



October • November • December **2013**

# AMERICAL JOURNAL

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

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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**AMERICAL**  
JOURNAL

The Americal Journal is the official publication of the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA). It is published each calendar quarter.

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## Commander's Comments

By Larry Swank

### Important Note on Service Opportunities

Our elections are coming up in the spring. Our association remains strong because so many of you devote your talents and time to the ADVA. If you are interested in serving as an elected National Officer we ask that you contact a member of the Nominating Committee listed below.

The Nominating Committee must present a slate of officers to the National Adjutant by February 1st, so please contact any one of them soon. The elective officer positions are the National Commander, Senior Vice-Commander, Junior Vice-Commander, Executive Council Members, and Trustees of Scholarship Fund.

*The Nominating Committee includes:*

**Jay Flanagan**, 908.709.9790, jayfl1@verizon.net

**Reggie Horton**, 336.599.6901, jrhorton@esinc.net

**Connie Steers**, 516.822.5938, 11thbrigade@optonline.net

**Dave Eichhorn**, 740.678.2001, de332435@frontier.com

**Rich Scales**, 217.736.6401, namgrunt@hotmail.com

I also have an open position on the ADVA Command Staff for the National Sergeant-at-Arms. If you are interested in serving in this important position please contact me at lswank@aol.com or 301.892.0855. I want to take this opportunity to thank Richard Smith for his many years of service in this post. He has maintained order and decorum among the members, helped us all follow proper etiquette for the Colors, and made meetings and banquets run like clockwork.

## Houston: We Have a Reunion!

By the 2014 Reunion Committee

PNC Ronald Ellis, Chairman

### Make Plans Today Special Room Rate

The 2014 National Reunion of the Americal Division Veterans Association will be held September 11-14 in Houston, Texas. PNC Ronald Ellis is taking the lead in planning the reunion. He is assisted by PNC Ron Ward and ADVA members residing in the Lone Star state.

The reunion headquarters hotel will be the Hilton Houston North. The hotel is located at 12400 Greenspoint Drive and is less than eight miles from George Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH). Houston Hobby Airport, 25 miles from the hotel, also offers opportunities for air travel into the area.

All 480 guest rooms and suites of the Hilton Houston North feature warm, traditional furnishings, are connected to high-speed internet access and have 37" LCD televisions. Relax in the outdoor swimming pool or keep fit in the fitness center with cardio machines and weights equipment. Play basketball on the nearby courts, or relax in the beautiful indoor atrium. Enjoy traditional cuisine and fine wine in Vino, this north Houston's hotel wine bar, or relish American classics at The Café.

Guests are encouraged to make hotel reservations as soon as possible due to the limited number of rooms at the special reunion rate. Make reservations by calling 866-577-1154 and

ask for a room in the Americal Division Veterans Association block and provide arrival and departure dates.

Reservations may also be made on-line. The reservation web page is at <http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-AMDI-20140910/index.jhtml>.

Rates begin at \$99 per night plus tax. This rate expires on August 20, 2014 or as soon as the reservation block is reserved, whichever is sooner. The rate is effective for reservations beginning September 10 through September 14.

### **Proposed Tour: San Jacinto Battlefield and Battleship USS Texas**

Almost everyone knows of the Battle of the Alamo that took place in San Antonio from February 23 to March 6, 1836. Forces under the command of President General Antonio López de Santa Anna of Mexico waged a 13 day siege that ended with the defeat and death of some 200 or so Texans fighting for independence.

But not many other than native Texans or history buffs can tell the story of the Battle of San Jacinto. Less than six weeks after the Battle of the Alamo the Texian Army under the leadership of General Sam Houston defeated the Mexican Army in an 18 minute battle on the banks of the San Jacinto River near present day Houston.

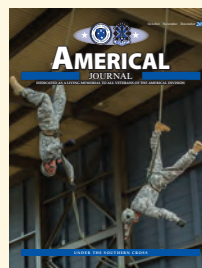
Preliminary plans for the Friday tour include a visit to the San Jacinto Battleground State Historical Site. In addition to the battleground the site includes the San Jacinto Monument and the Battleship Texas. The San Jacinto Monument bears a similarity with the Washington Monument in Washington, D.C. and is open for visitors to go to top for a birds-eye view of the City of Houston, the Houston ship channel, the Gulf of Mexico, and other features of the surrounding area.

The Battleship Texas was a Super Dreadnaught class vessel built in 1914 and renovated in 1922. She served in the U.S. Navy in World War I and World War II including duty in support of the D-Day landings in France. In 1948, the Battleship Texas became the first battleship memorial museum in the United States. It is the only surviving Super Dreadnaught and is open for self-guided tours.

Those wishing to pursue a day trip on their own may want to consider visiting nearby Galveston, Texas and the Gulf of Mexico. The weather most likely will be warm but the beaches should not be crowded this time of year. The Johnson Space Center is located on the other side of town and also offers a unique opportunity to visit a site that has a prime role in our country's space exploration history.

Additional hotel and program information and an event registration form will be in the first quarter 2014 edition of the Americal Journal magazine. If you have immediate questions please contact Ron Ellis or Ron Ward

Mark your 2014 calendars now and make your hotel reservation quickly. This reunion will be one you do not want to miss.



### Cover: Air assault!

Cadre from the Air assault school at Ft. Campbell demonstrate the Australian rappel for the ADVA. One of the most difficult maneuvers.  
(Photo: Dutch DeGroot)

## Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore

The Association added thirty-four new members for this reporting quarter. This represents an increase of four new members when compared to the third quarter 2013 reporting period. This is still not where we would like it to be, but it's moving in the right direction.

On a more positive note, the Association added 135 new members resulting from the merger of former 132nd Infantry Regiment Association members. The 132nd Infantry Regiment Association was headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. The 132nd Infantry Regiment was part of the Americal Division during World War II, and this group was comprised entirely of those Americal Division veterans and spouses of Americal veterans. Of this total new member count, ninety five are 132nd Regiment veterans and forty are surviving spouses who were on the membership roles of the association. Thanks go out to PNC David Taylor who lead this very important ADVA membership transition project and PNC Dutch DeGroot who was "boots on the ground" in the Chicago area helping with the transition.

Other members have been actively recruiting new members since the last Americal Journal issue. Member David Eichhorn signed up four new members at the 196th Light Infantry Brigade reunion in July. PNC Ron Ward signed up three Americal Division veterans attending a unit reunion in Branson, Missouri. We expect to gain approximately thirty new members from the Nashville reunion registration. Americal Division veterans who paid the fifteen dollar membership dues as part of their registration receive a one year ADVA membership. We will publish those names in a future issue of the Americal Journal once the Nashville reunion committee wraps up the reunion counts and provides the list of those new members.

New Life members gains continue at a very good pace. For this reporting period, five Americal Division veterans joined the Association as Life members. Thirteen annual pay members upgraded to Life status, giving us a total of eighteen new Life Members in the Association. Five former members were re-instated to the ADVA roster during the Fourth Quarter 2013 reporting period.

As always, a reminder to notify me when your mailing address changes for any reason. This is especially important for members who head to the southern states during the winter months. To continue receiving your issue of the Americal Journal at your temporary winter address, please notify me ASAP with your new mailing address.

You can contact me by telephone or email 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.

### Corrections (Unit)

**George Atzel**  
723 Maint Bn Co A

**Randy R. Schumacher**  
3/82nd Arty C Btry

### New Members

**Theodore H. Andrews**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Newton, NJ

★ PNC Ronald Ward

**Ralph Bateman**  
D/4/21st Inf Rgmt  
Stevensville, MD

★ Self

**Odon Bocanegra, Jr.**  
2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Alamo, TX

★ Self

**Thomas N. Caldwell**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Burlington, WV

★ Self

**Dennis Clark**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Woodworth, ND

★ PNC Ronald Ward

**Matt Connor**  
11 LIB  
Mason, OH

★ Self

**Jimmy Creech**  
E/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Howey in the Hills, FL

★ David Eichhorn

**Richard Gerety**  
1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Santa Cruz, CA

★ Self

**Keith Jackson**  
A/3/21st Inf Rgmt  
Dallas, TX

★ Self

**Maurice W. James, Jr.**  
A/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Boonesboro, MD

★ Jessie Gause

**Alan H. Johnson**  
1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Missoula, MT

★ Self

**Barry E. Kelly**  
3/82nd Arty C Btry  
Chester Springs, PA

★ Spencer Baba

**Frank R. Lavallee**  
198 LIB  
Valrico, FL

★ Self

**William Leon**  
3/1st Inf Rgmt  
Clarksburg, WV

★ Bob Kapp

**Carmen Matteo**  
17th Cav H Trp  
Brecksville, OH

★ Self

**Lane McGee**  
C/3/21st Inf Rgmt  
Newburg, MD

★ David Eichhorn

**Bob Mosher**  
23rd Admin Co  
Haslett, MI

★ Self

**Ernst Olsen**  
198 LIB  
Milford, PA

★ Self

**Lyle K. Reiner**  
5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Burnsville, MN

★ Self

**Kenneth E. Rice**  
C/3/21st Inf Rgmt  
Spring, TX

★ David Eichhorn

**Dan Ross**  
C/3/21st Inf Rgmt  
Lansdale, PA

★ David Eichhorn

**Don Sims**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Thomasville, GA

★ Roger Gilmore

**Raymond L. Sisneros**  
14th CAB HHC  
Santa Fe, NM

★ Self

**Allen W. Smith**  
B/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Simpsonville, SC

★ Stan Desorta

**Robert A. Spangler**  
196 LIB  
Longview, TX

★ Self

**Plummer L. Talley, Jr.**  
A/3/1st Inf Rgmt  
Gwynn Oak, MD

★ Mike Dachille

### ADVA MEMBERSHIP

31 July 2013

<b>World War II</b>	<b>468</b>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>2,487</b>
<b>Cold War</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Associate Members:</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Total Members</b>	<b>3,179</b>



**Harry Wilmoth**

C/1/52nd Inf Rgmt  
Fresno, CA  
★ *PNC Jay Flanagan*

**New Paid Life Members**

**Jerry Bocks**

196 LIB  
Vail, AZ  
★ *Self*

**Doug Giffen**

B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Roanoke, VA  
★ *PNC Ronald Ward*

**Joseph Perez**

196 LIB  
Bayville, NJ  
★ *Self*

**Billy R. Robbins**

E/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Sharpsburg, NC  
★ *John Taylor*

**Ruben Rodriquez**

E/4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Palm Bay, FL  
★ *Self*

**Darryl Dietrich**

B/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Soddy Daisy, TN  
★ *Robert K. Brown, Jr.*

**John Furgess**

Div HDQ RRU  
Nashville, TN  
★ *Ron Green*

**Tony L. Graham**

3/21st Inf Rgmt  
Elberton, GA  
★ *James B. Adams, Jr.*

**William Mahon**

1st/1st Cav A Trp  
Waco, TX  
★ *Bill Bacon*

**Craig McKeever**

23rd S&T Bn  
Lakeland, FL  
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

**Charles H. Moe**

A/1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Wagoner, OK  
★ *Bill Schneider*

**David W. Navy**

23rd MP Co  
St. Louis, MO  
★ *Rich Merlin*

**Ernest Rodriques**

C/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Union City, CA  
★ *Self*

**Reinhold Schiessl**

1/82nd Arty D Btry  
South River, NJ  
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

**Gerald Schmitt**

B/1/52nd Inf Rgmt  
Camdenton, MO  
★ *PNC Ronald R. Ellis*

**James Simms**

C/4/31st Inf Rgmt  
Carlisle, PA  
★ *PNC Ronald R. Ellis*

**Raymond G. Stice**

HHC/4/31st Inf Rgmt  
Bella Vista, AR  
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

**Alan R. Tinkous**

1st/1st Cav HHC Trp  
Holley, NY  
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

**Re-instated Members**

**Gary W. Bray**

C/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Stigler, OK  
★ *PNC Gary L. Noller*

**Jack Henley**

132nd Inf Rgmt Co A  
Hamilton, MT  
★ *Pete Messina*

**John C. Stricklin**

D/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Fayetteville, Ga  
★ *PNC Roland Castronova*

**Robert Verlezza**

E/4/21st Inf Rgmt  
Drain, OR  
★ *Don Young*

**George E. Watts**

A/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Laurens, SC  
★ *Self*

**New Associate Members**

**Donna W. Hammond**

Oklahoma City, OK  
★ *PNC David W. Taylor*

**TAPS**

**World War II Veterans**

**Max C. Alexander**

Unit Unknown  
Sycamore, IL  
*December 22, 2012*

**Richard W. Brooks \***

182nd Inf Rgmt  
Tiffen, OH  
*July 5, 2013*

**Al Diederich \***

132nd Inf Rgmt Co D  
Murrieta, CA  
*May 13, 2013*

**Nelson W. Dion \***

101st QM  
Marlborough, MA  
*August 22, 2013*

**Albert E. Drumblusky**

164th Inf Rgmt  
Shenandoah, PA  
*January 19, 2013*

**James C. Gulotta**

Unit Unknown  
New Orleans, LA  
*August 31, 2013*

**Karl Kennedy \***

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Houston, TX  
*August 28, 2013*

**Eugene C. Marsocci**

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Brick, NJ  
*August 19, 2013*

**Wilfred F. Myers \***

182nd Inf Rgmt Co D  
Glen Dale, WV  
*May 5, 2013*

**Nicholas L. Scotto**

Unit Unknown  
Orlando, FL  
*May 12, 2013*

**Arthur Smith**

Unit Unknown  
Hazelton, PA  
*August 8, 2013*

**LeRoy Tillery**

Unit Unknown  
Harrisburg, OR  
*July 24, 2013*

**Vietnam Veterans**

**Willard Boes**

123rd Avn Bn Co B  
Coldwater, MI  
*October 26, 2013*

**Donald B. Bowles**

Unit Unknown  
Lockport, NY  
*May 5, 2013*

**Stephen Ferrera**

Unit Unknown  
West Lawn, PA  
*December 12, 2012*

**Frank Hagen \***

B/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Muscadine, AL  
*August 23, 2013*

**Jesse L. Helms \***

E/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Greenville, SC  
*September 9, 2013*

**Paul Loyd \***

B/2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Cannelburg, IN  
*September 25, 2013*

**Kris Ruchti**

E/1/52nd Inf Rgmt  
Springfield, OR  
*August 27, 2013*

**Samuel Varney \***

23rd M.P. Co  
Crum, WV  
*September 15, 2013*

**James B. Walker**

Unit Unknown  
Spring Lake, NC  
*August 16, 2013*

**\*ADVA Member**

## Legacy Committee Report

By Roger Gilmore

### Americal Monument at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

At the annual ADVA reunion in Nashville this past September the ADVA Legacy Committee met to discuss current monument projects and related Legacy business. One of the key discussion areas was the Americal monument project at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

At the time of this meeting, the committee had RFP's (Request for Proposal) for the Fort Sill monument design out to two monument companies. One company requested to provide a proposal is Willis Granite Company, based in Oklahoma. The other company working on a design proposal is Columbus Monument Company of Columbus, Georgia.

At our meeting we had only the Willis Granite design proposal to review. Willis Granite submitted two basic designs for committee review. The design concept and wording is the same for both designs; the only difference between the two is the material used. One design utilizes gray granite for three Americal era pedestals, the other uses black granite.

The committee feels that cost containment has to be an important element for this monument, so our decision is to go with Willis' gray granite design for further consideration. The gray granite is the lower cost of the two designs.

Following the Legacy Committee meeting we received a design bid from Columbus Monument Company. Columbus Monument's design plan is significantly higher in price than the Willis plan. We have eliminated Columbus Monument's bid from further consideration.

A key discussion point at the Nashville meeting was to find ways to further reduce the overall cost of the Fort Sill monument. As a result of this collective decision to find some cost cutting measures, I planned a trip to Willis Monument for a detailed review of their design and discussions on how to reduce costs.

In early October I traveled to the Willis Granite location in western Oklahoma for this meeting. ADVA member and artillery veteran David Laukat drove down from the Oklahoma City area to join the meeting.

From this meeting, we came up with some basic design changes that should save some costs from the original design.

At the time of this article, the design change recommendations are being reviewed by the Legacy Committee to determine if these changes are line with our monument design goals.

We will continue to keep all ADVA members and interested veterans updated on Fort Sill monument design progress in future issues of this publication.

### 2014 Americal Legacy Calendar

The 2014 Americal Legacy calendar is scheduled to be mailed to all ADVA members in mid-November. It should be in the mail just prior to the Christmas mailing rush.

The calendar is designed and produced by ADVA member John (Dutch) DeGroot. Dutch has done an excellent job with the calendar from the very start and he deserves a pat on the back for his efforts. Producing the calendar for one year requires a couple of hundred hours of work on his part. Dutch receives no payment for his work other than the thanks he gets from ADVA members.

Please continue your support for Americal Legacy initiatives and future monuments with your generous donations. There is a lot to do and not much time to do it. Solid financial backing will allow for swift progress in construction of fitting monuments to honor Americal Division veterans.

The calendar mailing will include a pre-addressed contribution envelope for mailing your check or money order. Donations may also be mailed to ADVA Assistant Finance Officer and PNC Ronald Ellis at:

**4493 Hwy 64 W**

**Henderson, TX 75652**

### Americal Division Monument Project Cebu, Philippines

In the last Americal Journal issue, I reported on a proposed venture with a VFW post in Cebu City, Philippines. The project plan is placement of an Americal Division monument at the site of a major Japanese Army surrender to Americal Division soldiers in August 1945. The actual surrender site is north of Cebu City, and this location would be the monument site.

At the Nashville Legacy Committee meeting, a majority vote approved a motion for the Americal Legacy committee to provide limited funding for this WWII Americal monument. In October, we submitted a Memorandum of Agreement to the VFW post for the funding agreement.

At the time of this article, we are waiting for a reply from the VFW post regarding their acceptance of the agreement or proposed condition changes.

### Ft Benning Monument Coins Sold Out Videos are Available

The Limited Edition challenge coin depicting the Americal Monument on the Walk of Honor at the Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning has sold out. Thank you for your interest in this fine memento.

The DVD video of the dedication ceremony of the Americal Monument at Ft. Benning is still available through the Americal PX. Contact Wayne Bryant to order a video. Once the video is sold out it is very likely that it will not be reproduced. The cost is only \$15.

Proceeds from sales of the challenge coin and the dedication ceremony DVD go to the Legacy Program fund and will be used to help pay the costs of future monuments to veterans of the Americal Division.



## John "Doc" Hofer A "Veterans Veteran"

By David W. Taylor

Dr. John Hofer, DMD, is the Americal Division Veterans Association's National Service Officer and Chief of Dental Service, Veterans Administration Hospital in Madison, Wisconsin. John served as a combat medic in Vietnam, with Bravo Company, 5th/46th Infantry Battalion, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, in 1970-1971. During his tour he treated numerous casualties during combat operations in the notorious Ky Tra and Dragon Valley's in Quang Nam province. He returned home from Vietnam as a Specialist/5 (E-5) medic.



John Hofer with Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker receiving special commendation.

After active duty John joined the Army Reserves from 1978 to 1985 and was promoted from E-5 to E-6. He then joined the Naval Reserves in 1985, serving in the officer ranks and working with Marines Corps and Navy Seabee units until he retired in 2003 as a Commander. Hofer's awards and decorations demonstrate a long dedication to service in the military. He was awarded the Combat Medic's Badge (CMB), the Bronze Star Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, National Defense Medal, Seabee Combat Warfare Insignia, Navy Commendation Medal and Navy Achievement Medal.

During his years of Navy reserve duty Doc Hofer also served as a Doctor of Dentistry in the Veterans Administration (VA). "Service" became a hallmark of how John lives his life. He joined the Americal Division Association in 1988. He is the Post Surgeon of VFW Post 8216 in Middleton, Wisconsin, a member of the American Legion post in Cross Plains, Wisconsin and also a member of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV). John also contributes much to his local community in his church, his homeowners association and high school alumni association.

Doc Hofer's career in the dental health field has been varied where he has not only practiced dentistry but

taught and mentored others as well. He taught at Loyola University's Dental School in Chicago and has been on staff at the Chillicothe, Ohio Veterans Administration Hospital with an appointment as Adjunct Clinical Professor at Ohio State's Dental School. Hofer became a Principal Investigator for a National VA collaborative Dental Implant Study, surgically placing implants and restoring them.

Throughout his career working in Veterans' Hospitals Doc Hofer has gone far beyond the dental chair in reaching out to veterans in need. Wherever he sees a veteran struggling with just having a bad day or seeking extraordinary help, Doc Hofer has been their advocate. In addition he has served on the Long Term Care Committee of the Wisconsin Board of Veterans Affairs as well as being part of the boards Legislative and Program Review Committee. He established two "Halls of Heroes" to recognize the sacrifice of veterans at the Veterans Administration hospitals in Madison Wisconsin and Tomah, Wisconsin.

Working with his local VFW Post he has raised significant amounts of money to serve needy veterans and their families who are organ transplant patients; he has led the way for Veterans to get free bus rides and other services to give a helping hand for those who are down and out. As the Americal's National Service Officer John Hofer has provided critical advice to thousands of veterans on oral hygiene and encouraging exams for oral cancer. During many Americal reunions you have seen the local VA hospital providing oral screenings and blood pressure checks, an initiative begun by John Hofer.

But perhaps Doc Hofer's greatest contribution to Vets is just by caring ---- both inside and outside his dental activity. One of his comrades from Vietnam whom he keeps in touch with says, "John is unbelievably dedicated to veterans. He worries about all vets". Another Vietnam vet notes, "John has not only reached out to those with whom he has chanced contact but to many of our Vietnam comrades who were long lost. But he also helps any veteran from any era that he comes in contact. For most people, it is difficult to reach out to someone who is very troubled and yet John has walked willingly into those minefields every day to clear the way for us to get help. His service to many veterans can only be called "Life-Saving". He is a true medic of the mind, body and soul. Thank God for John and his endless battle to help people."

John's busy life has included helping his wife Beverly raise triplets, Brittany, Max and Kelly, and John has been active with the numerous sports teams they have participated in. As John contemplates finishing his career working at the VA Hospital, his friends and acquaintances have worked hard to insure this combat medic received some deserved recognition. On August 30, 2013 Doc Hofer was presented with a special commendation from the Governor of Wisconsin and, on September 14, 2013 at the Americal annual banquet in Nashville, John was presented with the ADVA Lifetime Achievement Award.

From all of Dr. John Hofer's friends and associates it is a job well done. But for Doc Hofer, it's a job not yet finished!

## 2/1 Infantry Chapter

By Chuck Holdaway



The 2/1 Infantry Chapter members in attendance had a very enjoyable gathering at the annual Americal Reunion in Nashville in September. We want to thank the organizing committee for a great, well run reunion. We had over 20 members attend along with family and friends. Attending members were pleasantly surprised when they were presented with 2/1 chapter and Americal Reunion shirts provided by Rich Heroux and Jesse Mendoza (Jesse also provided hats for each of the attending members with the 2/1 chapter logo).

The chapter held our annual chapter meeting at the close of the Americal membership meeting. Nominations for Commander, Vice-commander and Secretary/Treasurer were put forth for the coming two-year term of office. The members in attendance voted to retain the current officers for the next term.

We discussed setting the chapter up as a 501c non-profit entity sometime this year and updating the chapter by-laws to reflect a couple of changes. We will be working with the ADVA to get this accomplished sometime within the coming year. We also acquired four new members at the annual reunion and are looking forward to accepting any new 2/1 members who have joined the ADVA this year. Anyone wishing to join us may contact any of the officers.

We have made a concentrated effort to get all delinquent dues in line for the start of 2014; annual dues are \$5 and due at the end of January. This was reflected in a mailing and in our monthly newsletters. Our 2/1 Chapter newsletters are available to anyone through our website <http://www.b-2-1-196lib.com>.

Several of our members were able to attend the Kokomo reunion the weekend after the annual reunion and had a great time as usual. The annual veterans reunion in Kokomo, Indiana, for those who have never attended, is one of the, if not the, largest in the country and is well worth the trip.

We were greatly saddened at the passing of one of our comrades and founding members the week after we attended the Kokomo reunion. Paul Terry "Foxhole" Loyd, was able to attend the Kokomo reunion and we were blessed to be able to spend our time with him before his passing. "Foxhole" was a decorated Vietnam Veteran and a close friend. Several of us were able to attend the services which were ceremoniously befitting our warrior friend. We will all miss him very much and the chapter sends our condolences to his wife, Juliana.

## Great Midwest Chapter

By Dale J. Belke

The next meeting for the Great Midwest Chapter will be held at Winterfest in New Glarus, WI, on January 18, 2014. Elections of new officers will be held for the chapter at that time.

Current chapter commander Dale Belke will be relinquishing his post. If you are interested in the chapter, willing to take charge, or help out, please attend. If you can't attend, let me know any ideas you have for a reunion or other thoughts. If you would like information regarding Winterfest let me know and I will send when it is ready.

Americal National is interested in which year and where the Great Midwest Chapter would like to have a national reunion in our area. We need feedback on that too. Stay strong and take care of your own. Peace.

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## Far West Chapter

By Tom Packard

The Far West Chapter held its annual reunion at the Aquarius Casino Resort in Laughlin, Nevada in October. Thirty-five people registered. The reunion started with our customary hospitality suite overlooking the Colorado River and the mountains to the east. The weather was great with warm sunny skies during the day and cool nights.

The chapter elected new officers. Elected were Bill Miles from Penn Valley, CA, Commander; Ernie Rodrigues from Union City, CA, Vice Commander; Tom Packard from Spring TX was reelected as Secretary/Treasurer; and Paris Tognoli from Isleton, CA was reelected as Sgt. at Arms. Bill Miles appointed Gene McGrath from Pahrump, NV as Chapter Chaplain.

Chapter member Larry Kinyon presented the chapter with nine streamers for our colors. He explained the meaning and importance of each streamer. It was voted on to hold our 2014 chapter reunion in Sacramento, CA. Location and dates will be forthcoming- but hold open mid-October if you would like to attend.

There are many things to do in Laughlin other than gamble. This year we took a bus tour to Oatman, AZ. Oatman is an old gold mining town on Historic Route 66 about 45 minutes from Laughlin. There we found many shops selling everything you might find in a tourist town along Old Route 66. Local actors staged their daily, humorous and fake bank robbery and gunfight on the main street in front of the Oatman Hotel. The Oatman Hotel is where actors Clark Gable and Carole Lombard spent their wedding night in the 40's. In this town one will find a couple dozen friendly but wild burros roaming the streets looking for food and entertaining the tourists.

The reunion ended with a banquet. Paris Tognoli was joined by Roy Abbott as they sang a few songs after dinner.

We would like to thank Rick Ropele, outgoing Commander and Gene McGrath, outgoing Vice Commander for their time and effort in leading the chapter the past few years. We would also like to thank Rick for doing the chapter newsletter for the last several years. Rick's final newsletter will be issued during the last quarter of 2013. Tom Packard will take over as chapter newsletter editor in January, 2014 and he will be looking for stories from chapter members to publish..



## Co. B, 1/6th Infantry Reunion

By Ted Andrews



B Company, 1/6th Infantry, 198th Light Infantry Brigade, held their second reunion in Branson, Missouri on October 2-4, 2013. Members in attendance served in the unit in 1967-1968.

Attendees included the original company commander, Capt. Dan Prather, now a retired Colonel; original company executive officer, Vernon Lovejoy; original first platoon leader Lynn Apple; and original mortar platoon leader, Fred Preuss. Also attending was a succession of first platoon leaders: Mel Carney, second; Don Penrod, third, and Andrew Quinton, fourth.

The Company formed at Fort Hood, Texas in the spring of 1967. It arrived in Da Nang harbor, Vietnam, on October 4, 1967 aboard the transport ship Upshur. It then transferred onto U.S. Navy LSDs and made the short trip to Chu Lai.

During TET 1968 they were air-lifted by U.S. Marine helicopters to Lo Giang, a hamlet just south of Da Nang. They engaged a large force of 60 to 70 NVA and Viet Cong soldiers. For its extraordinary heroism Co. B along with A and C companies were awarded the Valorous Unit Award.

*Front row left to right:* Mel Carney, Robert Kirsten, Ted Block, Robert Yehle, Joe De Frank, Dennis Clark, Vernon Suchy, Doug Giffin, Don Penrod, Mel Cheromiah and Mark Linda.

*Second row, left to right:* Frayne Berg, Dan Gross, Art Rollins, Jim Millard, Bud Hanselman, Vernon Lovejoy, Ken Rowland, Jerry Haussels, Lynn Apple and Ted Andrews.

*Third row, left to right:* Andrew Quinton, Ron Ward (guest from A Company), Fred Preuss, Dan Prather, Ed Gullully, Jonh Hart, Tom Caldwell and Steve Wilson

Guests that are not in picture but at the reunion are Spencer Bumgardner, Roy Gray and Ron Pederson.

### Citation for Valorous Unit Award

The 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, comprised of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Company A, Company B, Company C, Company E.

The 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division distinguished itself by extraordinary heroism while engaged in military operations during the period 7 February 1968 to 11 February 1968 near the hamlet of Lo Giang (1), Quang Nam Province in the Republic of Vietnam. While conducting search operations to the south of the hamlet, Company C was pinned down by an extremely heavy attack from an enemy force of undetermined size. Company A immediately moved to assist the beleaguered unit, and, while approaching Lo Giang (1) from the north, the element came under a barrage of small arms, rocket and mortar fire which caused several casualties and forced the company to withdraw and regroup before launching a counterattack. Exhibiting conspicuous gallantry and relentless determination, the men in the lead element fought in place to cover the withdrawal of the remainder of the company and engaged the Viet Cong in savage hand-to-hand combat to halt the human wave assault that followed the mortar and rocket attack. Their inspired fighting temporarily repulsed the enemy, enabling the remainder of Company A to mount a counteroffensive which drove the enemy back into the hamlet. Concurrently, Company B arrived and pressed on with fury and force to assist Company C in repelling the communist aggressors. Fighting brilliantly, the three companies completely destroyed the hostile force. Their efforts resulted in more than 250 confirmed enemy dead, with evidence that an additional 300 dead or wounded were removed from the area. The men of 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry, 198th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, displayed extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty which are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinct credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States.

*Editor's note: The Valorous Unit Award is the second highest unit award of the U.S. Army. It is considered equivalent to the individual award of the Silver Star. The Presidential Unit Citation is equivalent to the individual award of the Distinguished Service Cross.*



**Dear editor,**

The Americal Journal, July-Sept 2013, page 19, contained a photo taken on Bougainville. The image is of an attack on Hill 260, Bougainville, Solomon Islands. It shows my husband, Renato Della Rocca, on the day he was wounded in action.

The photo is AP image #4401010444. The caption under the original image identifies 2nd Lt Renalto Della Rocco of Brooklyn, New York. Note the misspelling of his name in the caption.

Renato Della Rocca is alive and well in Venice, California. In fact, on October 1, 2013, we celebrated his 94th birthday. Should anyone wish to contact Renato, please feel free to do so: Renato Joseph Della Rocca, 42 Paloma Ave., Venice CA 90291; rdellarocca@ca.rr.com; 310.452.7667

Below is the AP website to which one may refer for additional information and the full caption to the photo.

<http://www.apimages.com/metadata/Index/Associated-Press-International-News-Solomon-Island-546005b64e5da11af9f0014c2589dfb/1/0>

WWII U.S. ADVANCE BOUGAINVILLE - Overview

Soldiers of the Americal Division, armed with two flame throwers, a bazooka, rifles and hand grenades, advance on the Japanese on hill 260 on Bougainville Island in the Solomon Islands, 1944, during World War II. The Japanese army are still dug around the base of the sheared off Banyan tree at upper left. Leading the attack is 2nd Lt. Renalto Della Rocco, of Brooklyn, N.Y., who is just below the crown of the hill at left. (AP Photo/U.S. Signal Army Corps)

Elissa Della Rocca  
Venice, CA

**Dear editor,**

I just read your article about The Forgotten War on page 35 of the Jul-Aug-Sep edition of the Americal Journal. We had a group of nine Korean War veterans in South Korea from September 29 to October 9, 2013. Seventeen students from the College of the Ozarks accompanied the veterans on the trip.

The students posted a blog and photos that may be found at <http://cofokorea2013.blogspot.com>. The entry for the last day in Korea begins with these paragraphs:

"Today we woke with an early start to head home. Although we are leaving the sides of our veterans this morning, they are not leaving our hearts. It was hard on everyone to load the colorful and highly decorated Korean bus for the last time. We waved goodbye out the windows to our wonderful veterans who have adopted us over the last ten days. Many eyes were filled with tears, but others expressed pure joy because we all know this is just the beginning. It is comforting to know that these goodbyes are merely 'see you later's.'

It was bittersweet to depart for home and reflect over our precious time spent in this beautiful country. Our journey in Korea was exciting, insightful, and full of exploration. However, nothing compares to the deep relationships that we have cultivated with the veterans that accompanied us on this trip. The veteran we were paired with was Mr. Tremblay and we are looking forward to keeping in touch with him. He is planning on bringing his wife down to College of the Ozarks in a few months so we can meet her. He has become family to us over such a short period of time. God placed this great man in our lives and nothing has made us happier than having the opportunity to learn from him. From inside jokes to deep conversations to precious gifts, Mr. Tremblay captured our hearts and not only ours but everyone on this trip!"

Vicky Reynolds-Middagh  
Valor Tours, Ltd.; Sausalito, CA  
415-332-7850  
[valortours@yahoo.com](mailto:valortours@yahoo.com); [www.valortours.com](http://www.valortours.com)

**Dear editor,**

I believe I am the child of a late member of the original Americal Division. My father, Earl McKenzie, passed in 1990.

When his wife and my mother, Evelyn, passed in 1998, I was left with many, many boxes of keepsakes and memorabilia. It has only been recently that I have been able to approach the boxes without becoming a tearful mushball.

Guess what I found? There was a fabulous photo of Earl and fellow soldiers proudly displaying a banner that read, "A Cool Million", celebrating the amount of money they raised in war bonds within the Americal Division! It is an inspiring piece of history and I wish to share it with your organization.

My father, Earl, is the one viewed from the side with a paint brush in his hand. My mother wrote a note on the back of the photo. It says, "Victory Bond drive during World War 2 in New Caledonia 1943. Earl as First Sergeant with Company members. Americal Division South Pacific Theater."

I believe my father was a supply sergeant at that point, but I am not sure. I do not have a copy of his discharge papers – actually, rumor had it that there were





two different sets. Something I do know is that he was awarded two Purple Hearts but I do not know from which battles. Is it possible to obtain replacements of his papers and medals? Those seem to have been lost after my parents passed.

Earl was born in 1905 in La Salle, Illinois so he was probably one of the oldest men in the division at the time. He was raised in Iowa and Wisconsin, the eldest son of a dairy farmer, and one of nine children. He had four brothers, three of whom saw combat in different WWII theaters. The fourth brother served on the sidelines since he had been injured as a teenager on the farm. All five brothers returned home alive – miraculously!

When Earl came home he earned an associate's degree that allowed him to move up to an engineering position at International Harvester in East Moline, IL. He also ran a few successful side businesses and helped a war buddy (George Vertis?) start a bank in Silvis, IL.

In 1954, he married my mother, a survivor of the war in Belgium who emigrated after its end, with quite a story of her own. I was their only child, born when he was almost 52 years old!

He lived in the Quad-Cities until I graduated from college, and then he and my mother followed me to New Jersey, where I earned advanced degrees and worked for about 13 years. My father was an ardent believer in education and provided encouragement and life lessons every day he was with me. He died in 1990, at age 84, in Princeton, NJ – a handsome age since he suffered recurrent bouts of malaria after his time in the Pacific.

Earl was a well-loved, highly respected man by all who knew him.

Maureen A. McKenzie, Ph.D.  
Homer, Alaska  
[maureen@denalibiotech.com](mailto:maureen@denalibiotech.com)

### Dear editor,

I recently read the latest issue of VFW magazine. In the back of the magazine is a claims section. Almost half of the claims were from veterans asking for anyone who could verify their exposure to Agent Orange (AO). Any veteran who set foot on the soil in Vietnam is believed to have been exposed to Agent Orange.

All Vietnam veterans should go to their local VA medical facility and ask to be screened for Agent Orange related diseases. If the veteran is not in the VA health care system he needs to ask for an application form for an Agent Orange examination.

This is a physical examination that the VA performs at no cost to the veteran. The exam consists of routine tests and does not take that long. Veterans do not have to have any service-connected disabilities to receive this test.

On page 14 of the VFW magazine a short column told about LT. Col. Paul Bailey who was granted disability for exposure to AO at Westover Air Force, MA. Years after the end of the Vietnam War he flew C-123 aircraft. His plane was inspected and showed high levels of contamination with dioxin. These planes sprayed AO during the Vietnam War. Anyone whom worked on these planes should read the VFW article about AO exposure.

The advice to Vietnam veterans to get checked for AO diseases sounds like common knowledge. But from what I read about this issue and from talks with veterans I meet at VA visits I find that too many veterans have no idea they should get checked out for AO. I wish the VA would just send every Vietnam veteran a letter explaining this situation.

A problem exists for veterans who served offshore aboard naval vessels or at air bases outside of Vietnam. These veterans need to get records that detail their presence near AO. For example, the need the log book or morning reports that detail activities. This exposure is harder to prove than in-country exposure- but it can be done.

Jim Gales; Glendale, WI  
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[galesgemoll@aol.com](mailto:galesgemoll@aol.com)

**Editor's note:** The following is a list of Agent Orange diseases recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs:

- AL Amyloidosis
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias
- Chloracne (or similar acneform disease)
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2
- Hodgkin's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Parkinson's Disease
- Peripheral Neuropathy, *Early-Onset*
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers (*includes lung cancer*)
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas (*other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma*)



## Veterans Health Care News

By Gary L. Noller

### Affordable Care Act Affect on Veterans

Veterans enrolled in Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) health care may have recently received a letter from the DVA that gave details about the affect of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on veterans health benefits. All veterans need to consider how VA health care may provide them with high quality services at low cost or no cost and also eliminate the need to purchase health care insurance.

In the letter the VA states that the ACA does not change veterans VA health benefits or out-of-pocket costs. Although the mailing also included an application form for VA health care those veterans already enrolled in the system do not need to submit a new application.

Most importantly, the VA states that veterans enrolled in VA health care meet the standards required by the ACA. That is, veterans covered by the VA do not need to purchase health care insurance in order to avoid the ACA penalty tax. This is a great benefit for younger veterans not covered by health care insurance through the government, an employer, or a family member.

Veterans using VA health care do not pay an enrollment fee or insurance premiums. They also do not have to meet a deductible. Depending on individual circumstances, some veterans may have to cover a very small co-pay for services. Veterans never pay for medical care related to a VA recognized service connected disability.

There are about 24 million veterans in the United States. The VA estimates that over a million of these veterans are not covered under any health insurance program. A large portion of these uncovered veterans are expected to apply to the VA for health care in order to comply with requirements of the ACA. These veterans are largely from the group of veterans who are too young for Medicare and have a good health history and not needed VA health care in the past.

Veterans who are covered under an insurance program can also apply for VA healthcare. For example, a veteran covered under an employer's health insurance program or Medicare or other government program can also be enrolled in and receive VA health care.

Services between different health care providers should be coordinated and not duplicated. Having VA health care and other health care provides veterans with important options on how to receive the best care. Established coverage through the VA can be of great benefit if a veteran loses employer health insurance or cannot find a provider that accepts Medicare patients.

Not all veterans are eligible for VA health care. This is especially true for veterans who do not have a VA recognized service connected disability, are not a member of one of several special groups of veterans, and have income that exceeds a threshold value.

Veterans wishing to apply for VA medical care may apply on VA Form 10-10EZ. This is a two page form and was revised in July 2013. Part of the form asks for income information in order for the VA to determine if the veteran is under the threshold value.

Form 10-10EZ and assistance in filling it out may be obtained from a Veterans Service Officer (VSO) or from the eligibility office at a VA medical facility. The VA office in Atlanta, GA decides eligibility and provides veterans with written decision letters. The application may take several weeks to process.

Additional information may be obtained by calling the VA at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or on the internet at [www.va.gov/aca](http://www.va.gov/aca).

### VA Benefits for Dependents and Survivors

On March 4, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address on the East Portico of the U.S. Capitol. In his closing paragraph he said, "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

Lincoln knew that the war would soon be over and he anticipated the need to bind wounds. He acknowledged the need to care not only for war veterans and also for veterans' widows and orphans.

Dependents and survivors of veterans may be eligible for federal, state, and local benefits. Eligibility depends on a number of factors. A Veterans County Service Officer (VCSO), state veterans agency benefits counselor, or Veterans Service Officer (VSO) representing a veterans organization can answer specific questions about eligibility.

Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) provides up to 45 months of education and training opportunities to eligible dependents of certain veterans.

The Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) is a comprehensive health care program in which the VA shares the cost of covered health care services and supplies with eligible beneficiaries.

Dependent Indemnity Compensation (DIC) is a monthly payment to eligible spouses and children of deceased veterans.

The spouse or child of a veteran who is permanently and totally disabled for a service-connected disability, or the surviving spouse or child of a veteran who was at the time death permanently and totally disabled from a service-connected disability or who died of a service connected disability may be eligible for benefits under DEA, CHAMPVA, and DIC. Other eligibility requirements also apply.

A veteran with 30% or more service connected disability can receive additional compensation for each dependent and can receive an additional payment for a spouse who is in need of the aid an attendance of another person.

Certain spouses and dependent children of deceased low-income wartime service veterans may be eligible for a death pension. Eligible spouses and dependent children may be buried in national and state veterans cemeteries.

Dependents need to show proof of the veterans service by providing a DD-214 or similar document. Marriage certificates, divorce decrees, birth certificates, and other vital records may also be required in order to apply for benefits.



## 20th Birthday Written by Patrick Stone

Reviewed by Dave Taylor

Patrick Stone served as an infantry squad leader with Charlie Company, 4th/3rd Infantry Battalion, 11th Light Infantry Brigade in 1970. His battalion base camp was on LZ San Juan Hill. Stone's story reveals himself in an intimate way throughout the book with his descriptions of life in his infantry squad coupled with letters to his fiancé and his attempt to share his life to a person so far removed from the realities of war.

Stone's platoon never operated anywhere close to full strength, often only having enough troops to form two full squads. At times, as a 20-year-old soldier, he had to take on responsibilities as platoon sergeant and even platoon leader. This is another example of the reality of the dedication and challenges of the infantry in the Vietnam War that bears repeating over and over again.

Stone pulls no punches, describing his first battalion commander whose lust for body counts exceeded the concern for his men, "Men are compliant beings who obey authority. And that authority is often motivated by a desire to be thought well of, to do their perceived jobs, and to be rewarded or promoted. An individual man's life or death is simply part of the price of conducting war, some leaders care, some do not. It matters little to the dead."

Stone, an acutely religious man, juxtaposes his story in combat with his strong faith in God, which begs the question throughout his combat tour when faced with man's inhumanity to man, "Where is God?" The answer he finds in combat is the same that holds him throughout his life; that God is with us always--- keep faith in Him.

Patrick Stone's book makes a sound contribution to those who wish to truly understand the war, with his ample descriptions of firefights and life in the field for the infantry, such as, "Rain is unlikely so no one pitches ponchos. Even a quarter-moon makes ponchos glow at night, a good target for an enemy grenade. In the field most choices have significant benefits or consequences. If you use your water to shave you may not have enough to drink, if you dig a fox hole for protection you may be heard by the enemy. If you lighten your load by carrying less ammunition so you can move more quietly on jungle paths, you may run out in a fire fight; simple choices with extreme benefits or consequences" Another example: "More than once we have had to make our food last twice what is expected due to no re-supply and bad weather. The one saving grace of Monsoon season is the enemy is staying close to home and loved ones. We are the only ones out in this constant misery"

No personal story of war would be complete without covering the struggles in life after the war, and Stone, a psychologist, does that with courage. The book is a good read.

The book is in paperback format and is available on Amazon.com for approximately \$8.00 plus postage; it is also available on Kindle for about \$1.00. Americal vets wishing to contact the author can do so

by e-mail: [patjstone@hotmail.com](mailto:patjstone@hotmail.com)



## Selective Memories Written by Jack Head

Reviewed by Gary L. Noller

Jack Head was drafted at the age of 25 served in the U.S. Army in Vietnam in 1969-1970. He took the induction oath on August 21, 1968 and headed to Ft. Knox, KY for basic combat training (BCT). This is where he begins his chronology of experiences that would change the course of his life.

The book is based on letters that Head sent to his family while he was in the Army. He wrote regularly to his wife, parents, family members, and friends.

After Ft. Knox he went to Ft. Polk, LA for advanced infantry training (AIT).

Upon completion of AIT he transferred to Ft. Lewis, WA for processing for Vietnam. He arrived at Cam Ranh Bay as a 26-year-old in a group of 18 to 20 year olds. After more processing he arrived at the Americal Division headquarters in Chu Lai. He completed in-country training and took his post with Co. E, 4/21st Infantry, 11th Lt. Inf. Bde. headquartered at LZ Bronco.

Head used his 11C MOS as a member of a mortar squad on LZ Amy and then LZ Jeff and LZ Charlie Brown.

In addition to arduous hours in the gun pit American soldiers endured such unpleasantness as friendly fire, monsoon rains, and tension brought on by boredom followed by intense activity. The men discussed the Peace Talks and that possibility that something would happen to get them out of Vietnam.

Head eventually became Chief Computer Operator in the Fire Direction Control center. He admits, "The title did not mean much, but it did give recognition to my ability to get the job done."

Head gives a full description of what it was like to be in combat in Vietnam. He also gives a glimpse of what the thought of the war. He says, "I was one of many sent to Vietnam as good-will ambassadors for the American Government. We were to represent all that was good in our democracy and teach the South Vietnamese how to follow our example. The fact that many of us were drafted, plucked from our families, friends, and jobs, and then treated as a group of idiots, might have had an effect on our attitude about the situation we were in."

After extending his tour Head finally completed 415 days in Vietnam and rode the Freedom Bird home. He recounts his arrival by saying, "There was no parade, so I retired to our bedroom to discard my symbol of 'being all you want me to be'". I hung my Class A uniform neatly in the closet taking one last look at it and all it stood for. These weren't the medals for good luck, for being in the right place at the right time, or for the bullshit I had endured. It should have been easy to close the closet door and "poof" be a civilian again. It didn't happen. I slid into a pair of blue jeans and a shirt. I rejoined the family downstairs. Welcome home."

The book is in paperback format and is available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)



## 132nd Regiment Association Merges With ADVA

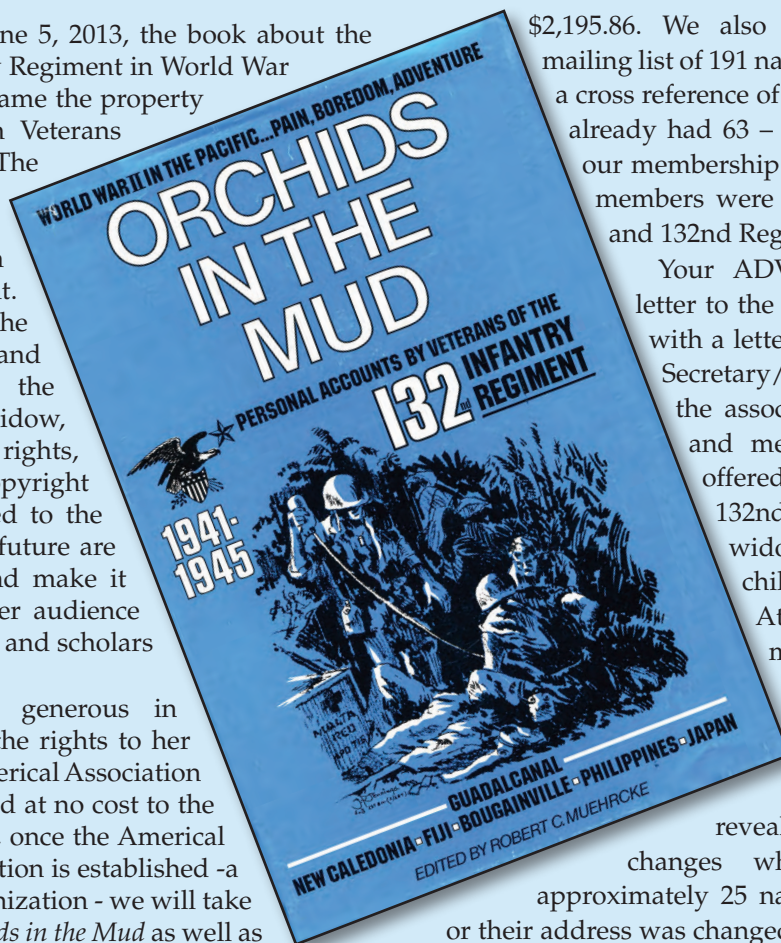
By David W. Taylor ADVA WWII Historian



### 132nd book rights are transferred to the ADVA

Earlier this year on June 5, 2013, the book about the Americal's 132nd Infantry Regiment in World War II, *Orchids in the Mud*, became the property of the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA). The book, published in 1985, was edited by Dr. Robert C. Muehrcke, a veteran of the 132nd Regiment. Dr. Muehrcke held the copyright to the book and when he passed away, the ADVA approached his widow, the direct heir to the book rights, and we asked that the copyright to the book be transferred to the ADVA. Our plans in the future are to republish the book and make it available to a much larger audience of World War II historians and scholars across the country.

Mrs. Muehrcke was generous in her approval to transfer the rights to her husband's book to the Americal Association and that was accomplished at no cost to the ADVA. It is our intention, once the Americal Division Veterans Foundation is established - a 501 (C) 3 tax-exempt organization - we will take steps to republish *Orchids in the Mud* as well as the book, *Under The Southern Cross*. Establishing the "Americal Foundation" is an effort under the ADVA Legacy Committee to pave the way for us to obtain more money and broaden the awareness of the legacy of the Americal Division among the general public. We are somewhat limited in what we can do now. For example, currently the ADVA is a 501(C) 19 organization which limits our book sales to ADVA members only and limits our fundraising to ADVA members only. When the Foundation is established we can sell these books and other information about the Americal to everyone in the USA and throughout the world.



## 132nd Regiment Association Merges with ADVA

For several months earlier this year your WWII Historian had been in discussions with Rocco Solto, President of the 132nd Regiment Association and Eugene Koeppe, the 132nd Association Secretary/Treasurer (and son of a WWII 132nd Vet). It had become increasingly difficult to maintain the 132nd Association with their members incapacitated or simply not able to continue the many tasks to run a veterans association. The 132nd Association asked if they dissolved their organization could they merge their members into the ADVA? The ADVA was honored to answer "Yes!"

In August the 132nd Association dissolved their organization and closed their checking account, sending a check to the ADVA for their remaining funds of \$2,195.86. We also received their membership mailing list of 191 names. Your ADVA adjutant did a cross reference of names and we found that we already had 63 - 132nd Regiment Veterans on our membership roster but only 23 of existing members were members of both the ADVA and 132nd Regiment Associations.

Your ADVA WWII Historian sent a letter to the 132nd membership list along with a letter from the 132nd Association Secretary/Treasurer, announcing that the association was closing its books and merging with the ADVA. We offered a free membership to the 132nd members, both vets and widows and, in a few cases, the children of vets, until May 2015. At that point, their annual membership would be at the same low rate established for all WWII vets, \$12/year.

Our mailing to the 132nd Regiment Association list revealed a number of address changes which were corrected and approximately 25 names came back as deceased or their address was changed with no forwarding address (quite possibly many of them were also deceased). This large number of address changes resulted from the association not being able to send out any correspondence to their members for quite some time.

And so we welcome our new members from the 132nd Infantry Regiment of the great state of Illinois to the Americal Division Veterans Association.

***Welcome on board, we are happy to have you as members!***



## A Mortar Mans Memoir

By Edward Kotrady



I am Private Edward Kotrady of Company D, 132nd Infantry regiment, base plate carrier for an 81mm mortar. I was a replacement right after the landing on Cebu, coming from Leyte. Arriving for the first time by truck (on Cebu) it was chow time at 12:00PM. I met Sergeant Steve from Texas. He gave me a tent right on the shoreline in the company area and said I would be by myself as the rest of the company were in the field and the other men in the area were part of a motor pool. I stayed there for almost 3 months. The Sergeant told me "never stand in line" with this motor pool unit for chow, just go to the front man and if someone questions me about it just tell them to see my Sergeant Steve. But they were a fine bunch of guys and I could not do that.

We did have a couple of Japs coming into the camp a few times at night with shooting next to my tent and I always slept through it. One night two of the Japs left their dugout canoe with an outrigger on it so I took it over. I was born a few blocks from salt water in Long Island, Connecticut and was comfortable with small boats. My infantry company returned then went back up into the hills but they did not want me to go with them and said "mind the camp". There must have been some type of spotter planes as the island was 12-20 miles wide and 140 miles long. One morning a Corsair came from nowhere and strafed me. I just stood there and waved and off he went. The next day a P38 did the same thing and the next day a B-29 Bomber came over. I could not see the sky since the bomber was flying so low. I could have touched the plane. I guess it cost the government big bucks as they were all trying to see who I was and then they would land at the water's edge.

We were getting ready for amphibious landing training for the Japan invasion when we received a few dollars to spend aboard an A.P.A. ship. Just after that I was called to the headquarters. The paymaster was my mother's cousin and he showed me his black book with all families' addresses in it. My mail was rerouted a lot because shortly after I was sent to Japan I was sent Okinawa for three months with fluid on my lungs.

Each night on Cebu my companions and I would meet by a center tent in our company area and talk or practice setting up the mortar to see who the best mortar man was for the day. One of the old-timers excused himself to finish a letter to his sweetheart. He could not hold back any longer about showing her picture to us so he came over with a beautiful picture of her and said her name was "Mame". It so happened she had been my girlfriend! She was the last one that I had been seeing before I entered the service. Her name I had forgotten; she lived about five towns away from me. When he left to go home in a few weeks (based on the point system) I told him to tell her where I was. He lived in a two family home and she was a neighbor.

"Sergeant Steve" sure liked me and I was always picked to run the rest of our company. About seven of us never went to the hills at the start, they thought we would screw things up and someone may get hurt. The first day that they started looking for Jap's in the hills about seventeen gave up. Sergeant Steve looked at me and said, "Get something to eat and go to sleep and be up at 10:00PM as you will be guarding them all by yourself till daybreak".

They had cleaned up one tent for the prisoners. It was dark when I took guard duty and the previous guy told me he had filled the Coleman lantern and it should be good till morning but I had to pump it to keep it from going off. I thought I knew it all at age 18. It was on the left of the tent opening. The Japs were just lying there all over the place. Sometime later, maybe 2 or 3AM, the lantern was going low. I did not move because I had to step over some Japs and I was afraid to turn my back as they might jump me. I made it to the lantern and kept on pumping it but nothing was happening. I was getting scared! I was not sure if the Japs were sleeping or not. I was hoping they were not watching me. I did not know if I should call for someone or leave the tent area but I was not sure if the Japs were sleeping and I had no flashlight. My eyes were hurting as I was trying to keep my eyes on the lantern and the Japs, so I decided to find someone and making a turn of my body put my thumb on the hole of the pump which put air in the lantern and it flared up and I jumped. I hoped no one was watching. The Japs were picked up early in the morning as we did not have a formal camp yet for Jap prisoners. Later I did see the group of about 6,000 Japs when they had the big surrender as I was one of the guards to make sure no one jumped off the march to their POW camp.

In the Yokohama area, Japan during occupation duties I moved seven locations in nineteen days. I was living with just 7 or 8 men and it was very cold with heavy rains and thunder and lightning, and we were only in our short sleeves. We would search the area to see what was there, which was just about nothing. But me and another friend found a small warehouse with wine and sake. I would not touch a thing because I was afraid it might be poison. A few days later it was the 82nd Airborne that came to relieve us. I was not in good shape then as my side was with a lot of pain from fluids. One of the 82nd soldiers knew I was feeling bad and they had a doctor finally send me to a hospital with a soldier but it took almost two days as he lost his way. The night before I separated from the 82nd Airborne to go to the hospital in Japan (a former warehouse) they were complaining about nothing to do or drink and they were used to being in Europe so I took a bunch of men to that warehouse with the wine and sake. I sure had a lot of friends that night! I hope some of them still remember that night.

I spent a total of 19 days in Japan, 16 searching for contraband being hidden by Japanese officials and 3 days in the hospital. Then they sent me to Okinawa to recover from fluid on my lungs. I was there three months, having a nice friendship with a nurse. The doctor said I could return to the states via plane but he recommended I go by boat to further recover but the next ship was scheduled for another month but I said that's Ok, I'll wait. When my ship landed in "Frisco" coming off the ramp I got on my knees and kissed the good earth. I was home!

## Americal WWII Museum A Time of Transition

By David W. Taylor *WWII Historian*

### The Situation

Last year we received word from the Worcester, Massachusetts National Guard Museum that displayed our Americal WWII materials, they were losing their building and their new location in Concord, Massachusetts would be much smaller. Therefore they could no longer display our Americal WWII collection.

The Worcester museum was at a splendid location and was the repository for all Massachusetts Army National Guard records. Their museum collection included flags, uniforms and weapons from the Revolutionary War. The building itself was on the National Registry of Historic Buildings and once housed a Massachusetts Cavalry unit. Our Americal WWII materials were carefully laid out on the second floor of the Worcester facility and we had a very good relationship with the staff of historians that ran the facility. Unfortunately state politics crept in. A facility next door pulled strings at the state level and cried they needed more space for social services. The Governor's staff- in my opinion- chose potential votes over the proper preservation of history and our great relationship with the Massachusetts National Guard History museum was to be no more.

I surveyed several small museums in the Eastern States that might offer storage space for our materials until we could find a permanent home. I also looked at rental storage facilities. The rental storage facilities were just that - for storage - and did not lend themselves for taking inventory of our materials and cataloguing them; moreover, the storage space rental for humidity-controlled conditions, which we needed, was expensive.

I did find a gem of a small-town WWII Museum in Eldred, Pennsylvania (Northwestern Pennsylvania) which is quite remarkable. It contains an excellent collection of WWII history materials from the European Theatre and the Pacific theater, including some rare German uniforms and weapons as well as materials from the Russian front. Numerous collectors and families have donated materials to the museum through the years. The population of Eldred is only about 750 -- so why a WWII museum in Eldred, PA?



**ADVA WWII Historian Dave Taylor taking inventory and archiving WWII materials**

The answer is rooted in history -- it was a major bomb-making factory in WWII and the museum was begun by a wealthy businessman to honor Eldred's contribution to the war effort. Logistically Eldred, PA which is close to the larger town of Olean, New York, is only a 3-1/2 hour drive from my house in Ohio as opposed to the 10-1/2 hour drive I had to make to go to Worcester, Massachusetts. There are no hotels or motels in Eldred, so I stay in Olean, NY when visiting the museum

### Decision Made

On March 14 I drove to Eldred, PA to look at the facility. I received a great tour from Steve Appleby, the Museum Director. Steve is a retired U.S. Army Master Sergeant Green Beret. I was very impressed with their museum and I hope the ADVA Eastern Chapter can have a reunion somewhere in Northwest Pennsylvania some time where they can bus over there to visit the museum. Steve was very sympathetic to our plight and offered storage space on their lower floor in a separate room off from the museum display area. They offered to store our materials at no charge until we could inventory what we have and look for a permanent solution. I accepted his gracious offer. They do not have enough space to display our materials at their site.

In early May I rented a U-Haul truck and drove to Worcester, Massachusetts to pick up our materials. The staff in Worcester, MA was packing their own materials to prepare to move to the Concord, MA facility in the summer. They provided 8 National Guard soldiers to help me load the truck with our materials and, with great satisfaction, I drove the truck carrying 20 Japanese rifles, a Jap "Knee Mortar" some Chinese "Siege Guns", etc. through the gun-control & liberal states of Massachusetts and New York to the Eldred, Pennsylvania museum. The folks in Eldred provided much-needed help in unloading the truck to store our materials in the space they reserved for us.

On August 20-21 I returned to Eldred to begin taking inventory and cataloguing materials. In the two days I inventoried over 30 boxes of materials and did a digitized photo inventory of the larger materials such as weapons, framed pictures, patch collections, etc.

On October 8-9 I returned once again and began taking apart the many framed photo collections to be able to scan them on a computer (and use them in subsequent Americal



**Japanese, American and Chinese "Siege Rifles" (far right) are secured for future displays**





**Pictured is the Eldred WWII Learning Center, which is part of the overall WWII museum in Eldred, PA.**

Journal articles!). A number of these framed photo collections contained photos of the Vietnam War. Many of the frames were falling apart and the glass was cracked. These WWII framed photo collections may have been useful while being displayed in Worcester, Massachusetts when our WWII vets could meet there on a regular basis, but they were of no use sitting in worn frames which will not be hung up again. They need to be seen by a much broader audience --- the ADVA! They will now be more carefully preserved in file folders.

I intend to return in early spring after the snow ends and devote 3-4 days to finish the inventory process. Through the years when the WWII materials were in Worcester, Massachusetts many veterans of the Americal Division donated items from their own history-related collections, whether they had anything to do with the Americal Division or not. One example are two very large "Chinese Siege Rifles" used by Japanese troops, who worked in concert with American, British and German soldiers to help defeat the Chinese Boxer rebellion between 1899-1901. A cursory look shows they may be worth between \$3,500-\$4,000 on the open market, and could be sold to raise funds for our WWII display effort. There are also a number of patch collections and military crest collections from veterans who donated them through the years. These collections go beyond the Americal Division. It is my intent to carefully retain those unit crests and/or patches that pertain to the Americal Division (going up to the Corps level patch of each Corps the Americal was part of) and then we will decide what to do with the remaining patches and crests. Other donated materials include donated model airplanes, framed preambles of the Constitution (suitable for schools), and assorted items with no relevance to the Americal, etc.

### Options to Consider

Once our collection is properly inventoried (More than anything there are paper items such as scrap books of news articles about the Americal and photos in photo albums), we will look at our options. We cannot expect to keep our materials in storage at the Eldred, PA museum for an undetermined period. It appears we have three options:

- Create a "template" display about the Americal in WWII (perhaps a Kiosk-type display) that we could ask small WWII museums from across the county if they would

consider using in their museums because of the uniqueness of the Americal in WWII (would not take up much space). We would split up our Japanese rifles to go with each display, along with display boards to tell the story of the Americal. There are some other sites in Massachusetts, such as the Wakefield, MA Welcome Center, which has an "Americal Lobby", the name used in honor of the Americal Division, that could also be candidate for this display as well. Pamphlets could be made available at each display across the country that would direct the visitor to our Americal Website.

- Locate a building or portion of a building, ideally next to a museum of some type, where we could develop an Americal Division Museum dedicated to all its periods of activation, WWII, Cold War and Vietnam. This would require a long-term agreement for someone to manage the facility.

- Once a total inventory is taken and non-Americal items disposed of (perhaps sold to other collectors) place in some type of long-term storage until future options can be explored.

I am asking all ADVA members to contact me if they know of any location that might be suitable for hosting an Americal WWII Kiosk display or a permanent Americal Museum (with the building owner getting the revenues from visitors from sales of Americal materials or entry fees) to compensate for hosting the site.

If you have any other suggestions or comments please don't hesitate to contact me. David Taylor, ADVA WWII Historian, 970 Kenner Drive, Medina, OH 44256; (Cell) 330-321-3370; Home Office (330) 722-7455; (E-Mail) [dave.taylor@zoominternet.net](mailto:dave.taylor@zoominternet.net)

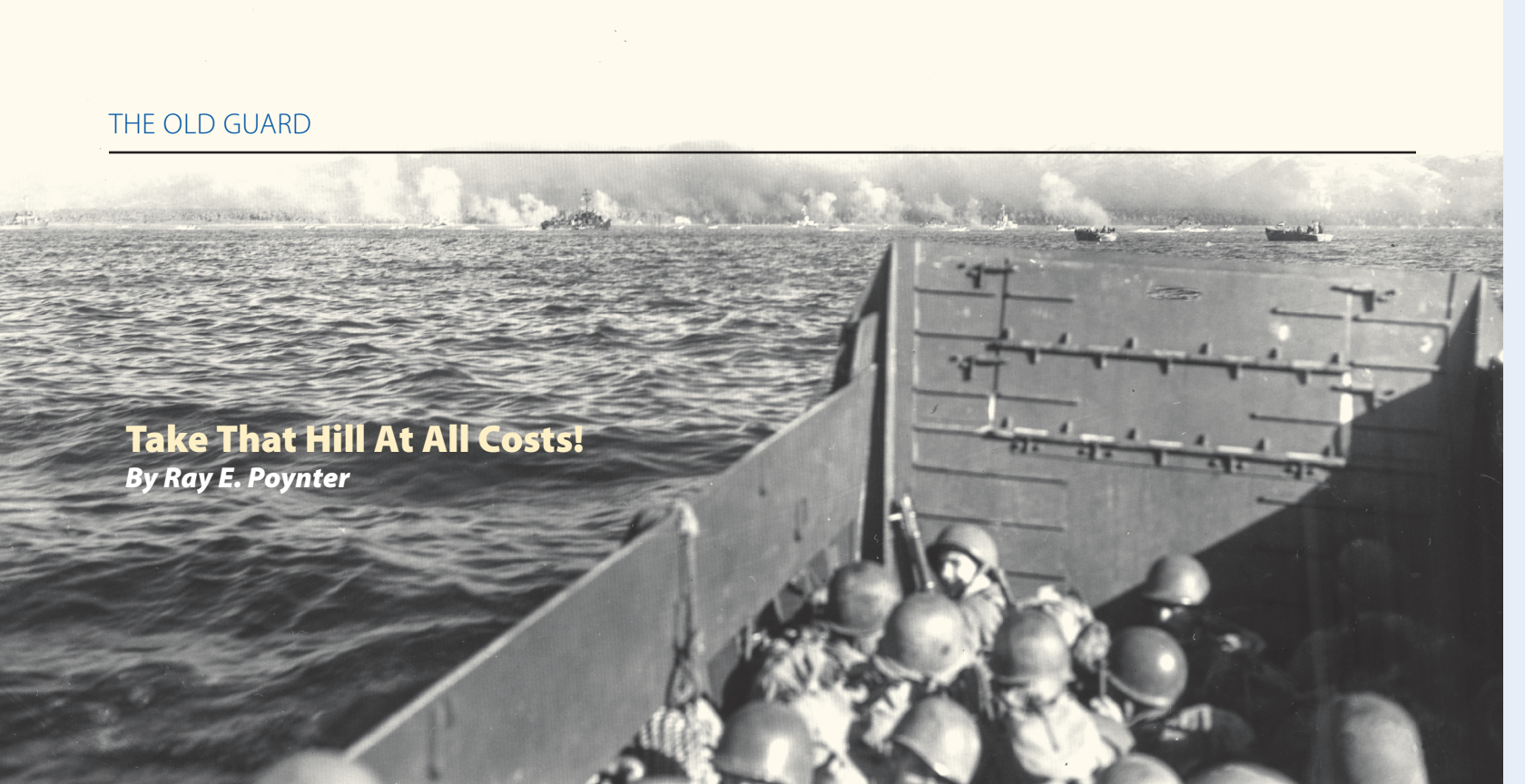


**Many framed photo collections (WWII & Vietnam) will be removed from the frames and digitized as well as catalogued in folders**



## Take That Hill At All Costs!

By Ray E. Poynter



Starting in 1944 where I spent nine months in the Solomon Islands on the Island of Bougainville where I first saw combat and won my Combat Infantryman's Badge of courage, I then was with the Americal Division to go to the Philippines. After a few battles in the Ormoc area of Leyte, and the war at this time was winding down, we were readied for the invasion of the island of Cebu. Cebu was not in the hands of American forces at this time and there were only guerilla forces fighting the Japanese there, so we were to go and take back the island.

There was an estimated 22,000 Japanese on the island of Cebu when we were readied for taking the island back from the Japanese forces. Contact was made with the guerilla forces on Cebu and our first mission upon landing was to contact the guerilla forces that were supposed to be guarding the reservoir and the distribution tank. The guerillas had moved to a high point to guard these two important places and keep the enemy from using them, and getting possession of these important locations. It was found later after contacting the guerillas that they had not made contact with the Japanese forces and were only holding the area around the two objectives.

I was assigned as a Radio Operator for my platoon leader and I had to memorize all the code words for the different locations along the way of our advance. We did not have an "SOI" or operating code like later on in the Army. I gave our company commander the locations by code over the radio to keep him knowing where our platoon was.

Our mission upon landing on the Talisay beachhead was to contact the guerillas and let them know our location and mission so as to not be fired upon by their forces. We were not able to contact them visually or ever get communications with them. We just kept on our mission to go inland and secure the areas ahead.

All of these plans were planned before the landing and back on the main ship getting ready to embark into our LVT, one of six LVT's that would carry I Company for the beach landing, we were ready and the excitement was great as we

knew there was an estimated heavy enemy force waiting to greet us upon landing.

Just as we got to the kick-off point on the Talisay beach, the Navy opened up with their heavy guns, mine sweepers and all kinds of other stuff pounding the beach with all kinds of munitions. Along with the Army Air Corps dropping bombs all along the beach ahead of us as we exited the ship on our way to the landing. It was great to see that every inch of the beach was covered by exploding shells of many kinds. No one will ever explain the feelings of relief that we got seeing those munitions cover the area where we were expected to land and be fired upon. It was a sight to see but can only be understood by those who were there.

Upon landing we were able to make it through the minefield where the Japs had placed some 500-pound bombs in the beach as well as some mines. This made the landing difficult as ten of the initial LVT's that hit the beach on the first wave were disabled and we had heavy casualties on landing. But my LVT got through the beach area without any harm as we missed the mines to our left flank where we hit the beach. We went on through the beach area and traveled about 1,800 meters (about one mile) before making contact with the enemy. We caught a platoon of Japs leaving the beach area and we killed all of them as we had two machineguns and a platoon of infantry firing on them as they tried to escape. They were a communications platoon and we captured their equipment.

At this time we observed hundreds of Japanese units evacuating the area heading up the mountain that was north of the city of Cebu. They had set the capital city on fire and were going to high ground north of the city to make their defensive stand. After we contacted our company and joined them later, we set up a perimeter for our first night on the island of Cebu. We made contact with many of the stragglers as they passed through our area and we killed some of them after dark. At this point we had not had anyone killed but did have some wounded on the beach from the mines.

The Japanese took a stand on the high ground above Cebu



City, called Babag Ridge, where they occupied positions of strength and were reinforced with artillery, heavy direct-fire guns, mortars and heavy and light machineguns. We were headed that way to get them. After going through many minefields that had been placed all over the area, we finally arrived just south of the high ground and set up a perimeter which would be our jumping off point for taking the high ground defended by the Japanese.

We made three attempts to take the high ground but we were backed-up by heavy enemy fire and we lost some of our company in trying to take the Jap positions. On our third attempt we did make it to within seventy-five yards of the Jap positions but at this time it was getting dark. We were almost out of ammunition and needed water as it was hard to keep enough water to last for very long during the fighting. It was dark and we were in a desperate position at this time. Every move brought fire from the Japs that were defending the positions on the high ground.

About 11:30PM that night on the 12th of April 1945 we received a message from the battalion to "Take that hill at all costs!" There was a Captain Murphy of G Company on our right flank and they had been attacking on our right and he passed the word down to us. The word came to "Fix bayonets". They too had become desperate to take the hill because their situation was precarious as well. I did not have a bayonet as I was a radio operator and did not carry one. But I found one from a wounded man and fixed it on my M1 and got ready to make the attack. I got rid of the radio as it was heavy and did not need it for an attack like this.

We started up the hill side by side and shoulder by shoulder as it was very dark at 11:30PM. You could not see anyone! You got your contact with the man on your right or left by feeling them close by. Then, on our movement uphill all hell broke out as the enemy started throwing grenades and all kinds of munitions at us. My platoon sergeant was hit and came falling at my front. He told me to "get up the hill now!" Then there was a burst of fire coming forward to our position. I saw a pink flame that seemed to come at us and burst just to the right of me and a man named Laturza. It got both of us and we were knocked down. I was hit in the neck, nose, shoulder, back, arm and chest. I was bleeding real bad and I fell back into a shell hole. The medic came and asked me where I was hit. He gave me a morphine shot and right there. I took out a handkerchief and stopped the bleeding from my nose as a piece of shrapnel had entered the right side of my nose and I was bleeding badly from that area. Another larger piece entered my right arm but did not seem to bother me that much.

I lay in the hole and seemed to pass out but later I awoke as the enemy had circled around behind us and was sticking the wounded and dead around me with their bayonets. They tripped over my foot and passed me by. Thank God they did not find me.

I lay there until about 10:00AM the next morning, Friday 13 April 1945, and was finally taken to a hospital where I was offered a blood transfusion but they were short of blood and I told the medics to give the blood to a more serious wounded man instead of me. I was evacuated to Leyte where I got surgery and was then sent to an area where many wounded were healing from wounds and awaiting transportation back to their units.

After being placed on work details and being used by the hospital people making us work for them, I got the men from my company that were there (17 in all) and we hitched a ride back to our company and back to duties there. I found that I had made sergeant and I was now a squad leader with many new men that had not seen combat.

After rejoining the company I was given a squad and was given my first mission as a squad leader. It was to knock out an enemy machinegun that was firing on our company as we advanced. The machinegun was in a position on a ridge just 500 yards in from us and I took my two BAR men and laid down a base of fire covering my advance with half of the squad along with me. We got to within grenade distance of the gun position and threw grenades on the position after I left our supporting fires. We knocked out the position and signaled for the company to come forward. This was my last real combat in WWII as it was at this time the Japanese had not shown any resistance and did not want to do anymore fighting, at least as far as our company was concerned.

Our company was then brought back to an area where we set up in a company area and had a nice mess hall built by the Filipinos where we screened in the area with mosquito nets to keep out the flies and bugs which were plentiful in the area. After being there awhile we learned the Atomic Bomb had been dropped and the Japanese were about to surrender. But the Japs on Cebu were firing and sniping on the Engineers that were building roads across the island and they wanted some troops to stop them from being fired on. I was picked to stop them and take my squad out to get it done. My Executive Officer briefed me and said, "Now don't take any chances! This war is about over and we don't want to get anyone killed at the ending like it is" we left and made contact but the enemy ran as they did not want to fight. I believe that was the last of the action of our forces before the war ended.

It was late August 1945 and the second Atomic Bomb was dropped and it was great to hear that Japan may surrender. But they had not given up at this time and we were loaded up to go to attack the mainland of Japan. We had just been provided new equipment and ammunition and were ready to make the main landing on Japan's southern-most island. We boarded ships and left for Japan on the 24th of August. This was just after we received the surrendering of the Japanese forces on Cebu by our commanders. We heard just as we got close to Japan that the Japanese had accepted the terms of unconditional surrender and the USS Missouri was in the bay where we were going to debark on Japan's soil. We passed the Missouri and saluted it as we passed along to the docks in Yokohama. It was after debarking on the 8th of September that we became involved in the occupation duties.

After some of the assignments given me on occupation duty up until November 1945, I was sent home and finally discharged on the 10th of December 1945, just in time for Christmas with my family. Thank God I made it home.

*WWII Historians Note: Poynter went back into the Army and served in combat in the Korean War as well as combat assignments with airborne units for two tours in Vietnam*

**Photo: Americal lands on Cebu beachhead after beach is pounded by naval guns and Army Air Corps bombing**

## NATIONAL REUNION









## NATIONAL REUNION







Photography & layout Dutch DeGroot





Artillery (105mm Howitzer) fires point blank into Japanese-controlled hillside caves during fighting in the Philippines. (*National Archives*)





## Tales to Be Told – Philippine Islands

By Kenneth C. Lachmann

*WWII Historian's Note: These stories are a continuation of those provided to us by Ken Lachmann. Lachmann was assigned to the First Platoon of G Company, 2nd Battalion, 182nd Regiment when he arrived on Bougainville. The 3rd Quarter issue of the Americal Journal covered his "tales" while on that island. He remained with his unit in the Philippines and these are some of his "other than combat" tales during that campaign*

### Carabao (Water Buffalo Steak)

On Leyte, Philippine Islands, we were actually training in preparation for making a beachhead on Cebu in February 1945. Reconnaissance informed the Americal Division of a platoon of Japs sweeping their way across Leyte but was not sure where they would cross. The 182nd Infantry (my outfit) was sent to form a main line of resistance and stop the Japs if they should happen to come that way. My Company G set up a sector and dug in defensively and spent four or five days living in the foxholes eating C-Rations and bored to death but on guard for a potential attack. We mainly entertained ourselves by playing cards.

Now one end of our sector was on a mountain trail and a machinegun fortification was set up at that point. On the second night I was on guard duty and in the wee hours of the morning a machinegun went off echoing thru the already spooky night. I thought, "Oh my God, the Japs are attacking". So I woke up my foxhole buddies and we went on alert. Nothing more happened and all became quiet and my buddies went back to sleep. In the morning we checked up on what had happened and learned that a Carabao had been coming down the trail and the machinegun squad thought it was Japs and opened fire. Being curious we went up to check and saw the damnest sight we had ever seen. A bunch of Filipinos were butchering the Carabao and were bloody clear up to their elbows. I'm sure the village enjoyed a big steak dinner that night. I hope no one swallowed a bullet or two.

Well the Japs never came through our sector but were defeated farther down the line. Our Colonel said it was just part of our open warfare training. Here-to-fore we had been jungle fighters in Guadalcanal and Bougainville, so you see ...

### The One-Night-Truce

On Leyte one of our training exercises was to go on a company patrol and bivouac in a small village that night. We set up a pup tent at one end of the town eating our C-rations and the townspeople supplied us with Tuba (made from fermented coconut milk). It sure had a kick to it and we were soon feeling no pain. Someone discovered some Japs were camped on the other side of town. That sobered us up pretty quick and we began to prepare for trouble. Our commander made a truce with them and, as they were some defeated misplaced renegades - that wasn't so very difficult to do.

So we went on with our partying and I guess the good town folks had also surprised them with Tuba and soon they became drunk and a bit rowdy and started yelling at us, "Yanks, tonight you die!" We had heard that many times before in the North Solomon's. We retorted back, "Tojo eats shit!" an expression we had also used previously. These





**Filipino uses Carabao to haul equipment for Americal soldiers in the Philippines. (National Archives)**

taunts and insults went on followed by hardy laughter on both sides. It was finally time to hit the sack but as a precaution we did set up an all-night guard unit. I'm sure they probably did the same.

### The Palm Tree

As you may recall from an earlier story we lived in pup tents when we first arrived on Leyte, Philippine Islands. When our equipment arrived we were given a site on which to build our camp which was in a palm tree grove. We were ordered to wear our helmets because being beamed by a falling coconut could be harmful.

Now Captain Murphy was still in a GI mode and we were to line up our platoon tents in a straight row. The spot for the platoon headquarters tent came right where a large palm tree stood. The engineers were ordered to cut it down which upset the owner and he came down on us pretty hard. The brass straightened it out and we proceeded to put up our tent which now had a big stump in the middle of it. Murphy ordered us to dig it up which seemed like an easy enough detail at first. Of course none of us had ever dug up a coconut tree stump before and all we were given were hand tools. The stump was composed of heavy fiber and not like ordinary wood at all. When you hit it with an axe it was almost impossible to get it back out. We struggled with it for two days and really weren't getting anywhere. That was when we were called back into combat and had to leave the stump alone for a while.

Of course that combat is when I was wounded and never came back so I don't know how the story ended. The platoon leader came to me on the litter and said that he would send all my personal belongs home, but I never received them. Our duffle bags were all stored in an open warehouse containing only a grass roof. Later, back in Michigan I learned from "Rosie" O'Dea that the Filipinos had burglarized the place and stolen much of our belongings. All my personal stuff was gone including some mementos and souvenirs I had been collecting. I guess it was payback for cutting down the palm tree.

### Bare White-Assed Americans

It was interesting to observe that although we were liberating the Filipinos they felt superior to us. One of their examples was they repeatedly saw soldiers and WAACs (Woman's Army Corps) kissing in public. They were very critical of our morals and jealous (in their minds) that we were all rich. We called the "Gimmies-Gimmies" as they were always asking us to give them things especially money. We had very little contact with the women except the ones who did our laundry. Because of "our low morals" they shielded the women from us. If a soldier did manage a date with a native girl, they had to be chaperoned.

The girl who did the laundry for our platoon was named "Morning-glory". Somehow one of our men managed to get an un-chaperoned date with her and they had sex. The next morning all hell broke loose and her brothers were trying to find him and were going to murder him. We told them they had no right to be in our camp, especially in our tents. We were told, "You foreigners – this is our country" We responded that this was US Military Property and they had illegally trespassed. They were determined to follow-up on their mission and we had to call the MP's who arrested them; we never heard from them again but we went into combat shortly after that.

The foregoing was just to give you some background. We had not had time to set up showers so we bathed in a nearby river. As soon as we stripped down and entered the water the women came flocking over to the river to observe us. They pointed and giggled and we felt rather uncomfortable. Some of the more endowed guys shook their penises at them and they just went "tee hee". They really seemed to be enjoying themselves. This happened every time anyone went down to bathe. One day when the Filipino men were berating us for our low standard of morals, we ask them, "What does this say for your morals?" They sloughed it all by saying; "We have never seen such men white skin before as on the part of your body where the sun doesn't hit" We laughed and said that we are just "bare-assed Americans"



**Filipinos give Americal troops a warm welcome as they liberated town after town in the Philippines (National Archives)**



After I was wounded it was a long trek to the field hospital which was set up in an old Filipino schoolhouse. I was very sick but they found out later that I was allergic to morphine and it was put in my record that it should never be given to me again. It's still on my records today. Besides that it was rough going anyway as they didn't have enough litters for all the casualties and I had to walk part way supported by my buddy Larsen. After what seemed like an eternity we finally met some Filipino men carrying litters and it was a big relief to be able to flop down on one. Now there were a few boys with the men and they were carrying palm branches. One boy was assigned to me and he fanned me faithfully the entire way to the hospital. It was then later afternoon when we finally arrived.

I was diagnosed and prioritized for my rank in line for surgery. I had surgery early in the evening. When I came out from under the anesthesia one of my two best buddies who had received a flesh wound was sitting beside me. The first thing he said to me was that my wounds were serious enough that I would be going back home. I was too ill for it to really make a difference to me right then. He also told me that our second best friend had died when I was in surgery. His name was Jim Edwards and the three of us were very tight. Now the other friend sat up with me all night; his name was Ernest Grice and I later learned he had been killed making a beachhead on Cebu Island. Although I lost many other buddies these two men were very special and I grieved for them the most. They are still close to my heart.

The next morning I was in pain of course and still sick but not as drastically as the day before. The medics began to get us ready to take us to the Army hospital in Taglobban. Now the terrain was mountainous and it would have been a rough going to take us by land. So we were to go by a "Duck". I don't know if the Navy types were familiar with an Army Duck but they were a vehicle with wheels for land travel that could also be driven into the water where they became a boat. We were carried into the Duck and lined up in rows. The litters were close to the filthy floor which smelled to high heaven. As the tropical sun became hotter the discomfort became unbearable as there was no cover over us. Many of us became sea sick and, on top of everything else, there was vomiting. I don't remember how long it took to get around that part of the island but it seemed like forever.

Now the -up-side of the whole adventure was those Filipino boys with their palm branches had been waiting for us as we boarded the Duck. The little fellow who had befriended me on the litter trip to the field hospital was beside me again and faithfully fanning me. He also kept getting me drinking water on a regular basis. All I could do was thank him and had no other way to reward him. I was broke because we hadn't been paid for weeks. But I guess the Filipino litter and palm bearers were volunteers who were showing their appreciation for their liberation. Before that all we seemed to get was criticism from the Taglobban townspeople. I still feel gratitude toward that little boy.

I had a few interesting instances in that hospital. I woke up in the morning and I couldn't believe my ears that I was hearing American women's voices. I thought I must be dreaming but there they were and did they look good.



**Filipino guerillas line up to assist the Americal in fighting the Japs in the Philippines (National Archives)**

One night I was aroused by a mosquito biting me and I was fighting him off. The nurse said, "Will you calm down I'm trying to give you your shot" "Oh, I'm sorry", I said. "I thought you were a mosquito." I heard her telling the other nurses and they had a good laugh.

When I went into surgery my clothes were a mess as one of my buddies had his leg blown off by a grenade and I had flesh, blood and bone splinters all over my clothes. After a few days in the heat I must have smelled pretty bad. The surgeon told the medics to take those clothes off and burn them. When I was carried into the Duck I was naked as a jay bird and all I had was my billfold, jackknife, compass and last letter from home (which was delivered just before my last battle) and was covered by an Army woolen blanket. Now in Taglobban hospital the second or third day, a nurse said to me, "It's about time we get you up and she asked me if I could get up by myself or did I need help? I replied there was no way she was going to get me out of bed. She wanted to know the reason and I said I am stark naked under this blanket. She went and got some pajamas for me; I took my first weak steps and was soon an ambulatory patient. Thus I was on my way to recovery.

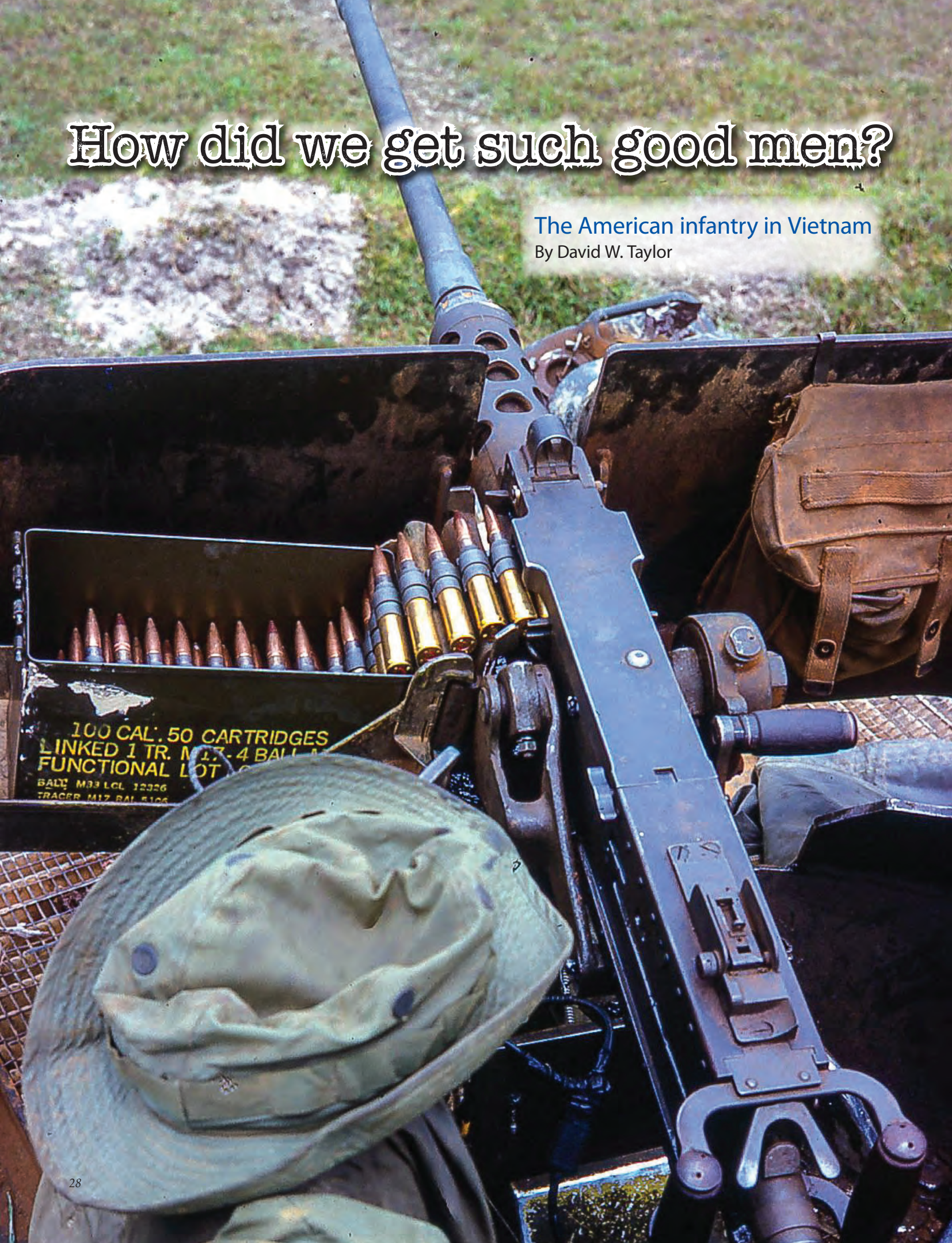
I was first sent to a General Army Hospital in New Guinea on a Navy hospital ship, then on to San Francisco's Letterman General Army Hospital and finally to Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan where I recuperated for another ten months and was discharged as a disabled veteran.



# How did we get such good men?

The American infantry in Vietnam

By David W. Taylor





I spent over a decade documenting the experiences of my infantry battalion in the Vietnam War. Known as *"the Professionals,"* the men of the 5th/46th Infantry Battalion of the 198th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal (23rd) Infantry Division, fought from 1968 to 1971 in three of the four types of terrains encountered in the war: the mountains, the piedmont and the coastal plains of South Vietnam (excluding the Mekong Delta, which was occupied by one division during the war because of the huge logistical burden to sustain it there). What I learned is that our experiences are a microcosm of the U.S. infantry's broader role in the Vietnam War.

While every soldier in Vietnam was important, as a general rule, approximately 10 troops supported every infantry soldier (Army or Marine) in the field. At the peak of the war in 1969, approximately 540,000 personnel were in country, but only 40,000 to 60,000 were in the field seeking to do battle with the enemy. In Vietnam, more than 70 percent of all casualties were suffered by the infantry maneuver battalions. In fact, casualty rates among the infantry divisions were two and a half times higher than those suffered in World War II.

Vietnam, for the infantry, was unlike any other war. Infantrymen saw heavy combat in the "battles of the big battalions" from 1965 to 1969. Then, for many battalions, it became a small-unit leader's war in which, by 1970, squad-sized and platoon-sized patrols were the norm. And the diversity of the terrain into which the infantry could be rapidly inserted by helicopter presented a new kind of challenge.

**"I was the pointman for five months. Night movements were the ones I feared the most. But I knew the guys were alert and had my back. My hope was that all the guys would return home safely. We were all proud to serve America, but we heard very little of the progress of the broader war. We only knew the progress we were making, and our daily trials and successes." Charles Barbo, sergeant, 5th/46th Infantry**

The Annamite Range ran the length of South Vietnam from the demilitarized zone (DMZ) bordering North Vietnam to within 80 kilometers of Saigon. The mountains have high peaks – some more than 8,000 feet – that straddle the country's borders with Laos and Cambodia. The terrain is as thick as it is high. Double- and triple-canopy jungle made movement difficult and dangerous. The unforgiving mountains were home to tigers, clouded leopards, various types of venomous snakes and the well-camouflaged lairs of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

East of the Annamite Range lay the piedmont, characterized by low-lying hills and small valleys, which are interspersed with tall elephant grass and thick stands of wooded areas. These in turn are interspersed with open fields dotted by small rice paddies. The piedmont was the transition point for the enemy. The heavy vegetation offered a fast avenue of approach from the mountains that allowed the NVA and main-force Viet Cong units to quickly assemble troop strength and munitions to attack populated areas, American units or the South Vietnamese Army. Most often, these attacks were to interrupt pacification efforts of the Vietnamese people.

East of the piedmont lay the coastal lowlands, which make up much of the area containing the Vietnamese population centers and the major rice paddies. The fertile paddies on the coast are nourished by silt from mountain runoff, a product of the eastern watershed of the Annamite Range. The lowlands offer broad plains of paddies interrupted by numerous hedgerows of thick vegetation. This type of terrain bred the threat of the typical guerrilla, a farmer by day and fighter by night, a member of an irregular Viet Cong unit who rarely strayed far from his or her ancestral home. Their firepower was not of major concern, but they made up for it with their familiarity with the terrain. And the knowledge of that land brought with it the scourge of mines and booby traps, from small "toe-popper" mines to mortar and artillery rounds, and many undetonated 500-pound bombs dropped from the air. They were all used to deadly effect.

Together, these environments were a mixture of contrast and contradiction that would try the infantryman's soul. While more than 100 inches of rain fell annually, watering the fertile rice fields, desert-like cacti existed near the swamps and rice paddies. Temperatures on the coast or in the valleys of the piedmont sometimes soared to more than 100 degrees, yet the hilltops in the piedmont or the mountains could be shrouded in clouds and rain, whipped by high winds that drove temperatures to bone-chilling lows. The cold, driving monsoon rain could abruptly cause temperatures to plummet and then rapidly rise after dawn.

The rapid temperature changes, hedgerows, elephant grass that could cut through skin like razor blades, mountain peaks and thick jungle strained infantrymen day in and day out. Their lean, muscular bodies were racked with pain, skin rotting from fungus and water immersion along with ever-present fatigue. Yet they trudged on, carrying 60 pounds or more of food, small creature comforts and enough ammunition to hold their own against the enemy. In the infantry, what you don't carry you do without.

Infantry operations varied based on the enemy situation, the terrain and the availability of soldiers to meet a particular threat. Operations often overlapped, and infantry units were directed to fight outside their own areas of responsibility.

In the Americal Division, Operation Wheeler and Operation Wallowa were combined to destroy forces in the Hiep Duc and Que Son valleys, which overlapped with Operation Burlington Trail to secure Provincial Route 533 from Tam Ky to Tien Phuoc. Operation Pochontas Forest was also aimed at neutralizing enemy forces in the Hiep Duc Valley. These operations in which we participated were sometimes conducted simultaneously and were only in Quang Tin province, yet our primary area of responsibility was in Quang Ngai province. Artillery and infantry battalions were nimbly cross-matched with armored cavalry as soldiers traded one piece of terrain for another to defeat the enemy wherever it could be found.

It was in the mountains that the infantry most often encountered the enemy at its strongest. The 5th/46th made numerous air assaults into the mountains, finding elaborate NVA base camps complete with underground ovens, classrooms, stockades for prisoners and elaborate sleeping quarters. During its more than three years in combat, the battalion discovered three enemy hospitals in the mountains, including operating rooms, post-triage bed wards and numerous medical supplies. The enemy's

medical staff always pulled out just before our arrival, taking their walking wounded with them and carrying as many medical supplies as possible. Those enemy patients who could not walk crawled, just to get beyond the hospital complex to hide and hope for survival to fight another day. What was left for us to find were dying patients, many with arms and legs rotting away. Around the camps were freshly dug graves of patients who had succumbed to their wounds, the sure sign that the enemy suffered enormous casualties from U.S. firepower.

It was at one enemy hospital, discovered during Operation Burlington Trail, that our battalion's soldiers were most exposed to man's inhumanity to man. Two women were found barely alive and emaciated, weighing no more than 50 pounds each. At first, our soldiers believed them to be enemy nurses, perhaps stricken by malaria. But when our interpreter arrived, they told their story of being captured in their hamlet in the valley below, taken to the hospital, and used for blood transfusions to wounded soldiers just off the operating table. In barely audible voices, the women cried for vengeance and did not want to be separated from the medics who carried them off the mountain so they could be evacuated to a division hospital. "They felt secure around us," one medic remembered. "They did not want to leave our side."

**"When I returned from Vietnam, the shrink at the VA said, 'You need to open up and talk about all this, and then you can forget about it and move on.' Forget about it? I told her, 'You are the crazy one here. How can I forget my buddies who were wounded or killed? Or humping all day through the jungles and rice paddies when it was so hot and humid you could hardly breathe? Or how about being so scared on an ambush when a whole enemy company was passing by within a few feet of you that you were wishing your heart would just quit beating because you knew they could hear it pounding in your chest? How could I forget all we went through every day when others back home were protesting, dodging the draft or running to Canada and calling us baby killers?' That stopped my therapy session, and my therapy now is talking to my fellow grunts who went through the same thing." Raymond Moriarty, staff sergeant, 5th/46th Infantry**

The enemy found most of the infantry's base camps (landing zones, or "LZs") perched on high points in the rolling hills of the piedmont. Thus, these were marked for attack by the enemy because they controlled key terrain. The LZs were subjected to enemy mortar fire and ground attack, most often by carefully trained sappers whose stealth, deadliness and laser-like precision became legendary. Our battalion's base camp, LZ Gator, took on more than 10 sapper attacks. Most had limited success, but one attack killed our battalion commander. Each time, the enemy forces who perished in the attack were taken to a nearby hamlet, which was always populated with communist agents. There they would be buried by their comrades. The message the infantry sent was clear: we will not be intimidated.

These base camps, while always dangerous places to be due to enemy attack, became the infantryman's only home of any permanence. The luxury of showers (from renovated oil drums), hot food from a mess hall and some time to unwind with music and beer – or something harder – was a fair trade for the requirement to man a bunker line at night but not have to hump a heavy rucksack during the day.



Photo: Robert Richardson

The coastal lowlands offered their own unique difficulties, principally from mines and booby traps. When our own battalion arrived in Vietnam, we were assigned the coastal area in Quang Ngai to neutralize the enemy. Inside of two months, eight men were killed and 123 wounded from mines, more than 60 of which were multiple amputations. From the simple punji stakes encountered early in the war, the enemy grew with sophistication as more and more munitions were used against them. Specially trained insurgents dragged off undetonated artillery rounds, mortar rounds or bombs from airstrikes and rigged them for command detonation or to be detonated by trip wires or pressure plates. It is perhaps in this environment that the infantryman in Vietnam faced his greatest challenges. Day after day, each step taken to patrol and secure an area brought with it the very real possibility of death or horrible dismemberment. Trails were rarely used, but it made little difference in the deadly cat-and-mouse game with the enemy. Even undisturbed tread marks from armored personnel carriers were no safe path to follow – the enemy placed mines underneath the tread marks by digging in from the side.

The sacrifice of the infantry on the coastal plains of South Vietnam may never be fully appreciated. In one instance where one of our platoons walked into a mined area, the platoon's medic detonated a buried 105mm artillery round. The blast sheared off his legs below the knees and cauterized his wounds, reducing the bleeding. The medic promptly placed his leg stumps atop his rucksack to stem what bleeding there was and gave directions to the rest of the platoon on how to use his medical supplies to treat the many others who were wounded. How did we get such good men?

The infantry adapted wherever it was sent. Beginning in 1969, our battalion established "hunter-killer" teams: fully self-sufficient squads of soldiers, each having two M-60 machine guns, a sniper rifle, lots of ammunition and enough food to be able to defend itself, if attacked by a superior enemy force, until reinforcements could arrive.



The teams changed positions every two days but did not move far due to their heavy loads. When spotting small enemy groups they called in artillery fire, helicopter gunships or, if close enough, used their own weapons. These squads allowed several platoons to cover a much larger area to keep unrelenting pressure on the enemy.

One team was discovered by a large force of NVA regulars and quickly scampered into a large stand of 6-foot-high elephant grass where, as luck would have it, there was a depression in the ground that allowed the team to get below ground level. For more than 36 hours, the team remained silent as more than 100 enemy soldiers probed their position with heavy fire. The enemy was reluctant to enter into the high grass without knowing exactly where the team had hidden. The team chose silence over annihilation. On the third day they slipped away.

"Eagle flights" were also used to great effect. Three Huey helicopters could carry an infantry platoon that would swiftly and efficiently search out suspected enemy positions; this use of air mobility made it possible to search as many as 10 locations in a single day.

First developed by the 9th Infantry Division in the Mekong Delta, "mechanical ambushes" (MAs) were adopted for use in mountainous terrain away from occupied civilian hamlets. These involved stringing a series of Claymore mines together off the side of a footpath believed to be used by the enemy. A wooden clothespin with thumbtacks on the two pincers was placed with a C-ration plastic spoon between the thumbtacks. The enemy tripped the wire and the spoon was pulled, allowing the thumbtacks to complete the circuit; three to six Claymores exploded in unison. With this tactic a platoon could set up two live ambushes, with each team setting up an MA as well, thereby covering more terrain than the soldiers could cover themselves. Many nights, a live ambush team would hear their MA detonate in the distance and in the morning discover dead enemy forces or abandoned equipment with blood trails leading off into the bush. Eagle flights, hunter-killer teams and MAs were some of the force multipliers developed by the infantry in Vietnam long before the Army coined the term.

Although such small-unit tactics were increasingly and successfully employed by many infantry units, battalion-sized operations were still being conducted deep in the mountains against entrenched NVA units closer to Laos and Cambodia, along the infamous Ho Chi Minh Trail. Through it all, the infantry did everything it was asked to do and more.

The average infantryman in Vietnam faced a greater statistical likelihood of injury or death, more continuous close combat (due to the availability of troop transport via

**"My greatest fear in Vietnam was being maimed – losing my legs or, worse, my eyesight. My biggest hope in 'Nam was getting some beer on the resupply bird or a stand down for a couple days, or that I could get some pound cake to go with the applesauce I already had. My hopes were small, immediate things. We instinctively knew we would not see a victory in Vietnam. 'Victory' was getting to go home. A professor in law school asked how I could put up with combat in the jungle. Easy answer: I did it for my friends, especially my radio operator and the other guys in the unit. And I didn't have a clue about how the broader war was going. My view didn't go much past the next tree line. And a tree line 200 yards away across a flat meadow still triggers my PTSD." R.**

*Pamp, second lieutenant, 5th/46th Infantry*



Photo: Robert Richardson

helicopter) and a greater variety of terrain than the average soldier would encounter in the big war. Further, this analysis would not be complete without a footnote giving weight to the added stress felt by infantrymen in Vietnam, knowing that their government had asked them to begin standing down with no armistice or clear-cut victory after so much blood was spilled.

Toward the end, as America gradually withdrew from Vietnam, the infantry spent more time working with the South Vietnamese army and regional or local force militias to conduct joint operations and advance "accelerated pacification" programs. There was not much confidence in these forces taking the lead, despite some good units. In the end, the infantryman in Vietnam led the way, but returned home without glory.

David W. Taylor served as an infantry platoon leader with Charlie Company, 5th/46th Infantry Battalion, in 1969. He was wounded twice. He retired as a colonel in the Special Forces, U.S. Army Reserve, and is the author of "Our War: The History and Sacrifices of an Infantry Battalion in the Vietnam War 1968-1971."

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**"Fear of the unknown was my biggest fear – the constant worry about what's around the bend, booby traps, enemy contact or incoming enemy mortar rounds. It seemed to take a lot out of you physically and mentally. It was a tour of survival; our infantry company strength on the books was 164, but it seemed to sit at 65 to 75 in the field. For us, the focus was on our rifle company and the mission we were doing. I don't think it took any of us long once we were in the bush to see that we were not going to win a total victory as our fathers and uncles did in World War II. But morale was good for the most part, except when we took casualties or had bad weather conditions and no resupply. But we always moved on with things."**

*Bill Reid, specialist fourth class, 5th/46th Infantry*



## Return to Bronco: 2013

By Terry Sula



Author and wife, Kim, with school children in Hue

I didn't want to go to Vietnam the first time in 1968- but for some reason I had a strange desire to go back years later.

In July 1968, soon after I arrived in Vietnam, I was flown to the Americal Division Combat Center in Chu Lai for a week's worth of jungle training. To see a beautiful beach on the South China Sea with a war going on around it amazed me. Besides that, the Chu Lai base was huge, and the jet activity and noise at the airstrip was astounding.

The following week I arrived at LZ Bronco surrounding Montezuma Hill, right next to the village of Duc Pho. Here I began my duty with E Company, 3/1 Battalion, 11th Light Infantry Brigade.

I, like most soldiers, was anxious to complete my tour. I remember thinking at the time that once I left Vietnam I would never return there because it would never be a safe place. In addition to the hazards of incoming rocket, mortar and rifle fire, I thought about the undesirable living conditions...the heat, the humidity, the ringworm, the leeches and the smell of death. With the bad memories that seemed to consume this wretched place why would I want to return?

I must admit I wasn't a grunt. I had a non-combat MOS. I didn't qualify for a CIB. I spent most of my year working in communications and supply at the Bronco base camp. But I did make frequent chopper and truck resupply trips to landing zones and firebases.

Performing perimeter bunker guard duty every other night was my most intense task; interacting with Graves Registration was the most difficult task. I especially remember frequently visiting nearby LZ Liz for resupply purposes. I also recall the road between Highway 1 and LZ Liz where we lost too many men despite regular mine-clearing efforts.

Many years after leaving Vietnam I wondered how things changed in the Bronco and Duc Pho areas. Did the

village expand into our base camp? Did the Vietnamese military take over the area? Is there any evidence that we were there?

I attended a veterans reunion in 2000 and met a vet who reported that Bronco was a restricted area. He had to sneak in to the area to get some photos. I remember it as being of only vacant land.

In 2013 I used Google Earth software on my computer to take a satellite look at Duc Pho and the surrounding area. I located Montezuma Hill and checked out the adjacent terrain. There appeared to be some buildings south of the hill near my former battalion area. But the picture was too fuzzy to identify much of anything else even when I tried to zoom-in.

I started thinking that I probably would revisit the country in the future- but there was no hurry. Then all of a sudden an opportunity developed. My wife needed to travel to South Korea in late May and she asked me if I wanted to go along.

A quick check of a few airline websites showed me that for a couple hundred more dollars we could add Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City to our itinerary. I chose Hanoi since I wanted to see how the true Vietnamese communists live, where our enemy was headquartered, and to see the Hanoi Hilton where our captured pilots were housed.

We ended up traveling to Hanoi to start an 11-day journey. The trip took us to near the southern boundary of the former I Corps and then back to Hanoi. We saw the sites of Hanoi and Halong Bay and then took an overnight train 14 hours south to Da Nang.

In Da Nang we met Mr. Vu, a military historian and guide. He owns Annam Tour. A friend who used Mr. Vu as a tour guide on a trip to military battlefields near the DMZ referred us. For the next two days Mr. Vu guided us to the three locations that I needed to see...Chu Lai, Bronco and Liz. We also visited two other points of interest...My Lai and the Tra Bong Special Forces Camp.



Main Gate, Chu Lai base





Chu Lai airport terminal

### Chu Lai

Mr. Vu and his driver took us south down Highway 1 to our first stop, Chu Lai. Chu Lai is on the coast about 60 miles south of Da Nang. I knew there was a commercial airport at Chu Lai and I thought there would be security there. Fortunately Mr. Vu had been to Chu Lai before and he knew the way around the security gate. Just north of the airstrip is a road that heads straight east toward the South China Sea. We took that road to circumvent the gate and to reach the area of the Vietnam Airlines terminal.

Just north of the terminal is the first evidence of a military installation...a large aircraft hangar consisting of 18 arched structures formerly used to shelter fighter aircraft. These concrete structures are still in use by the local airline. The hangars and airstrip are two of just a few leftovers of the war that we saw.

On the South China Sea beach there are remnants of a bunker that helped protect the east side of the base. It was surprising to me that more bunkers did not survive since those structures seemed so durable.



Author at Chu Lai beach



Mr. Vu, guide, with relic at Chu Lai beach

There is a paved road that now runs parallel to the beach. This road runs south past a resort. Along the west side of the road is a concrete and brick wall that was probably constructed by the Communists soon after the war as an attempt to secure the area.

I had fun trying to imagine where the Americal Headquarters and Combat Center were located. There is no physical evidence that I could find. I had a couple of photos from 1969 that I used to try to pinpoint my location. I think I came pretty close to finding those areas.

My biggest amazement was looking at the massive expanse of rolling sand dunes that was once the Chu Lai military installation- home of so many Army, Navy and Marine personnel. It is difficult to believe this was the same land where so many structures and so much activity existed 40 years before. I read that there were 17,000 people stationed at Chu Lai in 1968. Today only those associated with the airport inhabit that area. There are some manufacturing plants on the north end of the former base area.



Wall and roadway parallel to Chu Lai beach





**LZ Bronco at Montezuma Hill from Hwy 1**

### **LZ Bronco**

After we left Chu Lai we headed for our next stop about 55 miles further south. Soon after leaving Chu Lai we caught a glimpse of the former LZ Bayonet. It is just west of the southern end of the airstrip and across Highway 1. That former landing zone appears to be just an uninhabited hill.

We traveled 30 miles to Quang Ngai City and then another 25 miles to Bronco. I was excited when I saw the familiar Montezuma Hill that remains to be the most striking landmark in the vicinity. I remember rocks and weeds dominating the hill during the war. It is now completely covered by eucalyptus trees.

As we entered Duc Pho we turned left off highway 1 and eventually on to a road that runs south to north. The road was lined with homes on both sides. I believe this road follows the original Bronco airstrip or runs parallel to it. A right turn off this road put us in a clearing that extends to the base of Montezuma. I think this area is the former home of the Dolphins and Sharks of the 174th Assault Helicopter Company.

A furniture factory is in this area now. I think I located remnants of chopper landing pads and the perimeter road that ran around the hill. We followed this road east to the former location of the 11th Light Infantry Brigade HQ. Here we found a foundation on the slope that I suspect could be the remains of the brigade command bunker. We followed the perimeter road further east to the area where the POW camp was located and then a little further to where the 3/1 Battalion resided. This is the area which was important for me because this is where I spent most of my time in 1968-69.

The former 3/1 Battalion area close to the base of the hill is a surprisingly open and flat area clear of structures. A soccer or football field would fit comfortably in the area. There are homes located a few hundred feet from the hill and well within Bronco's former perimeter.

As I walked around I tried to imagine where our buildings were located. I particularly looked for the battalion street where company headquarters lined the left side and supply



**LZ Bronco near 174 Avn and medical battalion areas**

rooms lined the right. I tried to picture the location of the nearby mess hall, chapel, motor pool and outdoor movie theater. I remember we watched Clint Eastwood movies multiple times.

Further away from the hill I tried to picture the location of our resupply chopper pad, perimeter bunkers, shower point and the scout dog handlers hooch (59th Infantry Platoon?). I looked up to the top of Montezuma and remembered the Quad 50s that impressively repelled VC when they attempted to penetrate our barbed wire. I did not attempt to locate the other battalion areas because I couldn't remember exactly where they were located.

I felt like I was dreaming as I walked this land. Like my Chu Lai observation, it was difficult to comprehend that there was so much activity here 40 years prior. I found it difficult to leave... I wanted to find more remnants, foundations, or any evidence that the U.S. military was here.

But I soon realized I was searching for things that were part of ancient history, and an archaeological dig would probably be needed to find more.



**Author at LZ Bronco chopper pad looking South**



VC monument on Hwy 1 near LZ Liz

### LZ Liz

After leaving Duc Pho we headed north on Highway 1 and looked for the road heading west to Liz. About six miles north we found a bright yellow sign next to an arch over the entrance to the road. The writing on this sign commemorates an apparent VC victory in a battle with U.S. Marines in 1967. We proceeded the two miles to Liz. Along the way we crossed the railroad tracks which I remembered well. I recalled a few enemy mines detonated on this road and resulted in several deaths.

I was disappointed that most of Liz is no longer there. Apparently the locals have been excavating soil from the hill over the years. The Observation Post hill on the south end of Liz is still intact so at least I was able to have a reference point as to where Liz structures were located so many years ago.

After a busy day of touring we stayed in a modern hotel in downtown Quang Ngai City. The fact that we were able to be comfortable in a hotel in that town would have been



LZ Liz excavated for fill dirt

unimaginable 40 years prior. I remember Quang Ngai to be a poor and dirty large village but now there are over 100,000 residents who are still mainly poor but doing pretty well in a fairly nice city.

On the way back to Hanoi we traveled up the coast through Hoi An, My Khe/China Beach, Da Nang, and past Red Beach 2 where the Marines first landed in March 1965. We traveled through some very scenic coastal areas to Hue. In Hue we visited the Citadel and the site of the key urban battle during the Tet Offensive of 1968.

### Observations

I tried to communicate with the Vietnamese whenever possible regarding the war and their opinion of Americans. For one thing, most people have no idea what went on 40 years ago in their country during the 'American War'. They say they love Americans and personally we were treated like celebrities most of the time. At no time did we feel threatened. I still don't know if they really love Americans, or just American money. We only saw a few American travelers while in Vietnam, but quite a few English-speaking tourists, mainly from Australia and Great Britain.

It was interesting to us that we saw no beggars in Vietnam. Everyone seemed to have something to sell and sometimes their sales techniques were quite aggressive. They want to sell you something but they are not looking for handouts. Despite being a socialist country, small businesses are encouraged, and it seems that everyone who is physically capable is working. Elderly and extremely poor people appear to be taken care of by the government.

During my tour in the 60s we always talked about 'the smell of death' which we experienced when we first arrived and continued until we departed the country. I'm not going to speculate what that smell actually was, but I can now say the smell of death is gone! Like I remember from my first stay there, it was ridiculously hot and humid during our trip, but the air was clean and fresh.

Our Vietnam trip was very rewarding. The trip accomplished all the goals we expected. We got to see the current state of that communist country while revisiting sites that had a true impact on my life.

**Editor's Note: Terry Sula served with Echo Company, 3/1 Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade from July 1968 to July 1969.**

### Explanation of acronyms:

**MOS-** Military Occupation Specialty

**CIB-** Combat Infantryman Badge

**LZ-** Landing Zone

**POW-** Prisoner of War

**VC-** Viet Cong



## Facebook Discussion Threads

From ADVA Facebook Page Users

### Carrying the M-60 Machine Gun

**Bruce Flaherty:** I remember when I was FNG, Jones in one platoon and Henry "Clyde" Walker in my platoon carried them like lunch boxes. When Clyde deros'ed they gave it to me. I sank six inches in the mud. Dave Irwin showed up and it had his name on it.

**Terry Bradshaw:** My best friend and platoon sergeant wanted to carry the pig. I sure hated losing him as a platoon sergeant. His first days carrying it, we were ambushed, and he was hit.....sent to Japan, and didn't come back to VN. I found him a few years ago...but yet to go visit. It's on my bucket list.

**Jerry Griffith:** My 60 was mounted on a Huey. Just a lot of cleaning every night. Two of them

**Tom Neubauer** I feel bad for you Jerry Griffith.

Raymond M. Cusato: Me too. Two M60s to clean, c-ration can to feed it.

**Bill Pennington:** I carried one on a patrol we had to go on. I was signal and we were told we had to play infantry every so often.

**Bob Hammond:** Didn't hump it, but sure carried a lot of ammo for it.

**Terry Kanzler:** Humped the ammo. So I count.

**Rich Raitano:** Carried M-60 ammo and mortar rounds along with my aid bag and M16.

**Doc Wittmer:** We all carried at least a spare belt in Recon and I carried two because the rounds would also do for my M14 if I ran short. Never ran short because I carried all the magazines that I could. Weight at times was pretty unbearable but somehow when you are that young, you persevere. Billy Ray Sargent (RIP Brother) was our gunner and I carried it for him for a few clicks. I told him no thanks.. better a lanky country boy than me!

**Elmer Hall:** I carried the pig for almost eight months. Loved it. Also carried 600 rounds, 700 counting the starter belt, also walked point with it many times, I refused to carry the m-16.

**Ralph Bateman:** I carried the beast for more than a month when I first got to the field but I was lucky enough to carry an M-79 for over 7 months - mud or wet sand didn't matter - never jammed and I could shoot over trees and hooches - HE, WP, flares, buck shot.

**Richard G. Totten:** I carried M60 about 6 months. Light as a feather in a fire fight. The rest of the time it kicked my butt.

**Reggie Baxter:** I humped that sucker for almost 11 months, thought it was going to kill me during the monsoons climb up three or four steps up a mountain and slid back down ten in the mud.

**Al Simms:** Be happy that it wasn't a 50! As for the M79, I liked to practice with it but in a firefight.... well, it is a single shot - I want my M16 too.

**Ralph Bateman:** Al Simms - grew up squirrel hunting with a single shot 12 gauge so I could get 4 or 5 round out within 10 seconds with a lot less wasted brass (although I was reprimanded once by my first sergeant for using too much ammo during a firefight).

**Paul Bigham:** That tripod seemed to find all the vines ... especially when climbing up the large hills (I called them mountains).

**Dennis Haney:** The only thing that vines liked more than radios was 60s.

### Acquisition of an ARVN M-151 Ambulance

**John Kenneth Clough:** I think the old M-151 field ambulance that we had for our battalion aid station for 3/82 arty was one of the original ones brought in-country. It was rusting out and was beat up and ran like shit. One day one of the other guys and I went to the PX at Freedom Hill and the gods of fate were with us that day for behold there was a brand new M-151 field ambulance sitting around the corner of the building out of sight from everyone that was marked with ARVN unit markings and they hadn't locked the chain around the steering wheel. Well I preformed a act of grand theft auto that day and drove that ambulance back to our motor pool and since the ARVN vehicles were painted a lighter green than ours we did a paint job on it and switched the data plates with ours then parted out our old one and the guys in the motor pool made it disappear. Our doctor really liked the new ride and was smart enough to not question us on where it came from. It was still running strong when I came home.

**Lonnie Gibson:** Lmao! Great story and a job well done!

**Don Levesque:** What a great story, worthy of Hawkeye and Trapper John.

**Dan Kuykendall:** The M718 had the stupid little extension on the back so the rack was supported. I put many miles and more than a few hours working on one. Nice acquisition!!!!

**John Kenneth Clough:** Don that is a very fitting analogy because they drove me to the Air Base in it when I came home.

**Buddy Sadler:** It would have been worthy of a video if you could have replaced yours for theirs and gotten away with it! Would have loved to have seen their expressions when they walked around the corner.

**John Kenneth Clough:** I'm betting that they were pissed off when they found it missing. They should have locked the steering wheel, and I figure it was a fair trade for the watch that got ripped off my arm when I was driving through Da Nang and got slowed down in traffic and one of the street urchins ran out and grabbed my watch popping the pins that held the watch band on, then ran and disappeared into the crowd.

**Mitchell Bober:** There was a unit in II Corps, let's call it the 241st Trans. Their Motor SGT got good and drunk and wrecked a company jeep (drove across a bridge--almost all of the way-- that had been blown out for more than a year). The old man told him to clean up his mess or it would be his ass and his stripes. A friendly engineer NCO brought a dozer/backhoe to the area just inside of the wire, dug a hole and buried the jeep AFTER removing the ID plate. The Motor SGT "visited" an ARVN vehicle staging area in Long My, and left with a brand new pale jeep. A bit of paint, a bit of paper shuffling and all was fine. Motor SGT got reassigned to another unit. The new Motor SGT, "Red" Williams was a good man.

### Locator Requests

Additional locator requests may be found at [www.americal.org](http://www.americal.org). To view the locator requests, go to the home page above, then follow the links to the Commo page, then to the Blog page, and then to the Americal Locator page. Locator requests on the website do not post immediately. They are screened prior to posting. Allow several days for a new request to appear on the website.

**Author: Joseph Miller**

**Comment:** Looking for James Maddox (from KY) or anyone else who served with me in 11th Inf. Bde., Americal Div., A Co., 3rd Bn., 1st Inf., 1st Plt., LZ Dragon. August 1967-69. I was a machine gunner. Contact: Joseph Miller 83A4963, Auburn Correctional Facility, P.O. Box 618, Auburn, NY 13024.

**Author: Charles Hassler**

e-mail: [charleshassler1@yahoo.com](mailto:charleshassler1@yahoo.com)

**Comment:** Looking for anyone that was in Btry. B, 3/16th Artillery, Jan 1969-1970. Please call me at home 770 957 6528. I was SSG Hassler and at Tien Phouc, 4th gun section that was in the fight that started in Feb 69 and had 14 wounded and one KIA and then another attack on May 12.

**Author : Brian Sullivan**

E-mail : [brian.sullivan\\_49@yahoo.com](mailto:brian.sullivan_49@yahoo.com)

**Comment:** I am looking for anyone who served with A Co, 523rd signal Bn, Chu Lai, during 1970 and 1971. I remember Plotner (from Ca), Milford (tracktor races, E3), Shouldress (sp? from S. or N, Dakota, generator mechanic), "Muddy" Waters (Tx), Armant (sp, generator mechanic). I worked at DTOC taking care of the division radios. I'm from Boston and sometimes I was called "Boston Baked Bean" or "Sully". Plotner and I had our own AV setup to record music and sell cassettes to the troops. Want to see if you dudes made it back. Hope to hear from you.

**Author : Donad G Pierce**

E-mail : [DPOL4@YAHOO.COM](mailto:DPOL4@YAHOO.COM)

**Comment:** Looking for the men I served with in Vietnam 1/1 CAV 69-70 places like Tam Ky, Chu Lai, Hawk Hill. I was with B troop 1/1 CAV 3rd Platoon. When I left Vietnam I was a Spec 5.

**Author : Leslie Lowe**

E-mail : [Leslie092862@yahoo.com](mailto:Leslie092862@yahoo.com)

**Comment:** I'm looking for any photos or information on my dad who served in the 196th Light Brigade from May 1967, 1969-70, etc. He was a helicopter gunner. We are looking for any history or photos of him for the family history. His name was Duane R. Lowe and I don't know what his rank was then. Thanks for any help.

**Author : Bob Petermeyer**

E-mail : [bobpetermeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:bobpetermeyer@yahoo.com)

**Comment:** Looking for Grant Fischer from Lake George, NY. Was in the 1/46 Inf, B Company. 198th. We were on M 60 team together.

**Author : Greg O'Neil**

E-mail : [goneil90804@yahoo.com](mailto:goneil90804@yahoo.com)

**Comment:** I was with the 196th LIB, 4th/31st, Charlie Company from June 1970 to Dec 1970 then rotating to an MP outfit at Hawk Hill. I'm looking for a guy who served with the 4th/31st, Charlie Company who was nicknamed "Crazy John." Don't recall his last name. I think he was from Texas but not 100% sure. He came in country and was attached to the unit either in late June or early July 1970. Anyone from this unit and time frame remembers "Crazy John," please make contact with me. I've been looking for him off and on for about 30 years with no luck.

**Author : Clayton Reed**

E-mail : [clayreed@centurylink.net](mailto:clayreed@centurylink.net)

**Comment:** Looking for any Blueghost 69 - 70 live in denver 303-469-0019



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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>
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<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.



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