there were about a dozen additional volunteers in the office lobby area. As the paid staff worker bees stumbled around setting up additional video equipment, I heard another authoritative voice from the lobby cheerily proclaim to the new volunteers:

"Welcome to volunteer orientation."

That is very different than the rude greeting I initially received and a contradiction to the proclamation that there "would be no orientation today." Someone on staff is confused.

About that time two Volunteer Services managers arrived and the two near-retirement government workers attitudes toward us became more accommodating. During general conversations we learned that one cantankerous Volunteer Services employee, along with one of the managers would retire in less than two years, indicative of America's aging workforce.

In September, 2012 I received word that the volunteer in the Veterans Benefits Office had quit his post. No explanation, no reason.

I was delighted to begin volunteering two days a week at the reception desk in the Veterans Benefits Office. I began to learn the interesting personalities among the Veterans Service Officers (VSOs, more correctly "National Service Officers"). All but one were veterans, most were my age group, served the military during the Vietnam Era. Three are female, eight are male.

The veterans service organizations they represent include Disabled American Veterans, Vietnam Veterans of America, American Veterans (AMVETS), Veterans of Foreign Wars, Los Angeles County Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, and the Military Order of the Purple Heart. The Service Officers seem highly competent, help one another with information and share their camaraderie, kid one another and share good humor.

The prevailing attitude among hospital volunteers, VSOs, and hospital staff is that everyone is tasked to treat all Veterans with respect. This commonality of focus bonds members with a singularity of purpose, above all, to respect Veterans.

Even in this cooperative harmony there are scheduling complications that make my duties more challenging. Our doors open at 8:00 every morning. Some service officers see veterans right away beginning at 8:00 a.m., others not until 8:30, 9:00 or don't show up until between 9:00 and 10:00. Those who show up late often stay later than our closing time at 3:00 p.m. DAV and VFW have only one representative each. The VFW rep often leaves around lunchtime to go across L.A. to help with appeals cases at the Wilshire VA Facility in Los Angeles. The DAV rep only accepts four appointments after lunch and has his personal clipboard to list these. The Military Order of the Purple Heart representative limits his counseling to appointments. Thankfully the service officers are willing to bend these procedures when we get crowded.

One of my most effective responses to veterans who complain about VA is to remind them that although we help veterans with their VA benefits claims, we do not technically work for the VA claims division. Our badges are issued by the VA Hospital Security Services. The Veterans Administration provides us office space, copying, and I.T. support services primarily because service officers help complete claims and make the jobs of VA claims officers easier.

Sadly, but predictably, a small percentage of the veterans we see are incapable of clear communication, the result of low brain function usually due to wounds, medications, drug abuse, alcohol abuse or aging. They are typically accompanied by a friend, relative or health professional to help them.

Working the reception desk reminds me of a paraphrase of the theme for one TV reality show, "I never know what's going to come through that door." Most veterans are well groomed, polite, articulate. These Veterans make my efforts less difficult. It is the small percent of others that make my work more aggravating, demanding.

Some cases are difficult because they are heart breaking. A woman in her sixties walked in with her eighty-plus-year-old mother. The mother gently clutched a baby, presumably her granddaughter, close to her cheek and did not move the baby for the half hour they were in the lobby. The baby did not cry, yell, laugh. Then I realized the baby was a plastic doll. The younger of the two women sought a nursing home for her mother. I didn't find out whether a room was available, since that is the job of the service officers or hospital officials. I fear she may have to wait a while until a room in a veterans nursing home becomes available. Hopefully, some in-home health care will be available.

Another time a middle aged man approached me at the Veterans Benefits desk. He wore a stylish felt hat, carried a small musical case along with a few tote bags, looked like he might be a musician. He was clean-cut and appeared to be healthy, said, "I want to see a service officer."

"Yes sir, let me write your name on our log. Your name sir?"

"I don't know my name because I got hit on my head the other night when somebody robbed me."

"O.K., I'll put your name as John Doe, so listen for the Veterans Service Officer to call that name."

He took a seat, fidgeted a lot, sporadically talked to himself quietly aloud.

After about twenty minutes, he proudly shouted, "I'm an officer!"

"Yes sir, a Service Officer will see you as soon as possible."

A few minutes later he asked, "Can I use your desk phone to call my sister?"

Yes sir, if it is a local call. Where does she live?"

"In London, England."

"You will need to use your cell phone to call your sir."

Before long, a Service Officer invited the "officer" into his office. Fifteen minutes later John Doe stomped back into the lobby, obviously agitated.

"This is bullshit! I'm calling my attorney!" He went into the hallway to get better phone reception, returned within minutes.

"I'm a doctor, you know."

"Yes sir." I'm thinking, he doesn't know his name but knows he's a doctor? He began a tirade accusing the VA of mistreating him.

"Sir, those of us working here in Veterans Benefits do not work directly for the Veterans Administration. You need to see someone in the Patients Advocate office on the first floor. The office is adjacent to the elevators." He hesitantly gathered his gear, walked away from our lobby.

Our National Service Officer who had interviewed the "doctor" approached me and said, "That guy is crazy. He told me that he found a mandolin in the music case on the street and miraculously could play the instrument fluently even though he never had any lessons. Worse, the asshole is not even in the VA system, does not know military units or terminology and cannot produce evidence that he was ever in the military. These fakes and scammers waste time that we could use to help real veterans."

Later that day I saw the "doctor" loitering in another lobby in the hospital. He was supposed to get help from the Social Services office in another hospital wing, but there he became more belligerent so security escorted him off the hospital grounds.

Even by phone, we are subject to crackpots. "Veterans Benefits, may I help you."

"Maybe," the male voice in the phone timidly answered. "I did not know I would have to shave when I joined the Army, but they made me shave in basic training. I didn't think much of it for years, but now I'm wondering if I can request to have my Less-than-Honorable discharge upgraded to honorable?"

The man on the phone could not see me cringing in disbelief as I answered, "I don't know, but a Veteran's Service Officer can probably give you more information." I transferred his call. He did not know the Army would make him shave? Maybe there is some terrible disease he caught, but short of that, to hell with this idiot. Of course he can apply to have his Less-than-Honorable discharge upgraded, but, depending on reasons it is dishonorable, I strongly suspect his claim will be denied.

Another time I was listening to recorded phone messages. I had to listen carefully since the old guy apparently was missing teeth and his speech was nearly unintelligible. As his message progressed, it became clear he was likely drunk as he slurred his speech and said,

"Hey, I don't get no money from the VA, but I got a shit-load of old lottery tickets here. None of them are winners, but can you guys GET ME SOME MORE NEW ONES?" I shared the laugh with the VSOs. We did not return his call.

Why spend my retirement volunteering? Some personal motives are selfish. I still suffer "survivors guilt," so this is a way to pay back for the good life I have enjoyed, a sort of make-up for the guys and women who were maimed, killed, or emotionally wounded. Additionally, I enjoy the occasional adrenaline rush of confrontations, plus Veterans stories are interesting.

Some reasons are more altruistic. Making the world a better place at least for veterans. I experienced first-hand how Veterans got screwed by their draft boards, by unethical recruiters who lied to them, how veterans suffered through bad leadership, both military and political, suffered at the hands of the old VA System and the bad attitudes of the American public of that era. Veterans are some of the most honorable people I know. All military veterans make sacrifices that the public can at best only imagine. I intend to do my part to compensate veterans by doing volunteer work on their behalf.

One memorable day, as I walked the long hospital halls after lunch to return to my volunteer's office, a hospital attendant in scrubs came around a corner, motioned me to clear a path, step to the side. Soon a gurney appeared accompanied by a somber elderly lady and two younger ladies. The gurney was adorned by a new American flag the size of a bed sheet, covering the body of a veteran who had just made the transition to the other side of life. I stood at attention for this comrade-at-arms until the procession passed. Mixed emotions flooded me. Sadness for our mortality, for the loss of their loved one, pride for the respect displayed by the staff and that I am a comrade of such men and women as these.

When the backs and legs of Veteran's Hospital volunteers ache from pushing patients, sometimes literally miles each day, or our patience wears thin from dealing with rude veterans or surely staff, we remind ourselves of veteran's courage and camaraderie and pledge to maintain a compassionate, respectful face toward these defenders of our freedoms.

I often leave the hospital tired but with the pride and sense of fulfillment that I have accomplished something of value. Days that I volunteer at the VA Hospital are among the most fulfilling of my life. I will continue as long as I am able.



**Situation:** The American Division Veterans Association's annual reunion and "A" Company 1/20th Infantry's reunion will be held in Nashville, Tennessee from Wednesday, September 11-Sunday, September 15, 2013.

**Mission:** To secure the Millennium-Maxwell House Hotel at 2025 Rosa Parks Blvd., Nashville, Tennessee 37228-1505 by land or air assault (hotel provides free shuttle service to and from Nashville International Airport), beginning Wednesday, September 11, 2013 for the purpose of establishing a base of operation to join old friends and meet new friends, site-see, eat, drink, and enjoy great entertainment.

**Execution:** The registration table will be opened at 1200 hours (noon) on Wednesday, Sept. 11, 2013 in the lobby of the hotel.

*Thursday, Sept. 12* all personnel with a ticket will assault (ride the bus) up I-24 to Ft. Campbell, KY (about an hour away), home of the 101st Airborne (Air Assault) Division. Some of you may remember showing them how to do it in Vietnam or maybe you were privileged enough to have gone to basic training there. We will visit the museum, air assault school, see helicopters, and eat chow in a DFAC (new term for "mess hall"). That evening we will host a buffet at "LZ Millennium-Maxwell House."

*Friday, Sept. 13* those personnel with a ticket will board our ground transportation to the Tennessee State Vietnam Memorial for the annual memorial service at the War Memorial. Following a boxed lunch, you will have time to visit the Tennessee State Museum and/or the Tennessee Military Museum before being transported to the Ryman Auditorium (birth place of country music) for a self-guided tour. After being transported back to the LZ (hotel) you will have time to catch some "Z's" or a little dinner before our trip to the Grand Ole Opry.

*Saturday, Sept. 14* the command has invited all ADVA members to the annual business meeting in the briefing room at the LZ as our spouses board land transport to the Opry Mills Shopping Center which has a mile of stores and eating establishments or the Opryland Hotel. Saturday night will be celebrated with our annual banquet at the hotel.

*Sunday, Sept. 15* the Chaplain would like to see as many as possible at our chapel service prior to our withdrawal and return to our home stations. If you would like to come in a couple of days early or stay a couple of days longer to enjoy some of the other sites in and around Nashville, arrangements can be made with the Millennium Maxwell House at the reunion rate.

**Command and Control:** The reunion committee will be glad to assist you in any way possible.

**Supply and Logistics:** The reunion rate will be \$99.00/night + tax with ample parking, shuttle service to and from the airport and downtown. In addition to a wonderful restaurant in the hotel, eating establishments are within easy walking distance.

RV Camp Sites are located nearby.  
Please call Ron Green at **(423) 716-5978** for information.

**Hotel reservations Primary hotel is sold out. See page 3 for information on back-up hotel arrangements.**

**Make reservations and registrations as early as possible since tickets must be purchased well in advance and hotel space will fill up quickly!**



## 2013 ADVA NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Nashville, Tennessee September 11-15, 2013  
Millennium-Maxwell House Hotel  
2025 Rosa L. Parks Blvd.  
Nashville, Tennessee 37228-1505



Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Guest \_\_\_\_\_

First Time at an  
ADVA Annual  
Reunion? (y/n) \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit(s) \_\_\_\_\_ WWII \_\_\_\_\_ VN \_\_\_\_\_ Handicapped assistance? (y/n) \_\_\_\_\_

ADVA member registration\* \$20.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Non- Member ( Americal vet)\*\* \$35.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Guest/Spouse of members or non-members \$20.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*No registration fee for WWII ADVA members.

\*\* Registration fee for non-member Americal Vet includes one year ADVA dues.

Thursday Tour of Ft. Campbell ( w/lunch )

Sep. 12, 2013 0900AM-4PM  
\$40.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Thursday Country Buffet

Sep. 12, 2013 6PM-8PM  
\$30.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Friday Memorial Service, boxed lunch, tour of Ryman Auditorium (birth place of Country Music)

Sep. 13, 2013 0900AM-2PM  
\$40.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Friday "Americal Night at the Grand Ole Opry"

Sep. 13, 2013 5PM-10PM  
\$50.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Banquet: Cocktails Cash Bar Banquet & Program

Sep. 14, 2013 6PM-8PM  
\$40.00/person X \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Beef \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Registration confirmations will be mailed by August 15, 2013. A \$20.00 per person cancellation fee will apply to all cancellations received with 30 days of the reunion. Cancellations received within 10 days of the start of the reunion will be non-refundable due to contractual obligations.

Questions: Call or e-mail Ron Green at 423-716-5978 or [ron\\_green46@yahoo.com](mailto:ron_green46@yahoo.com)

Download form <http://americal.org/programs/reunion.html>

### MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: ADVA Reunion

Mail this form and your check to:  
ADVA Reunion  
P.O. Box 6007  
Cleveland, TN 37320

## Flamethrowers - Those "Frightening Weapons"

By David W. Taylor

Marvin Seas of the 164th Regiment remembered it well. It happened on Bougainville. "One morning our company executive officer told me that I would be going to a school on flame throwers. We (one person from each company) arrived at this training area, and after an hour of class we had lunch. Shortly thereafter we were told that we were needed up at the front and had to cut through the thick brush part of the way. This hill, 'Hill 260', was covered with trees of all sizes along with the brush. There was a huge tree right on top of Hill 260 which was used for a lookout post. I would say that the tree would measure 120 feet tall. This post changed hands several times with the Americans ending up in control. The hill was bombed and shelled so much that by the time we left you could have planted a garden. When our unit of 50 enlisted men and officers arrived, we were told to load our flame throwers and be ready to move out. Each man that carried a flame thrower was the squad leader, and five other men made up the full flamethrower squad, and their job was to protect the person carrying the flamethrower.

"One morning my partner and I were supposed to try to destroy this tree. The Japs had those round foxholes around the large tree. My partner and I took five one-gallon cans of gas and two loaded flamethrowers and started to work our way to the tree. When we got close enough we took the covers from the cans of gas and threw them into the Jap foxholes and then emptied one flamethrower without lighting it. Then we lit the gas with the second flame thrower. After a few days the tree roots had burned off so the big lookout tree came down".

He continues, "A day or so later one company of infantry plus my squad from the flamethrower unit went out again. They had gotten so they couldn't even go on patrol without taking a flamethrower along. A thrower weighed 90 lbs. loaded, so it was very hard to carry through the rough terrain and brush. We torch men went through our line before daylight and proceeded to work our way into enemy territory, and by early afternoon we had many Japs between us and the front line, which line we had left earlier that morning. I was ordered to go forward and burn out a big bunker. I got about halfway there when I stopped to see where my squad or protection was, and couldn't see any of them.

I alone proceeded forward and finally got close enough to my target to empty my flamethrower. The Japs started to come out of the other foxholes and bunkers. Everyone had orders not to shoot, but after a while a man carrying a Browning automatic let go a burst and the Japs jumped back into their foxholes and threw everything they had at us. We finally got off the hill after dark, carrying our wounded and several dead. After which seemed like many hours of walking we met a couple of soldiers who said we had been relieved. I stayed the rest of the night with an artillery battery, and this was the first time I knew that we were attached to the 182nd Infantry.



**Close-up of flamethrower M2-2, being demonstrated by Private Mario N. Herce, Key West, Florida, of the Americal Division on Bougainville Island. This flame thrower embodied new features that the older model (M1A1), did not possess. The M2-2 has a fuel capacity of only 4 gallons, but due to the improvement of the nozzle (or sprayer); it is capable of throwing a flame 40 yards away (National Archives)**

"The following day a jeep driver took me back to my own company. When I got out of the jeep our company executive officer came out of our headquarters tent and said he couldn't believe it because they had received word that I had been killed."

The Banyan tree on Hill 260 came down from the fire which burnt the roots, on March 17 1944. The Battle for Hill 260 began on March 9th when Company "G" of the 182nd Regiment, posted on the hill, received heavy volumes of rifle, mortar and machinegun fire. The next day a ground attack by the Japanese was launched across the Americal's front lines, including the outpost on Hill 260. It was Japanese Army Day. The battle for the hill would last until the end of March when remnants of the remaining Jap soldiers on the hill slipped away even while the Americal firmly controlled the hill.

Various companies from the Americal's three regiments would be involved during the heavy fighting on Hill 260. On March 14th flamethrowers assigned to the 132nd Regiment attacked one Japanese pillbox after another. The "Torch Men" brought a horrible and swift death to the stubbornly resisting Japanese. Remembering that fight on Hill 260 veterans recalled, "It took a brave and fearless person to risk crawling up that hornet's nest of machineguns and release a short-lived flame. Once the flame died down the operator was a 'sitting duck' target. The men with flamethrowers were always a vulnerable target. In one 48-hour assault, Lt. Thomas R. Allen's torch men destroyed eight Japanese pillboxes. And, although completely out of fuel, the men with the flamethrower held part of the hill."

On March 15 the fighting escalated in intensity aimed to destroy the observation post banyan tree, which would become known as "The Million Dollar Tree" because of all the ordnance fired on it, since it was a key observation post for both the Japanese and American's, whoever held the

hill at the time. Cannon Company, the 182nd Infantry's heavy 75mm pack howitzer weapons were brought up. Lt. Geiger's platoon from Company "A" with four flamethrowers attacked the Japanese at the base of the observation post tree. White phosphorous grenades and bazookas were used; prolonged concentration 81mm and 4.2-inch mortar barrages were laid down on the Japanese. Lt. Kaps had Company A dig a trench extending forward to the observation post tree.

At 7:00PM the generals considered the use of tanks to assist in the attack but the tanks could not get across the Torokina River. The infantry assault continued. Lt. Geiger and his platoon assaulted the east area of Hill 260, with their flamethrowers aided by Lt. Allen's torch men.

During the heavy fighting in mid-March two rifle platoons accompanied the 164th flamethrower team to Hill 260 where they fought in a brisk, three-day fight reducing Japanese strong points. While heavy casualties were inflicted on the Japanese from the deadly flames, the Americal took heavy casualties as well. The 164th Regimental flamethrower team lost nearly half their men. The 182nd teams were all but wiped out.

Joe Salini was one of those who tested flamethrowers for the Americal. He vividly remembered the appalling device: "I tested flamethrowers when we were on Bougainville. They were frightening weapons. When you use a flamethrower the blast gives off an intense heat that burns off your eyebrows. An arc of flame goes out that is six feet wide and maybe forty yards long. It creams everything it hits. Just destroys it"

The Americal was to turn to these "frightening weapons" again on the Island of Cebu, in heavy fighting in the Babag Ridge area in late March 1945, and especially, in the Go Chan Hill area. An explosion on Watt Hill nearby had devastated Company A of the 182nd Regiment, making the company combat ineffective.

On the morning of March 30, in vengeful attacks supported by all available artillery, chemical mortars and tanks, the entire 182nd pushed forward in a coordinated attack against the mass of high ground designated as Hill 31. Flamethrowers added strength to the attacks of the 182nd's 2nd Battalion striking Hill 31 from the eastern flank, crossing up Bolo Ridge. One of the Bay Staters' flamethrower operators, PFC Bernice McCombs, of Pinson, Alabama, had a field day as he helped grind out the advance.

When leading elements of the 2nd Battalion were halted by furious 20mm cannon fire and deadly bursts from well-placed light and heavy machineguns, McCombs went into action. Disregarding the intense hostile fire, he crawled forward; a perfect target with the bulky tank strapped to his back, and delivered a burst of flame at the leading enemy pillbox. This bold act so stunned the enemy, that troops of the battalion were able to charge forward and neutralize the emplacement. A short time later another Japanese pillbox placed sufficiently strong fire on the attacking infantrymen to halt the advance. McCombs moved out in front again, smothered the troublesome position in flame and smoke, and waved his comrades forward. Several more times during the day this Alabama soldier scored scorching



Enlisted men of the Chemical Warfare Service, Americal Division, fire a pillbox with a portable flamethrower, M1A1, during demonstration on the Solomon Islands (National Archives)

triumphs over enemy emplacements as he repeated his earlier performances. His actions proved to be one of the decisive factors in the final success of the battalion's mission and he was awarded the Silver Star.

The use of flamethrowers was costly to both the enemy and the Americal soldiers using them as noted in the fighting on Bougainville. On April 8 in the fight for Hill 20 on Cebu, Company E of the 182nd assaulted the hill. In the midst of the action, when the forward progress of the company had been hindered by heavy hostile fire, a pair of flamethrowers was brought up. As they were about to be placed in action, one of the two exploded as a result of a leaky valve and three men were sprayed with the deadly fuel. One of Company E's squad leaders with the torch men, Tech Sgt. James Simpson of Los Angeles watched in horror. In the confusion that naturally occurs, several of Simpson's men lost their weapons. The Japanese, taking advantage of the situation, launched a sudden counterattack. Simpson opened fire on the enemy, facing them alone while his men and the flamethrower team were incapacitated. He drove off the enemy and the wounded were evacuated. His squad was reduced in strength from 14 at the beginning of the attack, including the soldiers with flamethrowers, to 4 at the end, but the hill was taken.

#### End Notes:

*"How Many Remember Flamethrowers?" Marvin Seas, 164th Regiment Association Newsletter, September 1985.*

*"The Fearless Flamethrower Operators" Orchids in the Mud. Personal Accounts By Veterans of the 132nd Infantry Regiment, edited by Robert C. Muehrcke, Printed 1985. Pages 244-245.*

*"They Were Ready. The 164th Infantry in the Pacific War, 1942-1945" Terry L. Shoptaugh Pages 270-271.*

*"Touched With Fire. The Land War in the South Pacific" Eric Bergerud. 1996 Page 172.*

*"Under The Southern Cross" Francis D. Cronin 1951. Pages 285-296, 294*



## Lucky Three Times

By Lewis G. Mayfield

I read with considerable interest the article, "By The Grace of God" by Irwin Sonstegard in the October-November-December 2011 issue of the Americal Journal. I was also in Company A, 182nd Regiment. My similar experience follows:

### First Beachhead – Capul

On the night of February 18 we had a steak dinner about midnight, just before the company boarded LCVPs for a trip up the Samar coast to Capul. It is a small island in a strategic location in the San Bernardino Straits, between Samar and Luzon. The Straits had figured in a crucial naval engagement, the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the prior October or November. The Japanese on Capul had a couple of 77-mm cannons and were shooting at ships going through the Straits on their way to Manila. Going north around Luzon added another 1,000 miles to the sea route. Someone thought it would be a good idea to take their guns away from them and, by a quirk of fate, part of Company A got the job.

We made the assault on the beach at about 8:30AM after an air strike by two Navy Corsairs. I never saw any damage done by the air strike. With uncanny precision we landed exactly where the Japanese had two of their 77-mm cannons concealed in a narrow mangrove strip at the edge of the water. The beach was filled with coral, and was not sandy. When the tide was high, the water nearly reached the mangroves. We weren't over 100 feet from the mangroves when they fired at us with the 77-mm. The shell hit the water about five feet from the edge of the LCVP. It made a waterspout just like one sees in the movies. The important thing was they missed and I survived.

Nearby we had a lone PT boat without torpedoes. Instead the deck was covered with .30 and .50-caliber machineguns.

When the 77-mm round was fired the PT Boat started firing all of its machineguns and the Japanese didn't get off another round. Those guys on the open deck of the PT were highly motivated to shoot! The amount of fire was impressive. Needless to say I was not in all that great shape mentally when the ramp of the LCVP dropped and we waded ashore. I have said that if I had been required to shoot the BAR I could have hit everything in the general direction the gun was pointed. It has a rate of about 700 rounds per minute and a burst of a few seconds from a badly shaking gun would cover quite a bit of territory.

### Second Beachhead – Cebu

Off-loading the Alligators was just like practice, i.e. see the bottom of the ocean for a few seconds and then splash into the water with the Alligator. This time when we formed the skirmish line we had three LSI's (Landing Ship Infantry) with us, one on each end of the line and one in the middle. My Alligator was on the far left of the line next to a LSI. The LSI's had rocket launchers mounted on both sides. When we started moving toward shore, the bombardment from the ships lifted and the LSI's took up the barrage with many salvos from the rocket launchers.

It was really quite a sight and the first time I had seen rockets launched. I wasn't going to miss the invasion by keeping my head down when it wasn't necessary, so I was the eyes for the rest of the guys and gave them a description of the events. About a hundred yards from the shore the

**Above Infantry assault Cebu Beach on Alligators; explosion is from a Japanese mine that went off under one of the assault vehicles (National Archives)**

LSIs decided they were close enough and left, and I quit watching. It was now the Alligators turn, and they kept up the continual fire on this beach with the two .30-caliber machineguns and the lone .50-caliber machinegun each carried. The .30-caliber machinegun Heisick was manning misfired. The rest of the guys were annoyed and gave plenty of instructions when Bill didn't pull the bolt back twice to clear the gun. The first pull ejects the round that didn't fire and the second pull puts a new round in the chamber.

The next thing we knew, we hit bottom and crawled out on the shore. After the alligators had crawled up on the beach a few yards there were a series of explosions that blew off their tracks. Every Alligator, except mine, had run over the land mines! In retrospect, my alligator on the far side of the line must have been a few yards from the edge of the mined area. My alligator couldn't go any farther because the Japanese had railroad irons tied waist-high in the coconut trees at the edge of the beach.

Only one person on the Alligators was hurt. He apparently had his hand over the side when the Alligator next to his set off a mine and he got a piece of shrapnel in his hand. The beachhead was accomplished, and the assault wave was on shore.

The back ramps on the Alligators were dropped and everyone had to get out and hoof it. A mined beach was bad news. Just before leaving Leyte I had been assigned to a machinegun squad so I took off with my two boxes of ammunition and followed exactly on the steps of the first scout. He was an Indian from Pocatello, Idaho who had been

let out of prison to join the Army. Running liquor across the Canadian border was his offense. Those guys had good instincts about where they step and I appreciated having him in front of me on a mined beach. This time I was content to be an observing "follower". My luck was holding again.

### Disaster for Company A

Several days after the landing on Cebu we moved down the road a few hundred yards to where a mine-sweeping squad was working on clearing the road. One soldier had been killed sweeping the mines. We were headed to the top of a small ridge a hundred and fifty feet off the road. The ridge was small and probably not over fifty feet tall. When approaching the hill I observed a concrete-lined tunnel going back into it. It was a square tunnel not over 4 feet square. We were about half way up the hill when the Japanese threw some mortar shells at us. I thought they were gas shells because the smoke was very yellow. They were only marking shells. When we got to the top of the hill, my machinegun squad moved down the ridgeline. On the way I observed a sunken hole that had been dug with a shovel. Very curious, why should there be a sunken hole on top of this hill? We went 150 feet down the ridgeline to a 500-pound bomb crater and took up residence there for fifteen minutes or so. A spent round kicked up some dirt in the bomb crater. Nothing else happened. The word came to withdraw from the hill. Our machinegun was to go back up the ridgeline top cover the withdrawal. We set up the gun at a reverse L-shaped trench about 20 inches deep.





**Infantry and crew of supporting tanks move into outskirts of Cebu City after fighting their way over mined roads from the original beachhead 5 miles away. They are headed for the hill country above Cebu City where the Japanese have dug in** (National Archives)

The machine gunner, Nielsen, was on the foot of the "L". I was on the leg and a guy from Texas (can't remember his name so I'll call him "Tex") was at the top of the "L". One platoon of Company A was angling across the front of the slope going toward the rear. They were well-spaced and not bunched. A Sherman tank was on the flats seventy-five feet or so from the concrete-lined tunnel. Most of Company A was already on the flats approaching the road, perhaps 150 feet from the start of the slope. (WWII Historians Note: This is the infamous Watt Hill Mr. Mayfield is writing about)

### Explosion

The next thing I knew the whole earth was rising up in my face. I didn't care for this place and took off. I got about two steps when the blast knocked me down. The stuff started coming out of the sky. A wood timber, about 2-inches x 8-inches x10 feet long, hit me in the head. Fifteen feet away some clods of dirt came down. They were about 24-inches in diameter and surprisingly round. When the stuff quit coming down Nielsen and the guy from Texas were not to be seen. The Texas guy was only partly buried by loose dirt and raised his shoulders so they were free. He was terrified. He thought he had lost his legs. I freed him a bit and ran over to the edge of the hill to get some help. The guys on the flats were knocked down by the blast and when I waved to them to come, some came on the run. I was busy digging dirt off Tex's legs when they arrived.

They wanted to know where Nielsen had been and I pointed to where he had been sitting and to my amazement, there in a little sunken cone, his fingers were pointing up. Nielson! He had his hand above his head and dirt had run over his sleeve! They immediately started to work and had his head uncovered before he passed out. The machinegun

was buried and I pointed to where I thought it had been and it was dug out.

The 2x8 board had crushed my helmet enough so I had to pry it off my head. I had made a habit of keeping the chin strap for the helmet buckled. If I had been like the guys in the movies with the chin strap dangling, the helmet would have blown off and I would probably have had my skull crushed and been killed or injured and I realized great care should be exercised to do those protective things that might save one's life – like fastening a chin strap. A helmet lying on the ground is useless.

They found one of the guys, from the other machinegun squad, blown over the hill on the Japanese side. They carried him off the hill on a makeshift poncho stretcher. A tendon was all that was keeping his dangling right boot with him. I'm not sure how many in the two machinegun squads were killed but the next day I was the only one left on duty in the two squads. Everyone else in the two machinegun squads were either killed or had been evacuated to a field hospital.

We heard that there were twenty-seven missing in action – the men in the platoon angling across the slope where the explosion had occurred. According to the Saturday Evening Post article there were 110 casualties in that split second. The explosion left a hole at least 200 feet across. Being the analytical type, before I left the hill I paced the distance from where I had been sitting in the trench to the edge of the hole. It was nine steps and there was a dead Japanese soldier a few feet inside the crater. Guys ten miles away heard the blast and saw the column of dust and smoke go way up into the air. I never heard the explosion and I don't remember hearing a second explosion reported to have been made twenty minutes later.

### What Happened?

A Sherman tank was blown over on its side and the four-man crew was killed. Who knows what happened? Obviously the concrete-lined tunnel led into an underground ammunition dump, which must have been associated with the airport and probably contained many aerial bombs. I think those guys in the tank fired their 75-mm cannon into that tunnel. Otherwise why would the blast have turned the tank over? It would take an enormous blast of air to turn a tank over on its side. The initial force of the blast must have been pointed right at them. If they did fire into the tunnel it was the last round they ever fired. Friendly fire is sometimes deadly. Bad day; one not easy to forget, particularly since I had all those uneasy feelings about the strategic features of the area. I found a piece on the internet when I searched for "Go Chan Hill" that said the two explosions were set by the Japs with remote-controlled devices. Who knows?

Nielsen and Tex lived. Nielsen tried to get me a bronze star for saving his life but was told I did what was expected. Perhaps that was right. It probably took more courage to come back up to the top of the hill after the explosion. I was there and had no choice in the matter.

## Beachhead, Cebu, Philippine Islands

By Wayne Weber



end chewed out for not firing. As a country boy and an avid hunter, I only fired when I saw something to shoot at.

My first scout was poorly trained as well, and he and I were being chewed out again for not moving forward fast enough. Next, as we did move forward, the path was blocked with a large ball of wire. The first inclination was to kick it out of the way, which would have been a bad idea as a tight wire ran through the center of the ball, mined by the Japs with buried artillery shells at both ends. We decided to get away from the path and wound up on a concrete highway. One end, I was told, led to Cebu City and the other in the direction of our assigned hill. We found the road was also mined again with artillery shells, a core drilled into the road concrete and cemented in with only a firing pin the size of a pencil eraser showing. This was not an anti-personnel mine but much bigger for vehicles. We found mines in every stage of installation, from completed to just the hole drilled.

Moving up the highway towards our objective, Goat Hill, I had no idea what day it was or how long we had been on Cebu when again we were back on track. Up Goat Hill, to the military crest, we stopped as there was a large shell crater which was used later as a shelter for the wounded and the dead. I became one of the wounded. Again I am not sure how long we lingered in the crater before we moved forward. It wasn't too long before all hell broke loose; mortar, machinegun and rifle fire. It seemed the enemy had guided us to this particular spot so we could be picked off like sitting ducks. In my effort to get back to the shell crater a small knee mortar shell exploded

near my left side. Fortunately the only fragment that hit me was a small piece of the copper guide band that stuck in my elbow but the worst was yet to come. As I crawled forward toward the crater I was hit in the left ankle by machinegun fire, which ended my career as a combat soldier. This was at 2:30PM (I noted my watch). A fellow soldier, only known to me as "Gumbo" ran out of the crater and dragged me into it. Gumbo then proceeded to drag others to the crater.

I received blood and a tourniquet, which I was instructed to loosen every so often to keep the leg alive. I was given plasma several times before it was safe to leave the crater by litter at 2:30AM the following day to an evacuation hospital in Cebu City, which was in a small church.

Easter Sunday was April 1st and I awoke to a small group of natives with an echo choir in the other side of the church. Can you imagine what I thought? From there to another evacuation hospital where I spent several days with the leg in a water bag and receiving penicillin, it seemed, every hour. They called me "the million dollar kid" as the shots would cost \$50 each if I had to pay for them. I still got a terrible infection in the leg which gave me a high fever and put me out of any awareness of what was going on, only at intervals, until I awoke in San Francisco, after what I was told was on a 18-day cruise; from there to Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis until discharge in late October. My combat time was brief, but I made it home alive.



**Jap landmine is pulled from road intersection with help of tank-dozer as American infantry supervise the operation on the road to Cebu. The Japanese buried numerous artillery shells to be used as landmines from the American's beach-landing area running north to Cebu and south to other objectives, such as Goat Hill (National Archives)**

*Top: Wayne Weber – Just before Shipping to War*

## Remembering Hill 260 Bougainville

By Donald C. Duchow



American troops use flamethrowers and gasoline on Hill 260 to overcome the stench of decaying Japanese bodies after the long battle of Hill 260. Approximately 570 Japanese troops were killed in the bloody fighting for the hill (National Archives)

I am offering an account of my experience in connection with the Battle of Hill 260 on Bougainville, in March of 1944.

The American took over the perimeter in Empress Augusta Bay on Bougainville in late December of 1943. The total perimeter was in the shape of a half circle, established that way for security of the fighter airstrip in our sector. We had the right half of the circle from the shoreline extended to the west and the 37th Division had the left half of the circle which extended to their shoreline.

Directly in front of our part of the circle was a hill with a large banyan tree on top, which was designated later as Hill 260. I was in G Company (2nd Battalion, 182nd Regt) at the time. Hill 260 became used as an outpost line of resistance and as an observation post. Maintenance fell to Company G.

The area in front of the perimeter and in front of Hill 260 was heavily patrolled. It was known that the Japanese armed forces were moving in for a counterattack. Prior to the counterattack, which occurred on Japanese Army Day, March 10, 1944, there had been some skirmishes and fire fights, mainly relating to patrol activity. The original members of the 182nd were veterans of the Guadalcanal campaign, but the replacements, officers and enlisted men, had little or no combat experience. In contrast, the Japanese forces were veterans of the China campaign and were the force responsible for the Rape of Nanking.

In late January or early February, there was a request for volunteers to join the Intelligence Section of Headquarters Company of the Second Battalion. I and three other members of the battalion responded. We were in the Intelligence Section on March 10, 1944 – Japanese Army Day – when the Japanese army attack began on Hill 260. Some hours later after commencement of the attack, a message was sent to Intelligence to go to Hill 260 to count the dead Japanese soldiers. We responded. When we got to Hill 260, we went about one-third of the way up, but no further. Lieutenant Colonel Lowry, the battalion commander, was there. He said,

"They think they are fighting. I do not know what they think they are fighting." This remark was made against the rattle of machinegun and rifle fire and intermittent calls for blood plasma. The calls for blood plasma became more insistent and urgent because the supply on hand was insufficient to meet the required need. Colonel Lowry was a dedicated career Army officer, but he badly underestimated the enemy. The ample evidence from patrols that the Japs were moving in was ignored. His report to division headquarters concerning the attack was, "We can handle it."

We were not able to count the dead Japanese – they were moving around too much. On our way back down the hill, we met the Regimental Colonel, and informed him of the situation. He said, "We'll have to get them off of there before dark." This was not done.

Possibly because of the lack of immediate reinforcements, the Japanese were able to dig in sufficiently to withstand anything but a major assault. The topography of the hill, on the edge of the Torokina River, prevented any meaningful artillery assault.

Reinforcements were eventually obtained, therefore preventing Japanese occupation of the entire hill. Facing outward from on the hill, towards the Torokina River, the Japanese had the left side of the hill and the Americans controlled the right side of the hill. The Japanese maintained their position and did not attempt to strike the American position from the rear of the hill.

I was deployed on the American side, part of the time, as a messenger and on listening post, but did not engage in combat. We heard that the General said that Hill 260 must remain secure even if every man on the island died. That led to speculation that he must be on a ship out in the bay.

The Japanese did not remove or bury their dead. Where the soldier fell is where the body lay. Swollen and blackened under the tropical sun, the bodies soon became bloated and covered with insects; large green beetles ate away at the skin.



(National Archives)

**PVT R. Dennis, 182nd Infantry, stands rear guard duty on Hill 260, using the jungle growth to camouflage his position**

After the Japanese abandoned their attack and withdrew, an attempt was made to destroy the bodies with a flamethrower, in our letters home, any mention of the Jap bodies or their condition was strictly forbidden.

In addition to abandoning their dead, the Japanese also abandoned the equipment of the dead. The area once occupied by the Japanese was littered with rifles and other equipment. For a time, Americans were allowed to send captured rifles home, but permission to do so was soon revoked.

Security of the hill was eventually turned over to members of the 93rd Infantry Division, a Negro division. This was well before integration. The Army shared a general opinion at the time that the Negro was an inferior human being. There were some white non-commissioned officers in the outfit. I do not know if there were any Non-commissioned officers.

(WWII Historians note: Only the 25th Regiment of the 93rd Division, along with its 593rd Field Artillery Battalion and a medical and engineer battalion were shipped to Bougainville. The rest of the 93rd Division was used for occupation duties on other islands in the Pacific. Also assigned to Bougainville was the 1st/24th Infantry Battalion, part of the Regular Army 24th Regiment, which was became a black regiment in WWII.

The record of black unit performance on Bougainville is complex and requires a greater background than space allows here. It begins with command personnel. At the beginning of WWII there were few black officers who had the training or experience to assume command of company-size units. Because of this shortage and the conventional wisdom at the time that blacks were not capable of command, most senior officers of black units were white. The resultant imbalance often created hostility not only between enlisted personnel and officers, but between the lower and more senior officer ranks.

Another consideration is that there was tremendous pressure from the War Department to not place black units into direct combat because it was feared they did not have enough training. And so black units tended to be assigned occupation duties. The 1st/24th which relieved the 182nd on Hill 260 (not elements of the 93rd), through no fault of their own, saw limited frontline action on Bougainville. They were eventually transferred to the Russell Islands on June 25. On Bougainville eleven of its men had been killed in action, two later died of wounds and thirteen were wounded.

They accounted for an estimated forty-seven Japanese dead. General Griswold, the Corps Commander on Bougainville (after he relinquished command of the Americal) thought "their combat performance - however limited - had been good."

That the battle for Hill 260 was costly to both sides was undoubtedly due to a lack of proper intelligence on both sides. The Americans knew that the beachhead on Empress Augusta Bay had been made on a lightly defended portion of the island. They also knew that the Japanese were moving in strength, for a possible counterattack.

Colonel Lowry's statement, "We can handle it" caused him to be eventually busted back to the permanent rank of Captain. It also caused a costly delay in supplying reinforcements to the American position.

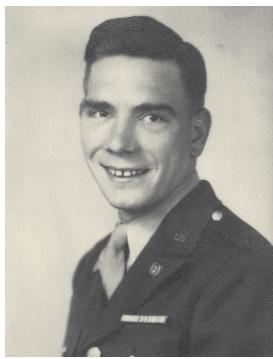
Japanese intelligence possibly knew that Hill 260 was lightly defended. They were unaware of the strength of possible reinforcements. When American reinforcements were in place, there was a stalemate. The Japanese did not have the strength to make a frontal attack and possibly did not have the strength to make any kind of flanking attack. As a result, as indicated above, they eventually withdrew. After the battle, the Intelligence Officer, who had been regular Army, commissioned from the ranks, sent me and the other three soldiers from G Company back to Company G, stating that we were unfit for this kind (intelligence) duty. We were of the opinion that he was afraid of losing his commission.

After the battle of Hill 260, there were continued patrols and occasional firefights. Returning from one patrol we met an incoming patrol with a brand new Lieutenant. We assured him that the island was comparatively safe. He said, "I know, but it only takes one bullet, from one gun. At least my wife will make a pretty widow. He was right. We don't know how pretty his wife was, but we do know that as a result of that patrol, she did become a widow.

**Editor's Note: Donald Duchow is an attorney in Bakersfield, California who still actively practices law.**

## My Time With The Generals

By Edward Buttlar



Having joined the Army in October, 1940 I was part of the 51st Brigade Headquarters Company at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts. In January, 1942, right before I would have been discharged, I found myself on the ship leaving New York harbor with Task Force 6814 headed for the South Pacific. On March 24, after the Task Force arrived in Noumea, New Caledonia, I was asked to go to the Hotel Du Pacifique (the hotel had five different buildings) in Noumea, where task Force 6814 had its headquarters.

My job was to teach the Javanese waiters how to properly wait on officers. I was a T/4 at the time and was considered the steward for the Task Force and for the Americal Division Headquarters (I had been a waiter before the war). In 1943 I became a Warrant Officer, Jr. Grade, specializing in supply administration, by direct appointment. I have many, many stories but here are three that stand out in my mind.

In the last half of July 1942, Brigadier General Williamson came down to headquarters three or four times in the middle of the night. He'd wake me up about 2:00 or 3:00 AM and would usually have two different captains with him. He would ask me to feed and billet the officers, who generally hadn't slept for about forty-eight hours.

During the first part of August, 1942, Admiral Halsey and his staff came on the Island (New Caledonia). One morning General Williamson and Admiral Halsey's chief of staff walked into the hotel courtyard. General Williamson called my name; I saluted. General Williamson asked me if the headquarters could take care of billeting and feeding Admiral Halsey's staff officers for about ten to fourteen days so they wouldn't have to go out to the ship to eat or sleep. I said yes, but mentioned that we didn't have enough equipment. He said that this was not a problem. Admiral Halsey's chief of staff told me that he'd give two letters to give to the sailors and the captain of the supply ship out in the harbor, where I could obtain all the supplies we needed. We could only billet sixteen officers on cots and beds, but we managed to feed all twenty-two of Admiral Halsey's officers. This was an exciting time when I saw the Army and the Navy working closely together.

On November 12, 1942 I was standing in the courtyard of the hotel where the headquarters were located when I saw Major General Patch approaching with two New Zealand officers, a general and a colonel. I asked if I could be of help to General Patch. "No thanks Buttlar," he said, "What's that you have in your hand?" "It's a book, sir that I wanted to ask your permission to keep, to have officers and others sign the book." "Yes, you have my permission. In fact", said General Patch, "let me be the very first to sign."

He immediately signed the book and then the two New Zealand officers signed. Many officers and eighteen war correspondents who visited the headquarters during 1942 signed my book. Toward the end of 1942, all diaries and my "guest book" were locked away in the headquarters safe for fear these materials might fall into enemy hands. The book was later returned to me; I have it today as a reminder of those days with the Americal Division.

I wanted to deploy with the Americal Division but I remained on New Caledonia for the duration of the war doing the same kind of duties for the "First Island Command Headquarters" as I had done for the Task Force 6814 and Americal Division.

**WWII Historian Note:** *This story was relayed to me in a written document mailed to me, supported by a telephone interview with the author in April 2013. Mr. Buttlar is 95 years young and lives independently by himself, keeping busy with daily chores and having dinner with friends occasionally. He is a native of Dedham, Massachusetts but now resides in Valparaiso, Indiana*

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## With the 746th Anti-Aircraft Battalion

By Paul R. Montan

I was sent to Boot camp from Minneapolis, Minnesota to Camp Callen just above San Diego, CA. Here we practiced being soldiers and in a few months we shipped out from Angel Island, San Francisco bound for the island of New Caledonia. On arrival, as raw recruits we were told to avoid contact with the island inhabitants. We were also told to heed a certain sound that would indicate that lepers were nearby. Apparently New Caledonia was a haven for lepers found in the South Pacific. We didn't realize that we were safe from contact with these unfortunate people, but, better safe than sorry.

My unit, the 746th Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) Battalion, was attached to the Americal to protect our airstrips. We were on the campaigns with the division on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, and Leyte in the Philippine Islands. During the fight to liberate the island of Cebu, the Americal came under heavy Japanese artillery fire. The infantry asked for the units of the 746th AAA to assist them in suppressing this fire. Our units were able to cut short fuses and skip rounds into caves housing the Jap artillery with devastating effect. Our radar units were able to detect enemy pill boxes by the steel in their construction and we were able to reduce these fortifications to rubble.

In my post-war memories, our unit was moved to Mactan Island, Philippines after the Jap surrender and during R&R time we went swimming in the clear, deep blue Pacific Ocean surrounded by beautiful multi-colored fish. Soon our service to Uncle Sam was over and we sailed from the Philippines for home, leaving tropical temperatures and arriving at Camp McCoy in Wisconsin to 10 degree below zero temperatures. A cool reception indeed!

**WWII Historian Note:** *Paul Montan was 89 years young when he submitted this memory in September 2011*

## Cremo – An Americal Division Soldier

By Bill Chisholm

In the recesses of my mind are many memories of WW2, most of which are repressed and I wish them to remain so. However, there is one name – a soldier's – that is indelibly inscribed and which insists on emerging: That name is Cremo.

The strange part of it is that I never met Cremo and only once had a fleeting glimpse of him.

I first heard his name called out in some distant roll call at Fort Ord, California the autumn of 1943. The only reason I "Picked up" on it was that to my "Anglo" attuned ears it had a strangely pleasant melodic ring to it, reminding me of those refreshing dairy drinks swerved at soda fountains. It seems there was hardly a day that didn't go by that I didn't hear his name; at roll calls, friends calling out to him, etc.

We were artillery replacements and Fort Ord was our "last stop" on the way to the Pacific Theatre of Operations. On our last day hundreds of us were assembled in a field with all our gear and duffle bags. A Non Com, looking every inch the battle hardened soldier of a recruiting poster was standing on an elevated platform before us. On his head was one of those old fashioned campaign hats titled at a jutting angle over his brow. He held a trench knife in his hand and with thrusting up and down motions exhorted us to "kill the bastards and to cut off their "family jewels"

Once the Non Com's somewhat disconcerting but nevertheless highly motivating farewell harangue was concluded, we were boarded on a waiting train that would transport us to our San Francisco port of embarkation.

During the boarding process I again heard someone call out the name "Cremo". I looked up and caught a fleeting glimpse of the soldier. He was of olive complexion, of medium height and appeared to be my age – 19 years old. He was smiling and joking in a carefree manner with his buddies. Later, I was surprised and somewhat dumfounded to learn that his parents had come to Fort Ord to see him off (our address, for reasons of "national security" was in the form of an APO number).

All along the tracks leading to San Francisco were crowds of people waving, "Give 'em hell!" placards and giving us "V" for victory hand signals. Upon arrival at San Francisco we were boarded on the Norwegian steamer "Torrens".

It took us 11 days to reach New Caledonia. The first thing we saw on the shore line was a huge tarp-like canvas staked to a hillside. In large black letters it repeated our Fort Ord's Non Com's strident admonition, "Kill the bastards".

Subsequently we were shipped out to Viti Levu, Fiji as replacements for the Americal Division which were "regrouping" and resting on the island from the rigors of the Guadalcanal campaign.

We were assembled in a park in the town of Lautoka, for roll call and ordered to count off. Apparently the "count off" number determined to what Americal unit we would be assigned. This was the last time I would hear the name "Cremo" spoken.

Some five months later during a Japanese offensive, Pvt. William C. Cremo, serving as an artillery observer with the 246th Field Artillery battalion, was killed at the base of a Banyan tree on Hill 260 on the island of Bougainville, Northern Solomon's.

Private Cremo's name along with 1,447 other WWII Americal soldier's, is shown on the Honor Roll in the book, "Under the Southern Cross".

## Recollections

By Don Squire

I was inducted into the Army on April 11, 1943 at Fort Douglas, Utah. We were then shipped, via Union Pacific railroad, to Camp Cook, California. I spent five long and miserable months there in basic training in the second Armored Group. I was sent from Camp Cook to Fort Ord, California where I spent another miserable month, training as a regular foot infantryman. Then late one night we boarded a train that took us to the docks of the Pacific Ocean, where we boarded the U.S.S. General George O. Squire. This was October 28, 1943. Early the next morning we were on our way, moving out to sea, passing under the Golden Gate Bridge.

It was a long trip from San Francisco to New Caledonia arriving November 15. The eleven days we spent on New Caledonia we worked in the large warehouses loading and unloading supplies. From there we went to Fiji and finally ended up on Bougainville Island in the Solomon's in January of 1944. I was there for a little more than a year and this is where I first saw combat with the Americal Division.

Early one morning in the month of October 1944, I Company, 3rd Battalion of the 132nd Infantry Regiment fell out for a patrol that would take us deep into the jungles of Bougainville. Little did any of us realize what would happen that very first night of the patrol.

It rained hard that day, which was not unusual. It made the trip that we had to take that much more miserable. The jungles of "Bougie" (as it was referred to) seldom, if ever, got dry. Then we had the swamps to contend with and the many streams.

The first evening we were getting ready to dig in for the night; all was calm and quiet until about five minutes after we arrived on this particular hill. Then all hell broke loose. Within about 30 minutes one of our boys was killed and about eight wounded. Many of the attacking Japanese soldiers were also killed. It was getting late, so we withdrew and set up a smoke signal and called for artillery. The artillery threw shells over us and onto this hill all during the night. The artillery shells were landing close enough that we could hear the shrapnel whistling through the trees around us. The next morning the shells had cleared out the enemy and we began patrolling another area.

A couple months later we shipped out to Leyte Island in the Philippines. While there I went on a boat trip delivering supplies to Samar Island, where there was considerable gunfire; however we did not get fired on going or returning.

A few months after arriving at Leyte I was put in the hospital because I was starting to lose control of my right arm. I was moved from hospital to hospital until they finally sent me to a general hospital in New Guinea. I was there for almost a month and then, on April 24, 1945, my birthday, I was informed I would be leaving for the States the next day. After receiving several months of treatment at Bushnell General Hospital, I was honorably discharged on June 30, 1945 with 40% disability. I was awarded the Asiatic Pacific Theatre ribbon and Combat Infantryman's Badge and campaign stars for the Solomon's and Philippines Islands.

**WWII Historian's Note: Don Squire retired as a Superintendent of the U.S. National Parks Service**

## Conscience and Consequences

Commentary by Gary L. Noller

The Jan-Feb-Mar 2013 issue of the Americal Journal carried a book review of Kenneth F. Teglia's book titled Lamb in a Jungle – Conscience and Consequences in the Vietnam War. Ken sent me a copy of his book and reading it sparked memories of my "introduction" to the meanness of war.

Ken describes the class that he taught at the Americal Combat Center in Chu Lai. He was given two hours to demonstrate to new arrivals how their treatment of Vietnamese civilians could affect the course of the war. The bottom line was that Vietnamese were likely to help Americans if they were treated fairly by Americans but would be reluctant to do so if treated unfairly by Americans. I was one of his students.

I have never told everything about my experiences in the war and I most likely never will. There are a couple of stories that I am going to tell here but probably should not. So let that be fair warning to the fair reader.

After completing in-country training at the Combat Center in early June 1970 I was assigned to Co. B, 1/46th Infantry. I processed through the battalion and company offices and prepared to join my unit in the field. The company was finishing up some hard days near Hiep Duc. My role was to replace one of the recent casualties.

The company clerk told me that the company would be coming to the rear area in three days for a stand-down and that I would not go to the field as originally planned. I thought this was pretty good. The first week with my company would end with a stand-down.

But I should have realized that I would not be left to idle away the hours. Each morning I was assigned to a detail to gather trash in the battalion area and take it to the dump. Three or four of us rode in the back of a deuce-and-a-half truck and picked up trash and discarded items from around all the buildings. It was not hard work but it also was not clean work.

Vietnamese scavengers were at the dump waiting for us when we arrived. They seemed to each have a particular item they wanted. They took wood, cardboard, metal, clothing, food, and anything else of value to them. It seemed to me that only a small portion of what we dumped actually ended up in the dump.

When we left the dump we rode in the back of the truck facing forward over the cab. The driver and the detail leader were in the cab. As we sped up I noticed an old woman sitting beside the road under a piece of sheet metal that she propped up with a stick. The sheet metal provided her with shade from the ever increasing pounding of the hot sun.

Suddenly the truck veered to the right and headed for the woman's makeshift shelter. The passenger's door opened and the rider stepped out of the door onto the running board. When we were next to the old woman he kicked the

sheet metal and caused it to fall on the woman. She jumped up with a startled look and froze a look of disgust in our direction. She was not hurt but she was angry to say the least. The guys in the front laughed at their stunt. I just looked at the woman as she dwindled in our dust.

In September or October 1970 we were operating somewhere south of FSB Mary Ann when we encountered an old man and old woman in the bush. They were frail and wore ragged clothes and did not appear to be with anyone else. They were quickly separated and the old woman was told to sit close to my position.

A staff sergeant told me to watch the woman. At the time I was a radio telephone operator (RTO) in the company command platoon (CP) and at the time stood by on radio watch anyway. Watching the old woman posed no chore for me.

Monsoon rains earlier in the day left us cold and wet. Someone started a small fire to dry clothing. The old woman motioned to me that she wanted to move closer to the fire. It was obvious to me that she wanted to share its warmth. I nodded my approval and she hunkered over the flames and rubbed her hands in the much appreciated heat. She gave me a small smile of thanks.

A few minutes later the staff sergeant returned and immediately bellowed, "What the hell is she doing by the fire?" I could only respond with the truth. "I told her it was okay," I said. The staff sergeant took her by the arm and roughly led her a few feet away where she originally started and ordered her to sit down.

Of course she complied. I shook my head in disbelief but knew better than to say anything to the "superior".

Many years later I recounted these two stories to Dennis Powell. He is the only one I ever told these stories before now. Dennis was my first company commander in Vietnam, and an excellent one at that. But was not in command either time these distasteful incidents occurred.

I told him that I felt ashamed for the manner that American soldiers treated these two old women. I did not even want to tell him what happened. He said, "That's good." I did not know what he meant and I gave him a quizzical look. I asked, "What do you mean that's good?"

He elaborated, "It's good that you feel ashamed and don't want to talk about it because that means you know what happened was wrong. The guys who treated the old women the way they did probably still don't feel ashamed. But they should. What they did was wrong- you didn't do anything wrong." I felt a bit of absolution upon hearing his words.

A lot worse thing happened in Vietnam than what happened to these two old women. Perhaps they never had the opportunity to get back at Americans for their ill treatment and meanness. But only perhaps.

I feel it necessary to add in closing that I did not hate the Vietnamese before the war, during the war, or after the war. Some may find it appealing to argue this point with me.

*Don't waste your time.*



## Death Awaits The Pointman

By David W. Taylor



PFC William "Bill" Lyon arrived at his unit, the 2nd Platoon of Alpha Company, 5th/46th Infantry Battalion, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, in early August 1970. After two months as a rifleman he saw many of the "old guys" - the experienced soldiers - finishing their tours and rotating home. That's when things started getting "interesting" for Lyon.

Lyon's Platoon Sergeant, Chester "Chet" Helms wanted Lyon to be the pointman, since he had two months experience in the bush and Helms, having a

chance to size Lyon up, liked what he saw. Lyon remembers, "I felt comfortable in that role. I was raised in upstate New York and spent a lot of time in the forests. At age 12 I started hunting with my father so I had a good feel for the woods. I also had a good eye, looking carefully for signs of game".

His platoon sergeant, Helms, was older, about thirty-five years of age, and had been a career Marine, serving two tours in Vietnam as an infantryman and being wounded on both tours. Because of his wounds Helms was discharged from the Marine Corps so he enlisted in the Army and was eventually assigned to the Alpha's second platoon in the 5th/46th Battalion. Initially he was a squad leader but soon became the Platoon Sergeant. His experience was recognized and valued by all.

Helms and Lyon became a close team. Helms as platoon sergeant walked behind his pointman, Lyon. Lyon recalls, "I always felt that Sergeant Helms had my back, he was behind me all the time. He called me 'Snoopy'. Normally our Kit Carson Scout (NVA Deserter) would have been up with me but after our first Kit Carson, 'Chot' left the unit (he was really great) we didn't trust the next Kit Carson so he was placed further back in the line of march."

By the summer of 1970 the 5th/46th Battalion had moved its patrols farther west, deep into the mountains and into Dragon Valley and the area around Ky Tra north of the valley. The rifle companies of the battalion operated, for the most part, as separate entities and, on most occasions, the platoons operated separately from the company, with squad-size patrols often the norm. It was a remarkable departure from the necessity to operate in company strength in the foreboding mountains in 1968 and early 1969. For the battalion, it had truly become a small unit-leaders war.

By January 1971, Alpha's second platoon was ranging far and wide in the mountainous terrain around Ky Tra. Lyon, as pointman, was keeping his platoon safe, but on one day in the span of thirty-minutes, he would find five enemy booby-traps within 100 yards of each other.

The platoon was heading for a night defensive position (NDP) that would allow the platoon leader to send squad-size patrols to search the area. Lyon remembers, "We were

moving down a trail and I spotted three sticks formed into a V-shape. The sticks were obviously a warning to any enemy in the area that there was a booby-trap on the trail, but I didn't exactly know how close it was"

Five yards down the trail, Lyon spotted a trip wire stretched across the trail. Connected to the wire was a mortar round covered with small stones. Then the point element looked at the trap closely and found two more mortar rounds concealed beneath.

Since the platoon was headed to a NDP the platoon leader Lt. Scott O. Toups (who would later lose a leg to a mine) decided they would bypass the booby-trap and return later to blow it up. "But before we moved another 20 yards, Lyon discovered another booby-trap," said Toups. "This one was connected to an anti-tank weapon"

Lyon didn't have much time to think about what to expect next because, just another twenty yards down the trail, he came upon his third booby-trap. "I began to get the shakes after this one" Lyon recalls. The platoon was also becoming unsettled. Word was passed down the line that potent mines and booby-traps were being found. David Barr, the Platoons medic thought each time a booby-trap was discovered, "My God, he saved someone else from certain death" After the third booby-trap was discovered, Barr's jaw dropped, "My God how many can there be?" Lyon's sharp eye was keeping the medic from dealing with a traumatic situation.

Again the platoon moved around the trip wire towards its NDP marking the location so it could return to destroy it the next day. But again, movement was halted when Lyon found another booby-trap. "Again I found three sticks placed in a V-shape" he recalled. Just off the trail Lyon found another antitank weapon with a trip wire extending across the trail.

It was just a short distance to the unit's night position but it was enough for Lyon to find his fifth booby-trap. This time it was an artillery round casing filled with explosives. For his diligence and steadiness Lyon was awarded the Bronze Star for essentially leading his platoon through a mine field.

Lyon would find three more booby-traps before his six-month tenure as a pointman would end. He remembers "it was one of the remaining three booby-traps that almost did me in. That one was the least sophisticated - a soda can-filled with rocks and chopped glass and C-4 explosive". Lyon had actually stepped over the wire which he failed to see and miraculously did not trip the wire. With one foot over the wire and one foot behind the wire, he spotted it and froze. His platoon sergeant Chet Helms asked, "why did you stop?" Lyon replied, "I'm one step over a mine!" He slowly stepped back over the wire with his lead foot and the two of them blew the booby-trap with some C-4.

Bill Lyon never mentioned the mine incidents to anyone, not even his children after the war. But the Army Reporter publication, printed by Stars and Stripes had published a story about the incident in Vietnam and last year at the Memorial Day observances in his home town, Vietnam Vets were asked to stand up front and be recognized. One of the organizers of the event had located the article and read it aloud to the crowd. His fellow townsmen were aghast with collective sentiments afterward of, "We never knew!" Lyon just shook his shoulders, "I was only doing my job"

***Editor's Note: Portions of this story were obtained from the Army Reporter article published in Vietnam in 1971.***

## Journey to Chu Lai

### Assignment: Task Force Oregon

By James Steffenhagen

I received orders for Vietnam immediately upon completion of Advanced Individual Training (AIT) in artillery at Ft. Sill, OK. Following a 30 day leave at home I processed through the Oakland (CA) Army Terminal and then moved to Travis Air Force Base. At Travis I boarded a C141 Starlifter and headed across the South Pacific. After refueling stops at Guam and Clark Air Base, Philippines we landed in Pleiku, Vietnam. It was July 9, 1966.

In Pleiku I received orders for B Btry., 3rd Bn., 18th Arty. Shortly thereafter I left Pleiku on a C7 Caribou aircraft for An Khe, the home base of the First Cavalry Division. The battery was a self-propelled (SP) 8" howitzer unit providing support for First Cavalry Division combat operations. After various missions at different fire support bases around the Central Highlands the unit received orders on September 18 to move to the coastal region around Tuy Hoa.

At Tuy Hoa the battery split up with two of our 8" guns joining A Btry., 6th Bn., 14th Arty., a 175mm howitzer unit. This battery continued supporting different infantry operations to include the 101st Airborne Division on Operation John Paul Jones.

On September 29 I contracted malaria and spent the next six weeks hospitalized at 8th Field Hospital, Nha Trang, and 6th Convalescent Center, Cam Rahn Bay. I finally got back to my old unit at Tuy Hoa and we spent the end of 1966 and the beginning of 1967 at various bases supporting combat operations along the coast to include the Nha Trang and Ninh Hoa areas.



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In April 1967 we received orders stating we were going back to An Khe to support the First Cavalry. On April 13 we left Ninh Hoa on a landing ship, tank (LST) for Qui Nhon harbor. There we unloaded the guns and equipment and moved to a base camp a few miles away. Two days later, just before we were to leave for An Khe, we received orders that we were to move north to Chu Lai as part of "Task Force Oregon".

No one told us exactly what this was about but the word was that we were on our way north to help support the Marines and that we had 24-48 hours to get there. With the change in orders our Headquarters, B, C, and Service batteries went back to Qui Nhon harbor and loaded the howitzers and equipment on a landing craft, utility (LCU). The LCU took us out to the U.S.S. Oakhill for transport to Chu Lai.

After being at different fire support bases in the boonies the troops couldn't believe how good the conditions were on the ship. Beds with sheets, toilets that flushed, showers and sinks with running water! They had a cafeteria with whatever you wanted- real milk, a coke machine, and ice! It was a welcomed relief after being out in the field for months.

At 6:00 AM on April 17 we landed at Chu Lai and moved north to set up our base camp. The area had originally been under Marine control and on arrival we noticed a sign that



read, "EVER SINCE THE DAYS OF GUADALCANAL THE ARMY HAS FOLLOWED THE MARINE CORPS TAIL. WELCOME TO CHU LAI, WATCH OUT FOR THE VC AND TAKE YOUR MALARIA PILL." The sign brought a smile to our faces.

After supporting combat missions around the Chu Lai combat base we received orders for our two 175mm guns to move north with the Marines to Tam Ky for an operation. We moved out so quickly with the 175mm guns that all we took with us was our M-14 rifles, web gear and helmets. After setting up a firing position north of Tam Ky we started firing approximately 180 rounds a day supporting the Marines on Operation Union. Four days later, more Marines, choppers and 105mm battery showed up for more operational support.

On May 2 the fire support base came under a mortar attack. We received 30-40 incoming mortar rounds with 1 Marine killed-in-action (KIA) and 12 wounded. There was extensive damage to vehicles and equipment. Marine patrols went out that morning and came back that afternoon with Viet Cong (VC) prisoners for interrogation.

Two weeks later, after 10 months in-country, I went on R & R to Hong Kong. After returning from R & R I went back to Chu Lai where we continued firing in support of Marine and Army operations in the area.

My tour of duty came to an end. I left Vietnam on June 27, 1967 for Ft. Lewis, WA. I was glad to have survived my year in Nam and proud to have been a part of "Task Force Oregon".



## What Was Task Force Oregon?

By Gary L. Noller

In early 1967 a decision was made to increase the strength of American forces in I Corps of Vietnam. A large American force was already in place to defend Saigon, the capitol city of South Vietnam. But there was a constant threat of North Vietnamese Army forces invading across the demilitarized zone along the northern boundary of Quang Tri Province.

The U. S. Marines landed a large force on the beaches at Chu Lai in 1965. But this force was stretched thin over a large area of operations. Marines covered the coast from Quang Ngai in the south to almost the DMZ in the north. Additional troops were needed to ensure that South Vietnam would not be cut in two between Saigon and Da Nang.

In June 1965 General William B. Rosson became chief-of-staff to General William C. Westmoreland, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) commander. In early 1967 Rosson was given the task to plan and create a new Army division entirely in-country.

Rosson was from Oregon and a graduate of the University of Oregon. In honor of his home state he named the provisional unit that he created Task Force Oregon (TFO). TFO moved into the Chu Lai AO and replaced the Marines as they moved north of the Que Son Mountains.

Army units already in Vietnam gave up a variety of elements to form TFO. The 196th Light Infantry Brigade, a separate brigade, relocated from Tay Ninh. The 25th Infantry Division provided its 3rd Brigade and the 101st Airborne Division sent its 1st Brigade. The 3rd Brigade, 25th ID was later re-designated as the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division.

Task Force Oregon officially organized on April 12, 1967. It immediately engaged the enemy in operations Malheur I and Malheur II. The 11th Light Infantry Brigade at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii and the 198th Light Infantry Brigade at Ft. Hood, TX, both separate brigades, stepped up training activities at their stateside posts. With training complete they deployed to Vietnam to replace the 101st Airborne and 4th Infantry Division brigades on loan to TFO.

On October 26, 1967 Task Force Oregon successfully fulfilled its mission and was redesignated as the Americal Division (23rd Infantry Division). Westmoreland chose the name Americal Division in honor of the famed World War II division created in New Caledonia in May 1942.

The formation of the divisions in both eras was similar. In World War II the Americal Division was formed on foreign soil from elements of Task Force 6814 and the 132nd Inf. Regt, 164th Inf. Regt., and 182nd Inf. Regt. These regiments were "orphaned" from their respective National Guard divisions when Army divisions went from four regiments (square) to three regiments (triangle).

Another similarity was the connection of the Americal Division to the 1st Marine Division. In December 1942 the Americal Division relieved the Marines after hard fighting on Guadalcanal. In Vietnam the Americal Division relieved the Marines first at Chu Lai in 1967 and then at Da Nang in 1971.

The last infantry combat unit in Vietnam was the 3rd/21st Infantry, 196th LIB. The Gimlets left Vietnam in August 1972. They were the final thread stretching back to the creation of Task Force Oregon in April 1967.

## Vietnam Journal

By Andy Olints

### CHAPTER 9 LIFE ON FIREBASE MARY ANN

After spending from 10 to 30 days out in the field, it was just heaven to be living on Fire Base Mary Ann. I hate to say it, but it felt like being home. I even felt safe just being there: good food, a place to sleep indoors (although some nights there might be some rats running over your feet) and lots of friends. All we had to do was "play a little Army," like fill sand bags, take out light patrols, walk around the base picking up paper, and pull guard duty at night. Other days you might have a class on booby traps. Any day living on the base was a lot nicer than being out in the field. But, there were some sad days.

#### Memorial Service

There was always a memorial service for anyone in our company who had been killed. Usually the service was held the first day our company got back on the fire base. The service I remember most was for the machine gunner killed by a booby trap. At the memorial service all three platoons were standing in formation on the helicopter pad. In front of us was a machine gun, a pair of boots, and a steel pot (head gear). Our company commander and platoon leader each gave a nice talk about the machine gunner who had been killed. The last to talk was the chaplain.

I stood in formation with the rest of the company and I was thinking how impressive it was that the whole company was paying respect to one of our men who had been killed. I remember thinking that I'd seen pictures of memorial services just like this and now I'm right here being part of one. A day I'll always remember.

#### C-4 Explosive

A package of C-4 is white in color, about two inches wide, 12 inches long, one inch thick, and about a pound in weight. C-4 reminded me of thick putty that you could bend or even break. Add a blasting cap and you have one hell of a bomb. We used C-4 for blowing up trees so we could have an area for a helicopter to land. C-4 was only supposed to be used as an explosive, but the men found other uses for it. If you were out of heat tabs, you could break off a small piece of C-4, light a match to the C-4, and in an instant you had one very hot flame. In seconds you could boil a canteen cup of water. Most men in the platoon carried two pounds of C-4.

Once during a period when it had rained for two days and no helicopters could get in or out of FB Mary Ann, four men from another platoon decided they wanted to get high on C-4. I don't know exactly what they did, but I heard they took little pieces of C-4 and put it underneath their tongues, a real dumb thing to do. The C-3 gave all four of them brain damage. We could hear some of the four guys screaming from inside the medical hooch.



**"play a little Army"**

When the rain finally stopped two of the ill soldiers were put on a chopper and sent to a hospital in Chu Lai. One of the others died on FB Mary Ann while waiting for another chopper.

The man who died was placed in a body bag which was placed outside in a location between the medic hooch and the mess hall. I happened to walk by and notice the body bag. Seeing something like that- I had to stop.

I had my camera with me and decided to take a picture of the body bag. I couldn't help thinking, "What a way to die." While I was standing there a medic came up to me and said he needed help to get the body bag onto the chopper that was coming. He also enlisted the help of two other guys and the four of us got the body bag onto the chopper. A few guys had gathered around the chopper pad because they needed a ride to Chu Lai so they could go on R and R. Before the men boarded the chopper I took another picture of the body bag. I said to myself, "He's going home."

There wasn't enough room for all the guys to fit inside the chopper without someone sitting on the body bag. Then I heard somebody say, "He won't mind if you sit on him. Get in." Sure enough, the last two guys to get into the chopper actually sat on the body bag. I stood there and watched the chopper fly off to Chu Lai.

#### Donut Dollies

Donut Dollies were women who volunteered for the Red Cross to go to Vietnam for a year. They were busy every day visiting hospitals, fire bases, and any place where a group of GIs were present.

One day our platoon walked onto Fire Base Mary Ann after a mission out in the field. There to meet us on the base were two Donut Dollies. This was the first time in months that I got to see an American woman. The whole Company was so happy to see these women and a few of the guys even got to talk to them.

We were told that anyone having a birthday that month got to eat first at the mess hall. The Donut dollies were at the mess hall serving supper. Guys with a birthday that month got a nice "Happy Birthday" from the donut dollies. For the rest of the men in line it was fun to have a real live



www.cambridgeblog.org

### ***fly out to a base in the middle of a jungle***

American women say hello and then put some food on their plates. I thought it was really nice of these women to get in a helicopter and fly out to a base in the middle of a jungle and a war to serve us supper.

#### **Pizza**

After a lot of talking to the cooks on Fire Base Mary Ann, the men in our platoon got permission for me to go into the mess hall to make pizza. The cooks gave me some flour and yeast, tomato sauce, and some type of cheese. The cooks turned on some portable ovens and the last thing they said to me was that I had better make sure the mess hall was cleaned when I was done cooking. I first made the dough so that it could rise a little. We found some flat pans about the size of a large pizza. I rolled out the dough and added the tomato sauce, and a few of the guys with me added the cheese. We cooked two pizzas at a time and I think I made about eight pizzas in all. I got to eat one slice of pizza and I thought it was O.K. Some of the guys delivered the pizza to the bunkers. Since we were on the base, we also had some Kool-Aid to go with the pizza. No one complained and there was no pizza left over.

#### **Ham and Crackers**

I think it was Jim Marin who had a small canned ham sent to him. He asked me if I could somehow cook the ham. I got a small plate and a lot of heat tabs. I cut up the ham into small slices and cooked the ham on the plate. Another guy in the platoon had some crackers sent to him. The whole platoon wound up having two slices of ham on crackers and believe it or not, another guy had a small bottle of wine that someone had sent to him. It was not enough wine to go around, but it was really nice to have the whole platoon together sharing food from home.

#### **Pancakes and Syrup**

One of the first mornings that I woke up on FB Mary Ann I could smell heated pancake syrup. I think I actually ran over to the mess hall that morning to get breakfast. I had never seen a big pot of heated syrup in my life. I got

a couple of pancakes and when I asked for some syrup the cook used a ladle to scoop out the very hot syrup. Forty years later when I see syrup I think of that great pancake breakfast I had on FB Mary Ann.

#### **Writing Letters**

I was at a bunker on the east side of FB Mary Ann looking down towards the river. Zeddie Bell and I were always writing letters home. It was getting dark out so Zeddie said, "Let's go into the bunker and I'll get a light so we can see inside the bunker." Zeddie got an empty can and somewhere got some diesel fuel to put into the can. He then got a piece of cloth and put part of the cloth into the can. Zeddie lit the cloth and we had this homemade light. There was lots of smoke but who cared. While I was writing my letter I could see Zeddie going into his pack. He pulled out a can of chocolate icing- yes, chocolate icing that goes on a cake. We got two plastic spoons and both of us just sat there writing letters and eating the icing. I got sick as a dog later on that night, but I had a great time.

#### **Burning Shit**

One evening around 7 o'clock I was told to get my squad and burn the shit in one of the shitters. I would never ask anyone in the squad to burn shit. The moment I was told to do the burning I got right up and walked towards the shitter. My first thoughts were that I would do it by myself. One second later I could hear Jeff Parks saying he would get the diesel fuel. In a minute the whole squad was at the shitter and everyone helped.

One of the guys opened the flap in the back of the shitter. Another guy got this long steel rod that was used to pull out the drum that the droppings were in. There were three drums in all. Jeff poured the diesel fuel into the drums and someone lit a match to the toilet paper. In one minute we were burning shit. Close to the drums were two wooden poles, like good-sized tree branches. They were used to stir the poop. Everyone took turns with the poles. There was a lot of black smoke from the diesel fuel burning. This is not a story that everyone would write about, but I'll always remember how everyone in the squad helped out and worked as a team no matter what we did.

I have one last story about shitters. My bunker was located near the artillery section of the base. One day a lieutenant from artillery walked over to our bunker and asked us not to use their shitter. That night their shitter was burned down. I'll never know who did it, but I think Jeff Parks was the guy. The following day when the guys from artillery were rebuilding their shitter they looked over at us and said, "You can use our shitter any time you want." True story.

#### **Parade**

Our company was waiting to walk off FB MaryAnn but before we walked off the base another infantry company had to be on the base. We were told that Charlie Company would be walking onto the base.



### **lots of smoke but who cared**

If you were sitting on the base and looked 360 degrees all around you would see nothing but mountains for miles. I was looking west and all of a sudden the point man from Charlie Company appeared. He was about 100 yards away from the barbed wire surrounding the base. I don't know why, but I was fascinated. Fifteen feet behind the point man another soldier appeared. Then I could see the single line formation of Charlie Company walking onto the base.

The men stayed about 15 feet from each other as they walked onto the base. They all had the same green Army clothes, but each one looked so different. They all carried different weapons and I just had to look at every soldier walking onto base. I already wrote about our company walking onto FB Professional where I thought everyone was staring at us as we walked onto the base.

Anyone watching soldiers coming back from the field was looking at the eyes and stares on the faces of the infantrymen walking onto the base. I stood there amazed. A lot of questions were running through my mind. I asked myself, "What did these guys see and do in their last mission? How many of them went out and how many of them came back?" I guess I watched about 60 men walk onto base and I stood there watching every one of them. To me, watching these guys was like watching a great parade. I stood there in amazement.

I recognized one of the men in Charlie Company, but I couldn't figure out who he was. Then I realized that I went to NCO school with him and he was one of the six honor graduates in the Company. His name was John Roeder. John made Staff Sergeant out of NCO school. Both John and I were about 30 pounds lighter on FB Mary Ann than we were in NCO school. The both of us got to talk a bit and he told me he was the platoon leader. Usually a platoon leader is a first lieutenant, but John must have had the confidence of the company commander to have been appointed platoon leader. John was offered a field commission later on in the year, but he turned it down.

### **Religion**

I'm Catholic and in Vietnam I tried to go to Mass whenever it was possible. A few times on FB Mary Ann I got to go to Mass. I didn't care if it was a Catholic or Protestant service.

There must have been over 100 guys on the base and I was surprised that only five or six guys would go to Mass. When I first got to Vietnam, I went to a Mass and the chaplain gave out rosary beads. I wore those rosary beads around my neck for the whole time I was in Vietnam. Usually at night I would say a little prayer, but one time during the rainy season there was more contact with the enemy so I would say the rosary every night. For me, this was a way to relax and have some different time away from the war. Life is funny, say the rosary at night and look for a kill in the day. No answer for that.

### **Kit Carson Scout**

Our platoon had a Kit Carson Scout for about two months and I never really liked him. Kid Carson Scouts were once in the army of North Vietnam and then they started working for the South Vietnamese Army. I think the U.S. Army wanted to use these Kit Carson Scouts as people that could help a platoon out in the field. To me, help would be someone that was trusted, someone that was an interpreter, someone that would show how the enemy worked.

Our Kit Carson Scout would get on a helicopter any time he wanted. He just would come and go at any time. If we got to the base, he would take the next chopper to Chu Lai and still get paid. When he needed money, he would get a chopper ride back to our platoon. Out in the field he would walk in the middle of our formation and not do anything all day. Once we found a few hooches and he left a note there telling the enemy to give up.

He did show us a certain tree that if you cut a little piece of bark off that tree, you could put the bark in your canteen and the water would have a taste. Someone told me this taste was like peppermint. To me it tasted like a piece of bark in my water. He also showed us a plant that if you dug up the plant, you could eat the roots. Someone told me if you boiled the roots, it tasted like potatoes. I boiled the roots and it tasted like very bad roots from a tree. The root was called manioc.

Tim Seloover talked to our Kit Carson Scout and over a period of time Tim tried to learn a few words in Vietnamese from him. At night Tim would show him something and the Kit Carson Scout would say what it was in Vietnamese, and then Tim would say the word about ten times. Now 40 years later I wished I had learned a few words in Vietnamese.

### **End of Four Months in Vietnam**

After writing about my first four months in Vietnam I would be the first to admit that there really wasn't a lot of action with the enemy. Our company worked very hard out in the field looking for the enemy, and we were very fortunate that we only had a few days of combat. We did have three men killed and several others wounded.



### ***living out in the jungle for days***

I could never really write in words how hard it was to be living out in the jungle for days. I can't describe how heavy the packs were, how steep the hills were, how tired we were at the end of the day. Add to that the stress of knowing that the enemy was watching you all the time and you really never were relaxed out in the field.

Soon it was November and the monsoons started. Our Company moved to LZ Young, a place much different than FB MaryAnn. There would be rain, mud, and firefights for the next two months.

### ***Update on the Men in our Platoon***

By November 1970 our company had its third company commander in four months. Captain Sampson was a quiet, non-aggressive type of guy. He once told me it was his second tour in Vietnam and he wanted to live. He wanted to go home to his family. My thoughts were I wanted to go home to my family, too.

Lt. Ed McKay was leader of our second platoon. He was too friendly with the guys in our platoon (second platoon) so he was moved to the third platoon. Our platoon had a new leader for the next ten days, a very nice lieutenant who seemed very book smart but not the type of guy who should be running an infantry platoon. I don't remember his name, but after being our platoon leader he got a job on FB Mary Ann in charge of supplies.

Our fourth platoon leader was Lt. Harrell. He was a "take charge" type of guy. He worked harder than anyone in the platoon and was the person you wanted as a platoon leader. He always walked fourth in line, went out on all the patrols, and was a great map reader. He liked the ability of my point men (Tim Seloover and Jeff Parks) so much that he wanted them to walk point all the time. Some guys are born leaders and Lt. Harrell was one of them.

For the first few months our platoon didn't have a platoon sergeant. Finally, Staff Sergeant Hester was assigned to our platoon and I was very much disappointed. It was Sgt. Hester's second tour in Vietnam and he knew all the ways to get out of the field. He was not a friendly type of guy and gave out the vibes that he didn't want to be out in the field.

Staff Sergeant Wolfe was our next platoon sergeant. At first I wasn't too interested in any staff sergeant. I had been in the Army for about 16 months and in all that time I never really got to talk to someone with the rank of staff sergeant.

I remember the first time we talked. We were out in the field near a river and we had just found a night laager. Before Sgt. Wolfe got his hammock set up for the night he went around to all the men in the platoon and asked if anyone needed anything. He had the use of a radio and could call in to FB Mary Ann for supplies. Then he started talking about cars and it was nice to see he was "one of the guys" in the platoon. Our company commander had an opening for a position called "field first." A "field first" is the top NCO in the company and he would be with the company commander all the time. Staff Sergeant Wolfe did a great job with our platoon and was moved to the job of "field first." One of our last platoon sergeants was Staff Sergeant Walker.

Jim Marin, Gerry McKay, and Don Carr were still with the machine gun team, working their butts off carrying a 26-pound machine gun and all the ammo. Bob Stainton carried the grenade launcher for a while and then helped out with the machine gun team. Tim Seloover and Jeff Parks had been walking point for months. They worked as a team, taking turns walking point.

I think being the point man was the hardest job in the platoon. There is no way I could describe walking point down a trail. Tim, Jeff and I set out a lot of claymore mines. Zeddie Bell and Frank Strzempka fit right in with the platoon and helped with the machine gun team. Bill Meek arrived and on his first mission he carried the 20 pound radio. Bill later carried the grenade launcher for a few missions and after that he carried the machine gun. Danny (Alabama) Collier carried the grenade launcher for a while and then worked with the machine gun team. Rex Armstrong liked walking last in line, one job I never wanted to do.

Kevin Kavanaugh was still the other squad leader in the platoon. With him were point man Larry Steel, Dave Milotte, John Pettepher, Allen Mader, Ronald Nutter, David Coffey, and others.

Our platoon was on its third medic. The first one was blackballed because he didn't help a wounded soldier. Our second medic was Doc Brown, one great medic and someone you wanted as your medic. Doc Ricks was our third medic and he was every bit as good as Doc Brown. Doc Taggard would be our next medic, and once again we got a great medic.

Coming soon to the platoon would be Brian Tickerhoff, Robert Bermudez, George Salcido, Sexton Vann, Donald Moore, David Ray and John Ortega.

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# Through The Years ... Informing the Troops in the ADVA

By Gary L. Noller and David W. Taylor



**W**orld War II ended and Americal soldiers returned to their civilian status to get on with their lives. But some veterans wanted to continue those ties established with their comrades in war. In 1945 Americal vets in Massachusetts formed the Americal Division Inc. It would not be until the 1980's that the Americal Association would file for the IRS Tax Status it holds today, as a 501 (C) 19 Veterans Organization.

Other regimental veterans of the Americal, such as the 132nd Regiment in Illinois and the 164th Regiment in North Dakota, would also form associations, with their regiment as the primary focus but a strong identity with the Americal Division. An effort was made to form a national organization, with 164th and 132nd vets joining the "Americal Club" as well as their state-focused organizations, but through those early years the difficulties and costs of travel for national reunions kept most "club" communications and activities on a state level.

In Massachusetts the initial organization became more casually known as "The Americal Club, and chapters sprung up around the state such as in Worcester, Lawrence and Boston.



## First Americal Newsletter

The first formal newsletter, "The Southern Cross", was issued in April 1947 (Vol. 1, No. 1). It was very formal and professionally produced for its time and was meant to be a monthly publication. However, the effort to communicate to veterans on a consistent basis soon fell prey to the demands that all vets had to build careers for their selves and raise families.



## The Start of Consistent Communications – mid-1960's

In the mid-1960's communications to Americal vets in the ADVA began on a more consistent basis and lasts to this day. The editor at the time was Dan Merlin, WWII Vet and also one of the national Commanders. His, son Rich Merlin would serve with the Americal in the 23rd MP Company just a few years later in Vietnam. The newsletters were typed and mimeographed and varied in length based on the information that was to be published.



## Rebuilding and Reuniting

The ADVA went through some organizational challenges in the early 1960's and was reorganized in March, 1964 with only 33 members. Because many of the WWII vets were retiring they had more time to devote to the ADVA membership grew to 285 by mid-1966.



## Cultivating a New Audience

When the Americal Division was reactivated in Vietnam copies of the newsletters were sent to the Division's staff in Chu Lai. Very few soldiers in the division knew anything about the Americal Division Veterans Association and division staff officers in Vietnam joined the association as a courtesy at the price of \$6/year. There were no Vietnam vets to write articles for the newsletter so all the mentions of Americal Vietnam combat came from copies of newspaper articles from the various newsheets in Vietnam, which were cut and pasted into the ADVA newsletter. This continued throughout the time the Americal was in Vietnam.



## July-August 1970 Newsletter

Curiously throughout the 60's and 70's no stories were published about veteran's experiences in World War II; the only combat stories came from copies of newsheets that covered Americal combat in Vietnam. The newsletters mostly featured stories about upcoming reunions, veteran's benefits and administrative news about the association and they were printed Bi-Monthly.

Most of those years Dan Merlin continued to be the editor but William McLaughlin had stints as editor as well. In the November-December 1976 issue Editor McLaughlin appointed the first Vietnam Editor, Eugene F. McGrory. The newsletter continued to be a bi-monthly, mimeographed, stapled and mailed, with each issue containing 12 pages. In the January-February 1982 issue, Kent Shields became the second Vietnam Editor.



## May-June 1988 Newsletter

In the May-June 1985 issue Ron Ward became the third Vietnam Editor and Bill McLaughlin retired out of his job as editor. Shortly after Jim Buckle took over the reigns as Editor-in-Chief at the same time he was in his second year as the ADVA National Commander. Buckle's goal was to more heavily recruit Vietnam Veterans to the association, with the help of Ron Ward. WWII Veterans were also joining at a rising rate. In the May-June 85 bi-monthly issue, 19 new members from WWII were recognized as well as 15 new members from Vietnam service.

By the 1988 period, Buckle had the newsletter printed and saddle-stitched so it looked more like a booklet or magazine, the form it is in today. With no training in publishing, Buckle persevered on his own for many years. He chose a two-column format and typed the articles using a typewriter on half sheets of paper, using a 10 or 12 point font. He then pasted the columns onto another sheet of paper and reduced it to 80% on a photocopier. Finished pages were pasted opposite each other on a board. Buckle then hand-drew vertical lines dividing the columns and horizontal lines between articles. The printer would scan each two pages to print them. In an interim period, 1989 and the spring of 1990, Oscar Patterson III took over duties as Editor-in-Chief but then Jim Buckle took back the reigns as Editor.



## The 1990's – Major Changes

In 1990 the newsletter made several changes that are still followed today. Vietnam veterans had been submitting most of the "War Stories" with very little coming from the WWII Americal Vets. In the early 90's this began to change and WWII vets were also submitting their remembrances. The newsletter had them separated in the "Vietnam News Network", "Letters from the Old Guard", "Chapter News" and association administrative information.

Ron Ward continued as Vietnam Editor while he also served as the ADVA National Commander. In the November – December 1992 issue David Recob assumed the duties as Vietnam Editor. Beginning in May-June-July 1994, the Americal Newsletter went to a quarterly publication instead of bi-monthly, because of all the work to publish it, and it expanded to 24 pages. Roland Castranova, Past National Commander, became the next Vietnam Editor with the August-September-October 1994 issue. In the 1st Quarter of 1998 John McKown became the Vietnam Editor for a brief period of time until July-August-September 1998, when Gary Noller, after finishing his term as National Commander, took on the duties of Editing the Vietnam News, a role he still holds today.



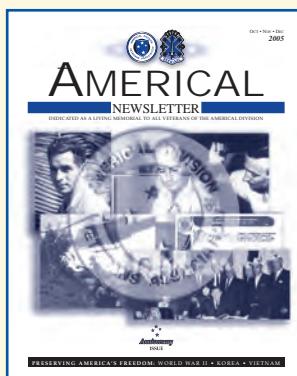
## Into The Modern Era

As more articles were submitted about Vietnam, it became prudent to submit them via a computer, keeping the margins as close as possible to what Editor Jim Buckle wanted for his WWII articles. Gary Noller and later, Dave Taylor who contributed articles, used the computer to submit their work. We also offered to help Jim Buckle with his work but the Newsletter was Jim's life and, not savvy on the use of computers, he continued to use his old typewriter-cut and paste and photo-reduction methods.



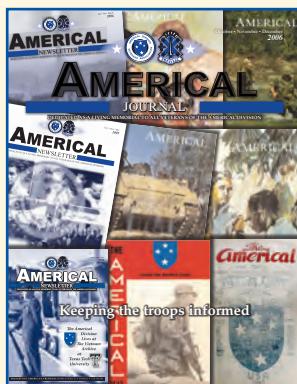
## Under New Hands

In the fall of 2004 Jim Buckle relinquished his duties as Editor-In-Chief, a position he had held since 1988. Jim found it increasingly difficult to have the time to keep up with the fast pace of a greatly expanded Americal Division Veterans Association, now in excess of 3,000 members. He also realized that technology had passed him by and a new look was needed to keep the association's members interested in the publication. Dave Taylor took over as Editor-In-Chief.



## From "Good" to "Professional"

During 2005 the Americal Newsletter continued to grow and became a 44 page newsletter. Yet we were not keeping up with the modern practices of desktop publishing. Past National Commander Dutch DeGroot, whose professional work is in the graphics and publishing world, volunteered to help provide the layouts for the newsletter. Beginning with the Oct-Nov-Dec 2005 issue, Dutch was appointed as Creative Director and the Americal Newsletter took a whole new look of professionalism that continues to this day.



## Striving to be the Best

In the fall of 2006 Dave Taylor relinquished his duties as Editor-in-Chief due to increased responsibilities as the Sr. Vice-Commander of the ADVA. Gary Noller became Editor-in-Chief as well as Vietnam Editor and Taylor became contributing Editor to support the publication with the WWII stories as the ADVA's WWII Historian as well. The editorial staff of Noller, Taylor and DeGroot looked at the possibility of making the Newsletter full color throughout. We found that the additional cost would be minimal and full color would increase the professionalism of the publication. So, in Oct-Nov-Dec 2006, we went to full color. The following publication (Jan-Feb-Mar 2007), the title was changed to reflect the more modern and quality publication the newsletter had become, "The Americal Journal". Greater emphasis was placed on printing articles about the history of the Americal and we have encouraged veterans to tell their stories. And the rest, as they say, is history.

*Creative Director note:* as shown on page 36 our ADVA logo also evolved left 1960's logo to present



See AMERICAL PX at [www.americal.org](http://www.americal.org)

Phone 336.621.8756

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2307	Bumper Sticker	\$3.00			
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2309	Americal Shield Pin (Large)	\$4.50			
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2312	ADVA Window Decal	\$3.00			
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2315	CMB Mini <b>SOLD OUT</b>	\$5.00			
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2318	196th Brigade Unit Pin	\$4.50			
2319	198th Brigade Unit Pin	\$4.50			
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2321	Baseball Cap - Khaki (1 size fits all)	\$14.00			
2322	T-Shirt, ADVA Gray (Med, Lg, XL, XXL)	\$18.00			
2323	Americal Trailer Hitch Cover	\$10.00			
2324	Americal black License Plate Holder	\$5.00			
2325	Americal Koozie	\$3.00			
2326	Americal Luggage Spotter ***2 for 9.00	\$5.00			
2327	Americal Division History - DVD	\$15.00			
2328	Under the Southern Cross - Book	\$15.00			
2329	Why Didn't You Get Me Out - Book	\$15.00			
2330	Baseball Cap - Spec Blue or Black (1 size fits all)	\$14.00			
2331	Americal Coffee Mug	\$10.00			
2332	Americal Grey Sweatshirt (Med, Lg, XL, XXL)	\$35.00			
2333	ADVA Challenge Coin	\$10.00			
2334	Americal Division polo shirt, Black (Med, Lg, XL, XXL)	\$28.00			
2335	Americal Flag w/grommets	\$46.00			
2336	T-Shirt Americal Brigades (Med, Lg, XL, XXL)	\$18.00			
2337	Americal Nylon Wallet	\$6.00			
2338	Americal Tie	\$23.00			
2339	Americal Beer Stein	\$45.00			
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### 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.

### Eligibility for Membership

Membership in the ADVA is open to all officers and enlisted personnel  
who have served with the 23rd (Americal) Infantry Division in an  
assigned or attached status during the following periods of service:

<b>World War II</b>	<b>1942-1945</b>
<b>Panama</b>	<b>1954-1956</b>
<b>Vietnam War</b>	<b>1967-1973</b>

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



# Application For Membership /Change of Address Americal Division Veterans Association

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Americal Unit: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates of Service: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Spouse: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsored By: \_\_\_\_\_ DD214 (Optional): \_\_\_\_\_

Change of address notification should be sent to Mr. Roger Gilmore, P.O. Box 830662,  
Richardson, TX, 75080, [gilmoraces@aol.com](mailto:gilmoraces@aol.com), 214-497-6543.  
If changes are seasonal please provide dates.

Please enclose dues: 1 year \$15  
(WWII Vets pay \$12/year)  
Life Dues: 75 years & over = \$50  
Under 75 years of age = \$125