

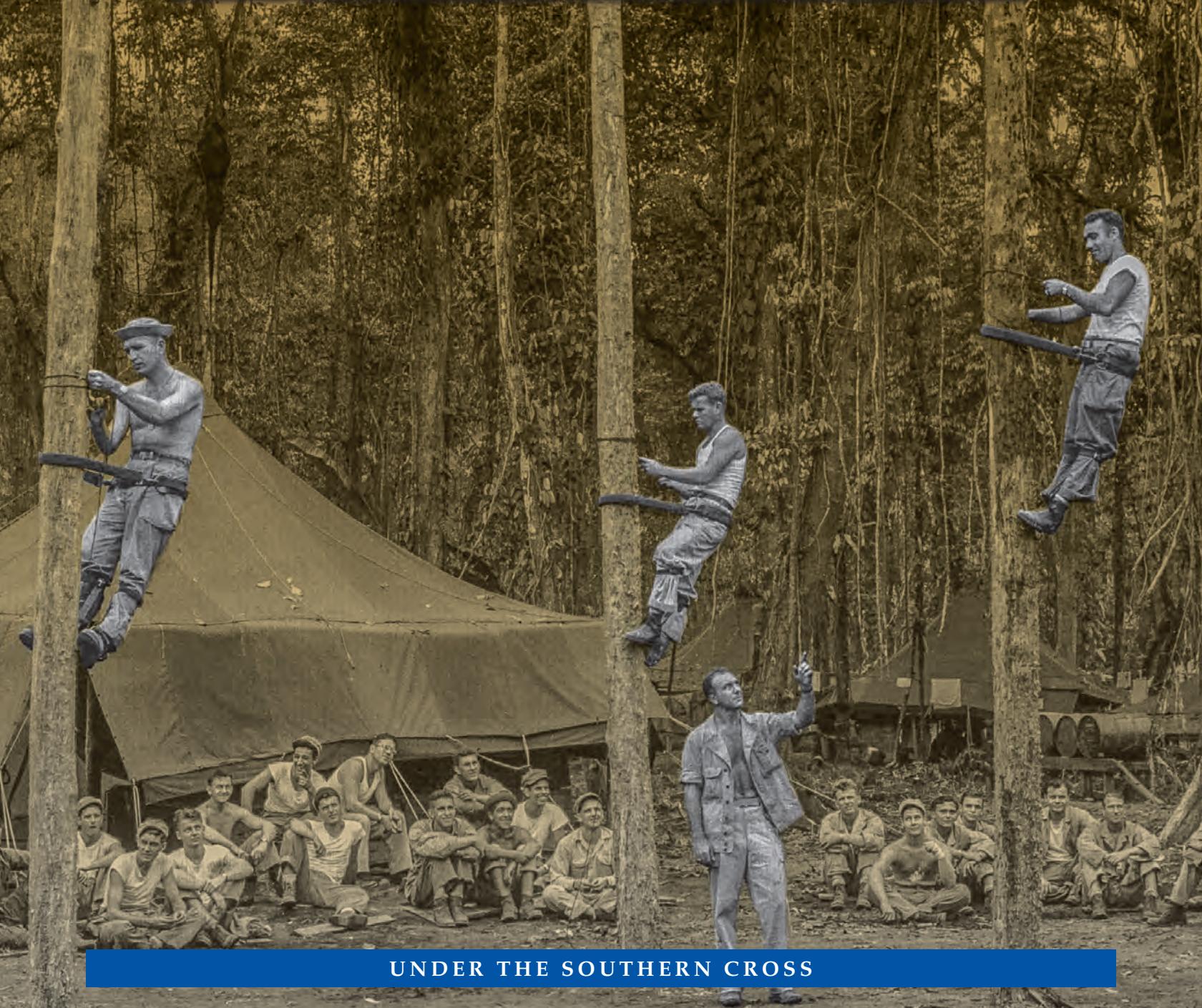


January • February • March **2014**

# AMERICAL

## JOURNAL

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



UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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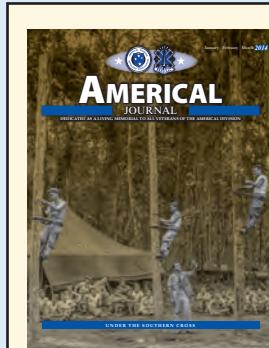
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#### Cover: Get the Message Through

Signalmen of the 26th Signal Company train during WWII to be the nervous system of the Americal.

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## 2014 Nominating Committee Slate

By PNC Jay Flanagan

At the 2013 Reunion Commander Larry Swank appointed a Nominating Committee consisting of David Eichhorn, Reggie Horton, Richard Scales, Connie Steers, and myself. The members elected me to serve as Nominating Committee Chair. After notices in the Americal Journal and on the Americal Division Veterans Association, 23rd Infantry, 11th LIB and 198th Facebook pages, the committee received and approved the following members for nomination to be considered for election.

Executive Council: **Larry Swank** (Bowie, Maryland), **Connie Steers** (Hicksville, New York), **J. Reginald Horton** (Roxboro, North Carolina), **Cary B. Bacall** (Long Lake, Minnesota), **Vern Pike** (Pinehurst, North Carolina), **Gary L. Noller** (Kerrville, Texas), **Rich K. Smith** (Friend, Nebraska), **John (Jay) Flanagan** (Cranford, New Jersey), **Roy Abbott** (Chino Valley, Arizona), **Andy Viega** (Queens, NY), **Michael J. Murphy** (Daphne, Alabama), **Richard Scales** (Oakley, Illinois), **Ronald L. Ward** (Protom, Missouri), **Wayne Bryant** (Greensboro, North Carolina).

Commander: **Dave Chrystal** (Centralia, Missouri); Sr. Vice Commander: **Robert Cudworth** (Moosic, Pennsylvania); Jr. Vice Commander: **William Miles** (Penn Valley, California). Scholarship Committee Trustees: **Larry Watson** (Wooster, Ohio), **Lee Kaywork** (Fernandina Beach, Florida), **William Tucker** (Cleveland, Illinois).

Of the fourteen nominated for the Executive Committee, eleven will be chosen to serve in the office. **Steers, Horton, Flanagan, Murphy, Scales, and Ward** are incumbents and may be re-elected for a second consecutive term. The current Scholarship Committee Chairman is **Bill Bruinsma** is appointed by the National Commander.

National Adjutant Roger Gilmore has verified that each candidate for elective office is a member in good standing as required by the Association's Constitution and Bylaws. The term of office for elective officers shall begin on July 1 following the election.

Paper ballots will be in the mail to active members in good standing sometime in early April 2014 and must be returned for counting in a timely manner. Results will be tabulated by the end of June 2014 and notification will be made to current and incoming officers.

The Committee would like to thank outgoing Commander Larry Swank for his confidence in us, Roger Gilmore for his assistance and past officers for their input.

I would also like to thank my fellow Nominating Committee Members for their fine work and outreach to our members for worthy nominees. Good luck to all nominees and looking forward to seeing many of you in Houston.

## 2014 Proposed Bylaw Amendments

By PNC Ron Ward

Commander Larry Swank appointed a bylaw review committee consisting of myself as Chairman, Junior Vice-Commander Robert Cudworth, National Adjutant Roger Gilmore, PNC Ronald R. Ellis, and PNC Gary L. Noller. The task of the committee was to propose bylaws to cover national reunion planning, organization, and operation. The ADVA Executive Committee reviewed the proposed amendments to the bylaws at the Nashville meeting in September 2013. The Executive Committee suggested further changes and recommend approval of the bylaws as listed below.

### Bylaw change #1.

The National Commander will appoint a reunion oversight chairman and a reunion organizing chairman. The reunion oversight chairman, with approval of the National Commander, will appoint members to serve on a reunion oversight committee. The reunion organizing chairman will appoint members to serve on a reunion organizing committee. The reunion oversight chairman and the reunion organizing chairman shall not be the same person.

### Bylaw change #2.

The reunion oversight committee will oversee the organizing, planning, management, and operation of all ADVA national reunions by the reunion organizing committee. The reunion oversight committee will report to the National Commander and to the Executive Council as needed and when requested and in a timely manner.

### Bylaw change #3.

All contracts involving an ADVA national reunion will be reviewed by the reunion oversight committee before they are signed. Contracts that name the ADVA as a party and expose the ADVA to potential financial liability will be submitted for Executive Council approval or rejection. Contracts will be signed by the National Commander or by designee(s) authorized in writing by the National Commander to sign contract(s).

### Bylaw change #4.

A business plan will be submitted to the reunion oversight committee by the reunion organizing chairman. The business plan will detail expected revenues and costs and outline reunion location, programming, hotel accommodations, and other details as requested.

### Bylaw change #5.

Money raised from reunion fees will be placed in a bank account under the ADVA national account. Reunion financials will be reported to the IRS on the annual ADVA 990 return.

### Bylaw change #6.

Within ninety days following the reunion, the reunion organizing chairman will complete a detailed reunion finance report using a form provided by the reunion oversight committee. The report will be made available to the ADVA officers and general membership.

## Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore

For those of us who attended the 2013 ADVA National Reunion in Nashville, Tennessee, we remember it being a very successful and enjoyable reunion.

The Nashville reunion was also a solid success in terms of new member additions for the association. We add forty-nine new members in this reporting period- an increase of fifteen over the past quarterly report. This increase is primarily due to the number of new members signed up at the 2013 Nashville reunion. Thirty-five Americal Division veterans joined the ADVA through the Nashville registration; five former members were reinstated as part of their Nashville reunion registration. In the new member listing, those appearing as sponsored by Ron Green are Nashville reunion sign ups.

New life member gains continue at a very good pace. For this reporting period, three Americal Division veterans joined the Association as life members. Thirteen annual pay members upgraded to life status, giving us a total of sixteen new life members in the association.

In December, we added two more associate members from the Max Hartwick family. Max is an ADVA member and WWII Americal Division veteran who served with the 132nd Infantry Regiment. Max's son Sean, a U.S. Army veteran, joined as an associate member in early 2013. Max's older son Herbert and Sean's son Adam are our newest members. Adam is combat medic who served in the Afghanistan conflict. Adam was severely wounded last year, losing both legs just above the knees in an IED explosion. This brave young soldier is recovering at Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington, DC, and we ask you keep Adam in your prayers.

Annual pay members with a renewal date of January will notice a change in the date format on their membership card. Membership cards mailed in early January display the renewal date as JAN2015. The old format displayed the renewal date as JAN14. All future issues for annual pay membership cards will have this new date format. Hopefully, this will help eliminate any confusion on renewal dates.

I close this article with a reminder to notify me when your mailing address changes for any reason. This is especially important nowadays, as USPS postage rates have increased significantly in 2014. We are charged a fee each time the USPS forwards a mailing to a new address we don't have on record. Please help us keep our mailing expenses low and notify me when you move to a new 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. 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.

### New Members

**George Anderson**  
Rcn/4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Xenia, OH  
★ Ron Green

**Gary Baker**  
26th Cmbt Engrs  
Powhatan Point, OH  
★ Self

**Jon Baker**  
D/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Sidney, OH  
★ Ron Green

**Walt Bertelsen**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Sunland, CA  
★ Ron Green

**Robert W. Bond**  
198th LIB  
Oklahoma City, OK  
★ Ron Green

**Louis Bordenave**  
HHC/4/21st Inf Rgmt  
Thompson Station, Tn  
★ Ron Green

**Barney Brauker**  
198th LIB HHC  
Tekonsha, MI  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Oscar Bussell**  
198th LIB  
Seaman, OH  
★ Ron Green

**Scotty Callihan**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Bimble, KY  
★ Ron Green

**Wayne Cherryholmes**  
5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Sacramento, CA  
★ Ron Green

**Thomas Devine**  
1/1st Cav E Trp  
Flint, MI  
★ Ron Green

**Stan Disorda**  
2/1st Inf Rgmt  
Chattanooga, TN  
★ Ron Green

**Darrell Freeman**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Eagle Rock, MO  
★ Ron Green

**Jimmie Gandy**  
23rd MP Co  
Hewitt, TX  
★ Ron Green

**Jay R. Goudy**  
Div HDQ AG  
Salem, OR  
★ Dave Hammond

**Jerry L. Haussels**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Rolla, MO  
★ PNC Ron Ward

**David L. Henke**  
1/1st Cav D Trp  
Jasper, IN  
★ Gregory Merder

**Lawrence Holliday**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Carmel, CA  
★ Ron Green

**Dan Holton**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Pegram, TN  
★ Ron Green

**Leonard Howe**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Kelso, WA  
★ Ron Green

**Arnold N. Huffstutler**  
26th Engr Bn Co C  
Fairfield, OH  
★ Ron Green

**Lawrence Kenney**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Concord, MA  
★ Ron Green

**Richard Kiene**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Sacramento, Ca  
★ Ron Green

**George Kline**  
D/31/21st Inf Rgmt  
Lutherville, MD  
★ Ron Green

**Carl Landwehr**  
1/6th Inf Rgmt  
De Pere, WI  
★ Ron Green

**Monte R. Lawrence**  
1/1st Cav E Trp  
Ravenna, OH  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**David Locke**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Glenmont, NY  
★ Ron Green

**Mike Mohr**  
5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Shelbyville, IN  
★ Ron Green

**Bobby Peck**  
1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Lawrenceburg, KY  
★ Ron Green

**William A. Pierce, Jr.**  
Div HHC  
Independence, MO  
★ John R. Worrel

**Tony Pleton**  
A/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Brockport, NY  
★ Ron Green

**Bruce Puckett**  
1/1st Cav E Trp  
Catskill, NY  
★ Ron Green

### ADVA MEMBERSHIP 31 January 2014

<b>World War II</b>	<b>454</b>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>2,496</b>
<b>Cold War</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Associate Members:</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Total Members</b>	<b>3,170</b>

**Lawrence Santucci**  
Rcn/4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Drexel Hill, PA  
★ Ron Green

**Sam Scarbrough**  
1/1st Cav E Trp  
Thompsonville, MI  
★ Ron Green

**Robert Scott**  
A/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Helendale, CA  
★ Bob Wolf

**Marvin Somers**  
5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Stevens Point, WI  
★ Ron Green

**William Spining**  
4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Brentwood, TN  
★ Ron Green

**Frank Tate**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Davenport, IA  
★ Ron Green

**James M. Wedgewood**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Kodak, TN  
★ Ron Green

**Stephen E. Wilson**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Hutchinson, KS  
★ PNC Ronald Ward

**George Wizer**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Westlake Village, Ca  
★ Ron Green

**Robert Yantzie**  
B/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Taylor, NE  
★ Ron Green

Melvin Zimmer  
A/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Sioux Falls, SD  
★ Ron Green

### New Paid Life Members

**Meredith E. Chance**  
No Unit Given  
Council Bluffs, IA  
★ Self

**Ronald E. Gleason**  
196th LIB  
Lowell, MA  
★ Self

**Steve Mackey**  
71st ASHC  
Riverside, CA  
★ Self

**Theodore A. Andrews**  
B/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Newton, NJ  
★ PNC Ronald Ward

**A Preston Cameron**  
6th Spt Bn Co B  
Riverview, FL  
★ Self

**Vernon Chapman**  
3/16th Arty Btry B  
Cypress, TX  
★ Self

**Brian C. Darnell**  
No Unit Given  
Pasadena, MD  
★ James Tarver

**Mahlon B. Fegley**  
A/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Newark, DE  
★ Bernie Chase

**Wilton F. Gray, Jr.**  
39th Cmbt Engrs HHC  
New Smyrna Beach, FL  
★ Don Ballou

**Dallas R. Hodge**  
4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Clyde, NC  
★ Ron Krul

**David Laukat**  
1/14th Arty HHC  
Oklahoma City, OK  
★ PNC Roland Castranova

**Michael J. McNelis**  
B/1/52nd Inf Rgmt  
Tyrone, PA  
★ Self

**Alfred Meyer**  
132nd Inf Rgmt  
West Bend, WI  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

**Dennis Powell**  
B/1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Columbus, OH  
★ Gary Noller

**Howard A. Sabo**  
C/1/52nd Inf Rgmt  
Little Silver, NJ  
★ Art Cole

**Bruce A. Welther**  
123rd Avn Bn  
Pleasant Ridge, MI  
★ Self

### Re-instated Members

**Daniel Denke**  
A/1/6th Inf Rgmt  
Aurora, CO  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

**Larry Forquer**  
C/5/46th Inf Rgmt  
McAllen, TX  
★ Ron Green

**Luther Helms**  
HHC/1/6th Inf  
Pineville, NC  
★ Tom Packard

**Jack Hosbach**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Rochester Hills, MI  
★ Ron Green

**Robert Ishmael**  
A/1/20th Inf Rgmt  
Coal City, IL  
★ Ron Green

**Vic Kornaski**  
23rd MP Co  
Mt. Carmel, PA  
★ Ron Green

**Thomas E. Morris**  
596th DCS  
Radcliff, KY  
★ William Walker

**Jerry Sears**  
1/1st Cav E Trp  
Rineyville, KY  
★ Ron Green

### New Associate Members

**Steven Delp**  
4th ID - VN  
Fredericksburg, VA  
★ Ron Green

**Adam Hartswick**  
U.S. Army  
State College, PA  
★ Max Hartswick

**Herbert Hartswick**  
NA  
State College, PA  
★ Max Hartswick

### TAPS

#### World War II Veterans

**Emery Boudreau** \*  
182nd Inf Rgmt Co B  
Jacksonville, FL  
April 1, 2012

**James R. Cook**  
182nd Inf Rgmt Co K  
Portland, OR  
December 8, 2013

**Frank Delimba**  
132nd Inf Rgmt  
Hanover Park, IL  
November 10, 2013

**James Diamond** \*  
132nd Inf Rgmt  
Marvell, AR  
August 8, 2004

**Milton Ellebracht** \*  
221st FA Btry A  
Cape Girardeau, MO  
Date Unknown

**John E. Ferdinand** \*  
57th Engrs  
Lexington, MA  
December 15, 2013

**Milton Freeman** \*  
182nd Inf Rgmt Co E  
Wakefield, MA  
July 6, 2012

**Kenneth Kaesebier** \*  
132nd Inf Rgmt  
Mt. Pulaski, IL  
January 13, 2013

**John M. Nocol** \*  
Americal Div Band  
Beverly, MA  
Date Unknown

**Glyn W. Withrow** \*  
182nd Inf Rgmt HHC  
Garland, TX  
December 1, 2013

**Vietnam Veterans**  
**David M. Bradley, Sr.**  
1/1st Cav  
Columbus, OH  
January 18, 2014

**Greg V. Carson** \*  
B/4/21st Inf Rgmt  
Erie, PA  
December 31, 2013

**Robert E. Clemens** \*  
B/1/46th Inf Rgmt  
Melbourne, AR  
September 23, 2012

**Dean Edmonson**  
D/4/3rd Inf Rgmt  
Abingdon, IL  
January 4, 2014

**Geoffrey M. Hoeft**  
Unit Unknown  
Helotes, TX  
September 10, 2013

**Richard T. Knowles** \*  
TF Oregon  
Albuquerque, NM  
September 18, 2013

**David W. Raikes** \*  
5/46th Inf Rgmt  
Avon, IN  
July 28, 2013

**Dennis Rodgers**  
C/4/21st Inf Rgmt  
Olney, Texas  
November 5, 2013

**Robert M. Rose** \*  
Div Spt Cmd  
Landsdowne, MD  
October 25, 2013

**\*ADVA Member**

## 2014 National Reunion

### September 11-14, 2014

Hilton Houston North  
Houston, Texas  
PNC Ronald R. Ellis, Chairman

The 2014 National Reunion of the American 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 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.

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 American Division Veterans Association block and provide arrival and departure dates.

#### Reservations

Hotel room rates begin at \$109 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. The hotel provides free shuttle bus from Bush Intercontinental Airport

#### Thursday- President George H.W. Bush Library, Texas A&M University.

Tour will depart the hotel at 9:00 AM for the 90 mile ride to the President George H.W. Bush Library located on the campus of Texas A&M University at College Station. A barbecue lunch catered by C&J Barbeque will be served in the library. The buses will begin leaving for the return trip at about 2:00 PM and arrive back around 3:30 PM. Cost for bus fare, admission fee, and lunch is \$45 each.

#### Friday- San Jacinto Monument, Battleship Texas, and Houston National Cemetery.

Tour will depart the hotel at 9:00 AM for the 20 mile trip to the 1,200-acre San Jacinto Battleground State Historic Site in LaPorte, TX. This site is managed by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and consists of the San Jacinto Battleground, San Jacinto Monument, and the Battleship Texas. Lunch will be provided at the nearby Monument Inn Restaurant. Buses will depart San Jacinto at about 2:30 PM and arrive at the Houston National Cemetery around 3:00 PM for a memorial service in honor of American veterans and all who have worn the military uniform of the United States. The tour will arrive back at the hotel about 4:00 PM. Cost for bus fare, admission fees, and lunch is \$45 each.



#### Saturday- Business Meetings, Cocktail Hour, Banquet.

ADVA Executive Council and General Membership meetings will be held in the hotel on Saturday morning. A cocktail hour will begin at about 6:00 PM and the banquet will be seated no later than 7:00 PM. A special guest speaker is being arranged and will give a short presentation. The banquet will end at about 9:00 PM and allow time for final conversations and chats. If you wish to reserve table space at the banquet for your group be prepared to provide names of those in your group no later than 10:00 AM Saturday morning.

The hospitality room and the PX sales area will be off the main lobby on the ground floor. The hotel features a Starbucks coffee bar, American café, and a roomy bar. ADVA members registered for the reunion and staying at the hotel will receive a free breakfast buffet each day. The hotel offers free airport shuttle from Bush Intercontinental Airport and has ample free parking in lots and nearby garages.

Registered reunion guests will be provided with a detailed program of events. Exact event times are subject to slight changes depending on variables.

#### Sight Seeing

Reunion attendees who wish to visit area attractions may want to consider a trip to the Johnson Space Center located at 1601 NASA Parkway. This is about 45 miles from the hotel. Another area attraction, approximately 65 miles from the hotel, is the coastal city of Galveston. For those wishing to shop The Woodlands Mall is located 16 miles north of the hotel on I-45. The National United States Armed Forces Museum is about 17 miles from the airport and features a small collection of restored military vehicles and artifacts. Call ahead to ensure a tour guide is there to show you the museum.

*Houston will be warm in September so bring plenty of hot weather clothing. The hotel features an outdoor swimming pool and a huge atrium lobby. The reunion hospitality room will be a cool and comfortable place to gather and visit with friends both new and old.*

Reservations may also be made on-line. The reservation web page is at

[www.hilton.com/en/hg/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-AMDI-20140910/index.jhtml](http://www.hilton.com/en/hg/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-AMDI-20140910/index.jhtml)

## 2014 ADVA NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Houston, Texas Sept. 11-14, 2014  
Hilton Houston North  
12400 Greenspoint Dr.  
Houston, TX 77060  
281-875-2222



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**\*No registration fee for WWII ADVA members.**

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

Registration fee covers name badge, registration gift, admission to hospitality room, printed programs and other benefits.

Thursday tour to George H.W. Bush Library  
College Station, TX  
Includes bus fare, admission, lunch

Sep. 11, 2014 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
**\$45 per person X** \_\_\_\_\_ = **\$** \_\_\_\_\_

Friday tour to San Jacinto Memorial, Battleship  
Texas, Houston National Cemetery  
Includes bus fare, admissions, lunch

Sep. 12, 2014 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM  
**\$45 per person X** \_\_\_\_\_ = **\$** \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Banquet with Cash Bar and Program  
Select entrée(s) below  
Beef \_\_\_\_\_ Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ Vegetarian \_\_\_\_\_

Sep. 13, 2014 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM  
**\$45 per person X** \_\_\_\_\_ = **\$** \_\_\_\_\_

Business card size advertisement in program at \$50 each. Please enclose copy. **\$** \_\_\_\_\_  
Special message to be printed in program at \$5 per each 12 words. Enclose wording. **\$** \_\_\_\_\_  
Example: In memory of veterans of Co. A, 1/6<sup>th</sup> Inf. 1968-69 - from your buddies.

Make your room and reunion reservations well in advance  
Hotel rooms and event tickets are limited.

For more information on the reunion please contact:  
PNC Ronald Ellis, Reunion Chairman  
[Re196thlib@aol.com](mailto:Re196thlib@aol.com); 903.738.9897

Additional information is available at [www.americal.org/programs/reunion](http://www.americal.org/programs/reunion)

Register on-line at [www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-AMDI-20140910](http://www.hilton.com/en/hi/groups/personalized/H/HOUGPHF-AMDI-20140910)

Make your own room reservations and ask for the ADVA special rate of \$99/plus taxes. Free airport shuttle (IAH).  
Tickets for free buffet breakfasts (\$16 value) will be provided to ADVA members staying at the hotel. Free parking.

**Total enclosed** **\$** \_\_\_\_\_

Make check payable to ADVA 2014 Reunion  
Send this form and payment to:  
PNC Ronald Ward; Reunion Treasurer  
280 Vance Rd.  
Protem, MO 65733-6346

## Legacy Committee Report

By Roger Gilmore, Chairman

### Americal Monument at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

We continue to work with Willis Granite Company, based in Oklahoma, on the Fort Sill Americal monument design.

In the 4th Quarter 2013 Legacy article I mentioned that Willis Granite Company worked on some basic design changes to the entire monument component structure with the idea of reducing our costs for materials and labor. Our October meeting with Willis produced some ideas for the new design. We also requested a quote for concrete work needed to pour the walkway extension from the main walkway to our base and the pour for the base itself.

In November, Willis Granite provided modified monument designs based on recommendations from the October meeting. The primary changes are reducing the number of pedestals to be placed and the elimination of small porcelain colored discs to be placed on the era pedestals next to each artillery unit's name. These discs were to represent the distinctive unit insignia (DUI).

In early January, Willis Granite completed the calculation of all cost components for the revised monument designs and concrete base.

At the time of this article, the Legacy Committee has reviewed the revised monument designs, and feels the modifications made to reduce the monument construction costs are in line with the budget plan. We are currently discussing adding some additional text to the history on one of the era panels. We expect to have had that finalized by the end of January.

Willis Granite's concrete sub-contractor submitted a bid for the sidewalk entry and base portion of the monument construction. Unfortunately, their bid for this monument component is extremely high so their bid is eliminated from consideration. At this point, we know of another concrete contractor in the Fort Sill area who has done work on the post for the artillery monuments revitalization projects. The next step in this process is to contact this contractor and request a bid from his firm for the sidewalk and base concrete work.

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 calendars were mailed to all active ADVA members in late November.

The calendar is designed and produced by ADVA member Dutch DeGroot, and the 2014 calendar is probably the best edition Dutch has done to date. We extend our deepest appreciation to Dutch for outstanding job he has done with the calendars. Dutch spends many hours working on these projects to ensure we get the highest quality production. As many of the other ADVA staff members, Dutch receives no payment for his work other than the thanks he gets from ADVA members.

Our sincere appreciation goes out to all members who have sent individual donations for the 2014 calendar, all of which go to support the ADVA Legacy Committee initiatives.

To date, we have received just over \$14,000.00 in donations.

We have two Legacy memorial projects in the planning stage now, and we need your continued support for these initiatives.

If you have not mailed in your donation for 2014, now is the time to pick up that donation envelope, write your check or money order and mail it in.

The calendar mailing included 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

With the terrible destruction the Philippines experienced in last November's typhoon, efforts in the Cebu area are focused on recovery efforts. The Tacloban area in the Philippines was hit the worst by the typhoon and Cebu VFW post members living in Tacloban lost everything they owned. The Cebu City VFW Post expended most of its treasury assisting post members recover from the storm damage. Fortunately, none of the post members were injured or lost their lives.

As a result, the VFW post's aid and recovery efforts have delayed work on plans for the Americal monument north of Cebu City.

The Americal Legacy Committee has a Memorandum of Agreement before the Cebu VFW post board of directors that proposes funding to assist with the design and construction for the monument commemorating the site where Japanese forces surrendered to the Americal Division in 1945.

From my conversation with our point of contact in Cebu, the VFW Post is preparing a response to the MOA, and, pending concurrence on the agreement, is ready to proceed with the monument design and construction.

### Fund raising mementos Case Collector Knife and Dedication Videos

ADVA Product Sales Director and Legacy Committee member Wayne Bryant has come up with another great Americal memento we are selling as a Legacy fundraiser.

The second edition Americal Division collector's knife, produced by Case Cutlery, makes an impressive gift or keepsake item for your veteran memorabilia collection. Each knife is number from 1 to 150, and comes in a handsome wooden display box.

More details on the Americal collector knife can be seen at the back of this issue beside the PX order form.

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 Case knife 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.

## Scholarship Program Enters Third Decade

By Gary L. Noller

### New Program Began in 1994

In June 1994 members of the Americal Division Veterans Association met for the annual membership meeting at The Pines Resort in the Catskill Mountains of New York. An action approved at that meeting resulted in one of the most successful programs created by the ADVA.

A vote of the membership approved the founding of the Americal Scholarship program. The program has resulted in nearly 500 students receiving the benefit of close to half a million dollars in scholarship grants. It is expected that the program will continue for at least another 15 years or more. The total benefit to descendants of ADVA members may someday be well over one million dollars.

### The Vision of Dr. Robert C. Muehrcke

Dr. Robert C. Muehrcke is credited as the key individual behind the scholarship proposal. Muehrcke served with the 132nd Infantry Regiment and edited the book *Orchids in the Mud- Personal Accounts by Veterans of the 132nd Infantry Regiment*. He graduated from the University of Illinois College of Medicine in 1952 and served as a physician in the Chicago area for 40 years. He passed away on November 9, 2003 at the age of 82.

Dr. Muehrcke joined with Peter Messina, Judge Advocate, and Joseph Chin, National Finance Officer, in drawing up the rules for the operation of the scholarship program. PNC Ronald Ward accepted the position of Scholarship Chairman and began the work of raising funds, finding a scholarship award committee, publicizing the program to members, accepting and judging applicants, and getting the scholarship checks to the recipients.

Ron Ward recalls, "Pete Messina was the real brains behind refining the scholarship bylaws to fit our association. Joe Chin was irreplaceable as our finance and tax advisor. Even after Dr. Muehrcke passed away we always received a nice check from the Muehrcke Foundation."

A substantial funding donation was contributed by Dr. Muehrcke. He provided funds for a full four-year scholarship for one student. Additional funds were obtained from the scholarship raffle and donations in memory of departed ADVA members. Some individual donations have been as high as \$10,000. In past years the total amount of scholarships awarded has varied with a maximum to date of \$40,000 in one year with a single grant as high as \$5,000.

### Two Decades of Efficient Success

Ward served as chairman for a number of years and was succeeded by Bob Short and then Ron Greene. William Bruinsma began his duties as chairman in 2013 and is continuing the traditions of this successful program.

The efficiency of the scholarship program is remarkable.

Depending on annual receipts, 90% to 95% of funds received are distributed for the benefit of scholars. The costs of the program include printing, postage, bank fees, and a small raffle prize. The scholarship fund has no paid employees, does not reimburse volunteer committee member expenses, and does not use paid fundraising firms.

Procedures are in place to ensure the integrity and trust of the scholarship program. Payments are made to the name of both the scholar and the college or university the scholar will attend. Selection of awards is made by an outside panel of judges that is blind to the relationship of the applicant to any current or former member of the ADVA. Scholars may attend an institution of their choice and are required to show that they have been accepted as a student by the institution.

The Scholarship Chairman is appointed by the National Commander. Trustees of the scholarship program are elected every two years during the ADVA national elections. The chairman and trustees must be members in good standing of the ADVA.

The trustees direct and control the business management and affairs of the program. The trustees conduct business by telephone, postal and e-mail correspondence, and at the annual meeting held at the reunion.

### Quick Facts about the Scholarship Program

The Americal Scholarship Fund was formed to provide financial help to the children and grandchildren including those by adoption of current or deceased members of the ADVA. Deceased members must have been in good standing at the time of their death. Scholarships are also available to any child or adopted child of an Americal soldier who was killed or died while on active duty.

Information on the application process can be found on the Americal website at [www.americal.org/programs/scholar.htm](http://www.americal.org/programs/scholar.htm) or by contacting William Bruinsma, Scholarship Chairman, at 5425 W. Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333, by phone at 269-795-5237 or by e-mail at [wb3379@gmail.com](mailto:wb3379@gmail.com).

Completed application forms and the required enclosures must reach the Scholarship Chairman by April 1 of each year. It must include a written essay of 200 to 300 words on a topic selected by the Scholarship Chairman.

The majority of the funding for the scholarship Fund is provided by the annual raffle and other donations. Raffle tickets are mailed to ADVA members in the early spring. The winner of the raffle is announced at the ADVA reunion in September. Tickets and donations may be mailed throughout the year to

### ADVA Scholarship Fund, PO Box 309, Middleville, MI 49333.

The membership of the ADVA has been very generous in the past and it is sure this year will not be an exception. It is because of the strong financial support the Scholarship Fund receives that it was able to help as many students as it has in the past and will continue to help in the future.

*William Bruinsma, Scholarship Chairman, and PNC Ron Ward, Founding Scholarship Chairman, contributed to this story.*



**Dear editor,**

In 1969 I was in the central highlands area of Vietnam with Co. A, 4/3rd Infantry. In the 1990s I often flew to Washington, D.C. on business and sometimes saw The Old Guard on parade or going to a ceremony. Once during a trade show held near Ft. Myers I visited the Old Guard Museum. Forty-four years passed and I had never attended a unit reunion.

On May 8, 2013, VE Day, I was a guardian on an Honor Flight taking WWII veterans to the National WWII Memorial and Tomb of the Unknowns in Washington, D.C. Before the trip I searched the internet and found that my old combat unit is at Ft. Myers and is Alpha Company, The Old Guard's Commander-in-Chief's Guard. Videos on YouTube show the Alpha Company drill and uniforms of the Revolutionary War era.

I emailed the Alpha Company commander and mentioned my upcoming visit. He quickly replied and suggested bringing some of his officers and NCOs to meet me at the National WWII Memorial.

My seat was at the front of the tour bus and I held a photo collage illustrating my time in Vietnam with A/4/3. What an indescribable feeling it was to be greeted by the officers and a senior NCO of my former combat unit! These men carry on the tradition of the oldest continuously serving regular regiment in the US army.

I presented my collage of photos taken in 1969 and received a framed portrait of Alpha troops dressed in their Commander-in-Chief's Guard uniforms at a Twilight Tattoo Ceremony. We enjoyed exchanging stories and sharing each other's company until duty required them to return to training and I to my WWII veteran tour group. What a memorable day!

Jim Sobery



**Dear editor,**

In the 2nd Quarter 2013 issue of the Americal Journal I featured an article about Americal WWII veteran Edward Buttler. The article is titled, "My time with the generals" and begins on page 26. Buttler had an interesting assignment with the Americal on New Caledonia, one which would keep him there when the Americal deployed.

Ed lives in Valparaiso, Indiana. His daughter, who lives in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, called me and asked if I would visit him while he was staying with her over the Christmas holidays. I was happy to make the trip on December 18 and spent a delightful day talking with Ed. He had brought a number of memorabilia with him and he talked at length about his experiences as though it were yesterday.

His daughter, Jan, is writing his wartime autobiography and I am looking forward to sharing more of his memories with Americal Journal readers in the future. Jan provided a nice salmon lunch as we continued to talk about the times and conditions of the WWII years. It was a great way to begin the Christmas holidays.

Photo caption: Ed Buttler (95 years young) with Dave Taylor

Dave Taylor – ADVA WWII Historian

**Dear editor,**

First platoon of Alpha Company, 5/46th Inf., held its third reunion on September 22-27, 2013 at Oak Haven Resort in Sevierville, Tennessee. Reunion hosts were Bob and Sue Olenzak. There were 29 guests present which included 17 Co. A! from the first, second, and fourth platoons.

Veterans enjoyed the renewal of old friendships as well as meeting new veterans who came for their first reunion. A highlight of the reunions has been enjoying breakfast and dinner meals prepared on site. The evening campfire allowed the group to reflect and remember their friend and comrade, medic Donald Sheffield, who passed away during 2012.

Oak Haven has already been reserved for their fourth reunion in September 2014.

Ellen Gause

**Dear editor,**

The next reunion and annual meeting of the Far West Chapter will be held in the Sacramento, CA area during the second or third week of October, 2014. We have narrowed the actual location to just a couple hotels. Details will be in the next chapter newsletter due out by the end of March.

Chapter members are encouraged to renew their dues for 2014. About half of our members are due to renew this year. If the year on the mailing label of the most recent newsletter (in January) was 2013, then membership dues are now due. Those receiving the electronic version of the newsletter would have received a message about dues with the newsletter.

New ADVA members who would like to join the Far West Chapter may contact Tom Packard at [tompack50@gmail.com](mailto:tompack50@gmail.com) or by phone at 720-635-1900. Our newsletter, The Cannon, will have a new editor beginning with the first quarter issue of 2014. We are looking for stories about members' service with the Americal Division. Write them down and send them by e-mail to [tompack50@gmail.com](mailto:tompack50@gmail.com) or postal mail to Tom Packard, 8231 Edenwood Dr, Spring, Texas 77389-4156

Both the 23rd MP Chapter and the Far West Chapter held elections during their meetings in the last couple of months. Both newly elected chapter commanders will represent their chapters with ADVA Executive Council votes.

For the 23rd Military Police Chapter, Jim O'Brien was elected Commander, his contact info is phone (317)557-7561 and email [lions3@aol.com](mailto:lions3@aol.com). Vern Pike was elected Vice Commander. His contact info is phone (910)235-0352, email [vernpike@pinehurst.net](mailto:vernpike@pinehurst.net)

For the Far West Chapter, Bill Miles was elected Chapter Commander. His contact info is phone (530)432-8743, email [wkmiles@gmail.com](mailto:wkmiles@gmail.com). Ernie Rodrigues was elected Vice Commander. His contact info is phone (510)487-2387, no e-mail

Tom Packard



First platoon of Alpha Company, 5/46th Inf reunion

**Dear editor,**

I live in Manhattan near the VA hospital. One day I was waiting for a bus while wearing my Americal hat. A man behind me said, "Did you know that the Americal Division experienced more casualties than any other division in the Vietnam war?"

I turned around and found a fossil from the Vietnam War. This guy was dressed for the field. He wore jungle boots, camo fatigues, a web belt, canteen, back pack and bush hat.

As we rode across town together he told me that he had spent two tours with the Americal as a LRPP. He also confessed that he was on his way to meet with his VA psychiatrist.

He loved being a LRPP. He said that on some missions he would be dropped alone and on others he would be part of a team, spending several days and as much as week in the bush.

He told me that there was a LRPP compound on the Chu Lai base. Because of the sensitivity of their missions the members were not allowed to mingle with the other GIs on base. The compound had its own mess hall, PX and entertainment. It sounded as though the compound operated as an R & R center when the LRPPs were on stand down. What he enjoyed most, however, were the "wives" who lived within the LRPP compound.

This is a pretty fascinating story, but one which would have to be corroborated to establish its truth. Also, there may a lot more to the story about the compound. If you can find another LRPP to confirm and elaborate on it, it could be great reading in a future newsletter.

Don Kilgore

**Looking for:** Richard H. Adler, D/4/3/11. Rick was wounded on Aug. 29 1969. Patches and I saw he was down and went to help him. We grabbed him up and got about 15 feet when another round landed where he was first hit. I got hit by the second round. Rick went to Japan to get patched up. Contact: Gary Birk, [cgbirk@msn.com](mailto:cgbirk@msn.com).

**Looking for:** CPT Robert B. McBane, Co. B, 2/1st Inf., 196th LIB, 1971-1972. Two of his former 81mm mortar guys are trying to get in touch with him. Contact:

Jim Gales, 1001 W. Fairfield CT, Glendale, WI. 53217; (414) 351-deer; [galesgemoll@aol.com](mailto:galesgemoll@aol.com).

**Looking for:** Anyone who knew Ward Francis Weaver Jr., who served w/ Co. B near Chu Lai from May 1968 to May 1969. I would like to interview anyone who served with him about their personal recollections of him and or Co. B's experiences. People whom I believe served with him include Tom BRIZENDINE, Lance BRYANT, John GORSAGE, Donald HAMILTON, Randall HOLDEN, Marvin MOORE, Denotiane "Don" SANCHEZ, Danny SANDS and Jerry TEGTMEIER. Contact: Janine Robben; 971 404-6628.

## America Health News 2014

By John (Doc) Hofer, DMD  
Co. B, 5/46th Inf., 198th LIB

I want to share some health news with you and also send my wishes for a healthy 2014. Some of the news is specifically for VA care and some is for general health issues regardless of where you get your care.

I will start with some information about VA Patient Advocates. Patient advocates are dedicated VA staff that try to help you navigate concerns, questions, and problems you may have about health care at their facilities. They also take complaints about care and in some cases act as mediators between providers and veterans. They do not do is work on claims and cannot help with disability ratings. The patient advocates usually refer veterans to Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) such as those with the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, VFW or state VSOs.

I am not authorized as an ADVA Service Officer to handle claims but I have provided guidance or researched occasional questions that I get. A great referral is that most counties have their own VSOs. They can help with claims and usually also have good working relations with the local VA hospitals or clinics.

I have worked closely with our VA patient advocates and I know they are very dedicated. We work very closely to get the facts regarding a complaint. We also take a few compliments. To be honest, some of the veterans that have complaints are sometimes unrealistic and have issues with everyone they deal with.

I am up-front with veterans about their care needs. Some do not realistically address their own personal health care. For example, heavy smoking or alcohol or drug abuse complicates care for so many. Another example is that an alcoholic currently drinking will not be approved for a liver transplant. I have also seen one smoker who came to our hospital for a lung transplant and was sent back to his home by the VA.

Other health issues are evident in our age group as Vietnam vets and also in age groups younger than us. We have seen a large increase in Head and Neck Cancer the last few months of 2013.

We are all aware of lung cancer and its primary cause from cigarette smoking. Head and neck cancer includes the tongue which you can self-examine in a mirror or have done at a dental exam. It also includes cancer of the larynx (voice box). Cancer of the larynx is harder to detect but two of its symptoms are difficulty swallowing and hoarseness that do not go away.

Patients with cancer of the larynx are usually referred to Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists or Laryngologists. They use scopes to view the larynx and vocal cords. A biopsy is usually performed for suspicious tissues.

If you go to the VA and have either of these symptoms it is important to discuss this with your doctor. You may need a consult referral to both ENT and to dental services.

It is absolutely critical that if you are planned for head and neck radiation that you see a dentist that works with radiation oncologists to determine if teeth that may be in the radiation fields need to be extracted. I had a few



Part of VA Staff that did a screening for America Veterans at the Atlanta reunion 2012

VFW buddies that were sent to their private dentists from private radiation oncologists and we now are dealing with problems that I would have preferred to have taken care of before the radiation started.

If teeth receive a certain threshold amount of radiation we cannot extract them without a risk of them developing severe bone infections that can lead to loss of parts of the jaw. The radiation is used to kill the cancer cells but unfortunately also damages other healthy tissues.

This is even worse in the head and neck as it can kill saliva glands and decrease blood flow especially in the lower jaw (mandible). Think of it as a heart clogged artery but we cannot do a bypass or dilate it as they do with a balloon catheter. It usually gets worse over time this is why I hope everyone still smoking can quit or be checked early.

There are some other drugs that also can cause damage to the jaw. An example is Fosamax which is of relatively low risk but the IV form of this drug has a higher risk for complication if oral surgery is needed later.

At the Madison, Wisconsin VA we see all veterans on consultation before radiation is started or if the IV form of Fosamax drug is going to be started. We also see some veterans that would not otherwise be eligible if they need a joint replacement or cardiac valve replacement. This is all to prevent infections and problems and have a better outcome.

One last topic is prostate cancer and treatments which seem to be changing. My advice is get checked regularly and if you have a new diagnosis of prostate cancer get as much information about treatment so you can discuss surgery, radiation, medication, or watching for changes with PSA levels. I previously recommended a book "Invasion of the Prostate Snatchers" and it still is an excellent, informative book.

I want to thank the ADVA for the Lifetime Achievement award and thank my Bravo buddies for the jacket and Mike Colligan from "Cheating Charlie" Company, 5/46th Infantry, who was a big part of this award. There were others receiving this award in Nashville and they have really done so much for our Association. We need to thank them the next time we pay our dues or see them at a reunion.

I may be contacted at 608-798-2530 or seabeedoc@aol.com Best of Wishes with your Health for a LONG TIME!

## Suggestions on How to File a Disability Claim

By Jim Gales

The following is a brief description of how I filed my disability claims with the VA.

**1.** For a PTSD claim, write or type a narrative of your military service with emphasis on your Vietnam tour(s). Write down everything bad that happened to you. Did you kill anybody? Did you see anybody get killed, wounded or hurt? Did you earn a C.I.B, Purple Heart, or any other highly regarded medals? Explain in full detail everything you can remember that was negative: bunker guard, ambush, fire fights, using a Zippo to torch hootches and villages, race relations, war protestors, Jane Fonda and how you feel about her, being scared to death every day and night, not wanting to go to the fire works on the 4th because it reminds you of a fire fight and the smell of gun powder, etc. Do you hate going in public where there are large crowds, or just avoid them altogether? Deal with every horror of Vietnam you can recall. Also write about how you acted after you returned home. Did you turn to alcohol, drugs? Did you get divorced and did you know it could have been because of what you did and saw in Vietnam? A similar narrative can be written as evidence to support other claims.

**2.** If you are in contact with guys you served with, ask them to write you a letter stating what you did and saw. Ask your wife to write a letter and explain what she noticed in you, especially if she knew you before you went to Vietnam. These letters are called letters of witness to substantiate your story.

**3.** Find a copy of your DD-214 and any other discharge papers. If you do not have these papers send a Standard Form 180 to the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) in St. Louis and ask for them to be sent to you.

**4.** Make an appointment with a service officer. You can find one at a VA facility, county courthouse, or with the VFW, Disabled Vets, American Legion, etc., even if you are not a member. The service officer will assist in filing the claim at no cost to you.

**5.** Tell the service officer that you want to file a disability claim. They will ask you to fill out a couple of papers and on one it will ask why you think you suffer from a disability. Tell them to see the narrative you wrote. If you have letters of witnesses include a copy of those to your claim papers.

**6.** Ask the service officer to make the claim retroactive so you get paid from the time you file versus when they give you a rating. If you don't ask, they may not tell you to make it retroactive.

**7.** As for Agent Orange, if you have never been tested, ask the service officer how to get tested so your name goes on the VA Agent Orange registry. This will come in handy in case any of your kids or grandkids comes down with any diseases on the AO list. The VA will let you know if you have any AO diseases.

**8.** Ask about getting into a PTSD group if your VA offers them. Ask for professional counseling from the VA.

**9.** The service officer will ask you to sign a paper giving them power of attorney for you and that lets them access your files including your 201 file. They then will do most of the leg work for you.

**10.** It will take a while to investigate your claim. It may take up to a year so be sure to have it be retroactive to the filing date.

**11.** Makes copies of everything you give the VA as they have a habit of losing or misplacing things.

**12.** You will receive updates on your case and eventually you'll get an examination with a medical professional. They will ask you about your case. Make sure you indicate every emotion you have. They have seen and heard it all. Always tell the truth. That way you will always give the same answer.

**13.** When you get your rating, if it is not 100% you may want to immediately file an appeal. The VA often gives a low rating just to keep vets happy. Some guys saw and did more than others, but everyone, no matter where you were or what your MOS was, faced the fact that you could have been killed any day at any time.

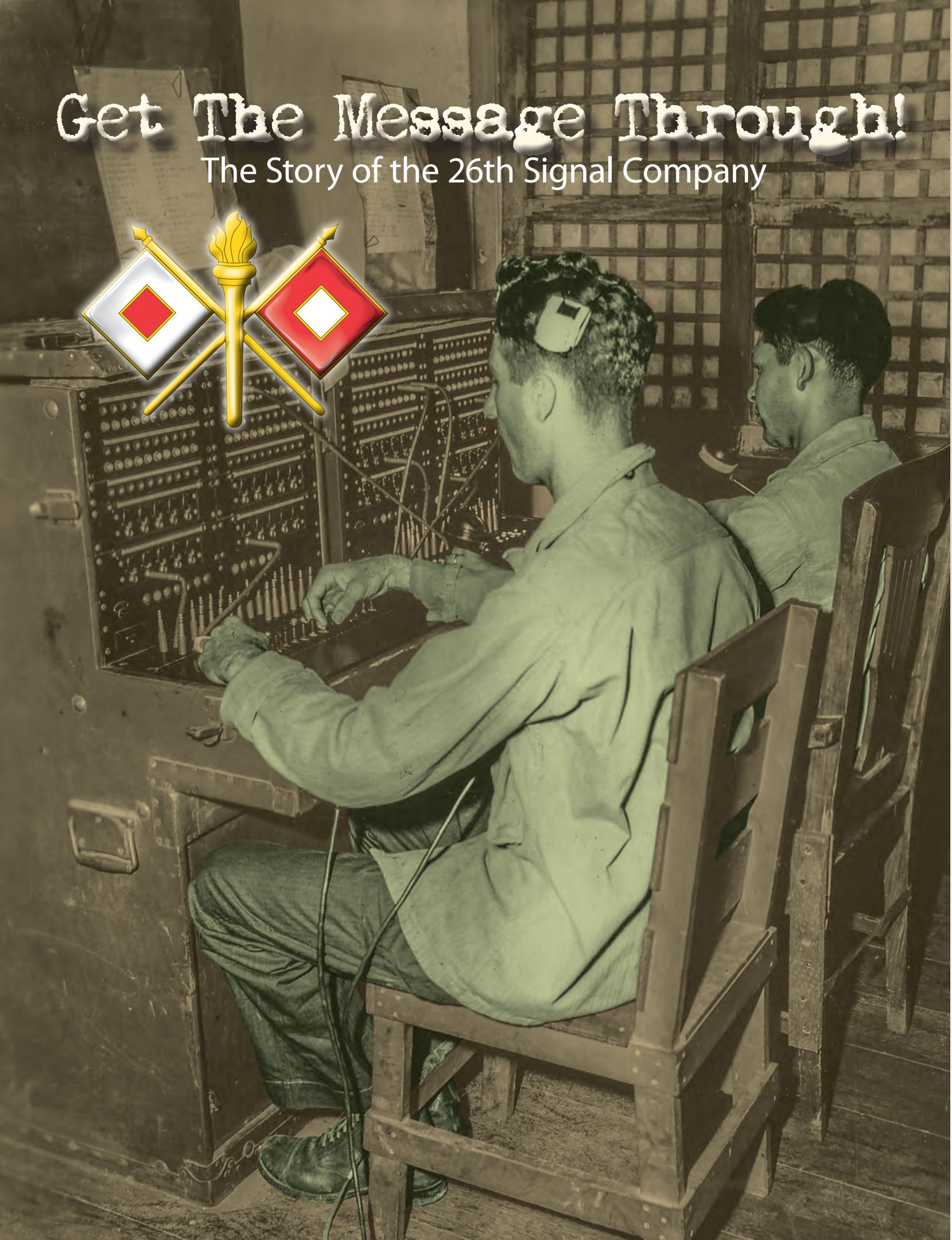
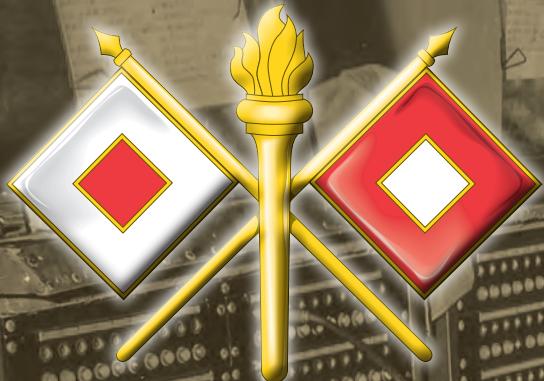
**14.** At 100% your spouse will be eligible for CHAMPVA insurance which means she can go anywhere and get doctors' appointments, surgeries and all her meds for free or low cost. She will get better care than you. If you get 100% you will get dental care at the VA and that is the only way to get dental. Don't be concerned that the VA doesn't give you good care. I have been in the VA system for 44 years and have had great care and top of the line doctors. There are some bad ones, but you can always ask for a new doctor.

Every soldier who set foot on land in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia may be presumed to have been exposed to AO. One guy in my squad just had his Leukemia come back, his son had cancer. Another had a form of cancer and both of his sons got it. They did not know they were eligible for benefits until I called them and they are all at 100%.

Many veterans eligible for disability do not file for it. Don't feel you don't deserve it. You served your country and you earned your benefit and you will get it. The monthly rate for 100% is just under \$3,000.00 per month and you get a little extra if you are married. Good luck with your claim.

# Get The Message Through!

## The Story of the 26th Signal Company



## By Harry T. Miller

This is a compendium reminiscent of activities by and within the 26th Signal Company in the South Pacific. It was written by its former Commanding Officer from 12 January 1942 to 15 April 1944.

It all began on 29 January 1942, when the 26th Signal Company, consisting of 7 officers and 207 enlisted personnel entrained at Camp Edwards, Massachusetts at 1145 hours, en-route to their port of embarkation, Brooklyn, New York. At the port, an additional 25 enlisted replacements joined the company and all were checked onboard the United States Army Transport Barry at 2400 hours.

The Barry had been a luxury liner, formerly of the Cuba Mail Line, making the New York to Cuba run. It was a 28,000 ton ship with a top speed of 28 knots per hour, built to accommodate 800 passengers, for a maximum of 13 days.

Aboard were 4,000 troops and crew members. The troops included the 26th Signal Company, 43rd Engineers, 68th Fighter Squadron, 108th Quartermaster Battalion, 4th General Hospital, 52nd Evacuation Hospital and the 109th Station Hospital, together with 300 nurses.

At 0600 hours on 23 January 1942 the SS Barry left port and joined in convoy with six other transports: The Argentina (flagship), Cristobal, Santa Elena, Santa Rosa, McAndrews and Ericsson, together with appropriate escort of destroyers and cruisers. Blimps and aircraft joined in, to provide additional security. This, then was the creation of Task Force 6814, born in confusion, nurtured in hope, dedicated to success and died in glory.

Classes were held daily for all troops aboard ship in the following subjects: Semaphore, Signal Lights and Code Practice. Members of the radio section assisted in the operation of all signal systems aboard ship and won considerable praise for efficiency, enthusiasm and dedication from the ship's members.

After a brief stop in Bora Bora for refueling, the Barry steamed back out to sea to rejoin the convoy. On the morning of 26 February, 1942, the convoy sailed into the picturesque Melbourne, Australia harbor. Trains arrived at the docks and the 26th Signal Company had the good fortune to be transported to a bivouac area in the Royal Park, a zoological and botanical garden just outside Melbourne proper.

Re-embarking took place on 6 March 1942 with the signal company boarding the Army Transport Ericsson, which soon after sailing developed engine trouble and was forced to drop from the convoy and return to Melbourne. Repairs were completed and sailing was resumed on 10 March. Five days later, Noumea, the capital of New Caledonia, was safely reached.

Troops were immediately off-loaded and brought by small boats and flat barges to the Grand Quai Docks, assembled and marched to a staging area on Rue de L'Anse Vata, on a hill overlooking the Noumea Harbor. Task Force Headquarters was established in the Hotel du Grande Pacific with the 26th Signal Company establishing a telephone central in a room at the rear of the hotel.

< Americal Division Switchboard Exchange - Cebu (National Archives)

Subsequently a Division Headquarters was contemplated in the vicinity of La Foa and work was immediately begun installing telephone circuits from La Foa and working toward Tontouta, a distance of 50 miles. An open wire circuit of the French Telephone Company between Noumea and Paita, a distance of 18 miles, was taken over and work was begun extending this circuit to Tontouta where it was to connect into a switchboard at the airport.

On 11 April the company moved from its staging area to bivouac at La Foa, with division headquarters being set up in the Hotel Banu. In the meantime, circuits between Noumea-Tontouta-La Foa were completed. A good, talking channel was obtained between Noumea-Tontouta, but the talking range of wire, type W-110B, was exceeded and it was decided to make this a telegraph printer channel exclusively.

With the subsequent relocation of the division headquarters to Paita, all wire construction between Tontouta-La Foa was suspended, and on 1 May the 26th Signal Company moved to a bivouac in the vicinity of the Paita Railroad Station.

General Order #10, Headquarters United Forces in New Caledonia was published on 27 May 1942, designating the division be called the Americal Division. A name proposed by PFC David Fonseca of the 26th Signal Company.

The circuit between Tontouta-La Foa was turned over to Combat Team (CT) 164 and CT 182 for their use. At this time CT 164 was at St. Vincent, in defense of Tontouta Airport and CT 182 was at Bouloupari with CT 132 in the vicinity of Bourail.

A division rear echelon was maintained at Noumea where the majority of the division staff remained. The island defense plans were now complete and Combat Teams were to remain as now located. This brought about the establishment of a wire communications net. Projected wire installations involved pole line construction, using two pairs of W50 wire, each pair running from Noumea via Paita, to La Foa, terminating at a point 10 miles north of Bourail, a total distance of 125 miles.

Additionally, submarine cable was laid between Noumea, two miles across the harbor, to Ile Nou, and a 5 pair rubber-covered cable was laid from the Grand Quai Docks to the USS Curtis and ultimately to other Naval vessels at anchor in Noumea Harbor.

Consistent with the movement of Division Headquarters, the 26th Signal Company closed bivouac at Paita and returned to Noumea on 20 June. On 19 July 1942, 2 officers and 45 enlisted men with 600 pigeons arrived from the United States and were attached for administration, quarters and rations.

Colonel F. L. Ankenbrandt, Signal Officer on General Harmon's staff, arrived 28 July 1942 and ordered that a telegraph printer circuit be established between Noumea and the airport at Plaines des Gaiacs, via Tontouta, a distance of approximately 200 miles. This was to be completed and in operation not later than 1 August 1942, since the beginning of the offensive operations in the Solomon's in August was to be controlled from General Harmon's headquarters, and Plaines des Gaiacs as well as Tontouta.



Because of the limited time available, it was necessary to bargain with the French Telephone Company officials for one of their existing open wire circuits. Monsieur Herve who, as Commissioner of Postes-et-Telegraphs, was reluctant to relinquish that circuit but finally relented and was persuaded to grant us its use.

The French telephone system was wholly unsatisfactory and not desirable for Army Communications. Part of the circuit in question was found to be galvanized iron wire and pretty badly rusted, and part was copper. It was obvious that the French had given us their poorest circuit. However, and at any rate, we had an installed wire which would have to be serviced from one end to the other to get it into shape for use as a telegraph printer.

The circuit was on standard French porcelain insulators, nearly all of which were either completely broken (wire resting on iron pins which held the insulators and so that the circuitry was nearly 100% grounded out), or where the insulator was not entirely broken off, it was found to be badly cracked. Under the skirt of nearly every insulator, "mud wasps" had built nests. Due to the high mineral content of the earth in New Caledonia and because of the cracked insulators, additional ground had been added to the circuit. Also, where the galvanized wire had been used, heavy oxidization followed, with rust running down the skirt of the insulator to the metal supporting pin. In wet weather these conditions grounded out the circuit completely.

New insulators were installed to provide for those that were missing or cracked. Some poles, and in some cases wire, had to be replaced. Despite overwhelming odds and the constant torment of swarms of mosquitos, work proceeded satisfactorily and was completed in the allotted time, providing the telegraph printer service that was required.

Colonel Ankenbrandt was both pleased and elated at the results obtained and personally commended the entire

company. A substantial network of telegraph printer was now in operation. In addition, an elaborate radio network was now in operation, including overseas channels to New Zealand, Australia, New Hebrides, Guadalcanal, Fiji and Hawaii.

With the movement of the Division Command Post back to La Foa, the 26th Signal Company on 9 September 1942, closed its bivouac in Noumea and relocated to La Foa. However, with prospects looming of a move to Guadalcanal, Division Headquarters closed at La Foa and returned to Noumea. The 26th Signal Company followed on 2 November, establishing a bivouac in the vicinity of Dumbea.

The 26th Company plus a detachment of the 175th Signal Repair Company and a pigeon detachment, together with a detachment of the 831 Signal Services Company (photographic) was embarked aboard the U.S.N.T. President Adams on the Grand Quai Docks of Noumea at 1500 on 22 November 1942. The ship did not sail until 0530 on 3 December and arrived at Guadalcanal 8 December 1942. For the first few days a temporary bivouac was established at "Block Four Beach" but was moved to the Lunga River.

Christmas was an uneventful day. Work went on as usual with every man in the same fine spirit. A good Christmas dinner was provided with turkey and all the fixings.

On 1 January 1943 the 26th Signal Company with detachment of a Signal Pigeon Company; detachment of the 162nd Signal Photo Company and a detachment of the 175th Signal Repair Company, a total of 12 officers, 1 Warrant Officer and 307 enlisted men, were still on Guadalcanal, occupying a bivouac on the Lunga River on Lunga Point, near Kukum Beach.

At this time the 26th Signal Company was operating the MACON switchboard at the Division Command Post on the edge of Henderson Field. In addition the DEDHAM switchboard was set up and operated in the 26th Signal Company area. This board also served many other units

operating in the Lunga area. A switching central was operated just west of Lunga Lagoon, first called "Texas Switch" later known as on "The Switch", using a 100 line Japanese switchboard captured by the First Marine Division. A second switching central called "Turkey" was operated just west of the Ilu River.

Radio stations were set up at Division Headquarters. Shortly afterwards this headquarters became a temporary headquarters of the XIV Corps and the Americal Division Command Post was reopened a short distance north of and across from Corps Command Post. The normal division nets were operating. In addition, an SCR 197 was set up and operated a circuit to COMGENSOPAC, Noumea, New Caledonia. An Air Warning Net was operated using two SCR 270 radio sets located in the vicinity of Henderson Field and one SCR 270 was located at Koli Point. Telegraphs printers were being operated in one net at Corps Headquarters, Navy Headquarters and at Marine Wing Headquarters, all personnel, equipment and maintenance being provided by the 26th Signal Company.

Telegraph (TG-5) communications was maintained at Combat Team Headquarters, Corps Headquarters and attached units as required. At Corps Headquarters telegraph sets were at radio stations and when wire was still "in", TG was used. When wire was knocked out operators turned on their radios although Net Control Stations maintained a constant watch so that under emergency conditions any unit could clear traffic through our Net Control Stations.

At this time work was begun on the establishment of communications at the proposed Command Post for XIV Corps. This function was in addition to ordinary installations, operations and maintenance for the Americal Division. During the period of 1 January 1943 to 17 January we experienced 10 night air raids. Many bombs were dropped but the Company suffered no losses.

Work was stepped up in the training and use of pigeons. Considerable "overwater" training was given the birds and an additional pigeon loft was established on Tulagi Island approximately 20 miles north of Guadalcanal. Pigeons were flown from Guadalcanal to Tulagi and Tulagi to Guadalcanal with a fair degree of success. Pigeons were also released from ships at sea and considerable progress was made in bird training along these lines. Birds on hand were a little old and did not settle as well as desired.

The 2nd Battalion, 132nd Infantry was given a mission of landing at Cape Esperance in the rear of the Japanese positions and subsequently to attack the Japanese in their rear. On 31 January 1943 this battalion embarked its mission. Attached to them was a detachment of the 26th Signal Company, viz: Sergeant Joseph F. Crippa, T/4 William A. Gold, T/5 Harvey J. Gorski and T/5 Willard P. Pease, whose job it was to provide radio communications for this battalion back to Division Headquarters.

At 1625 Hours on 9 February 1943, word was received that all Japanese resistance on Guadalcanal had ceased and that the 2nd battalion of the 132nd Infantry met and had joined the 161st Infantry (25th Infantry Division) who were attacking westward toward Cape Esperance.



Exterior view of Americal Divisions radio Transmitters, installed in the 26th Signal Company area on Bougainville. Transmitters were remotely controlled from the Division's Command Post. (National Archives)

T/4 Daniel Lapham, T/5 John M. Crawford and PFC Frank J. Curtis, who were assisting the Australians in operation of the Inter-Island Air Warning and Coast Watching Net, were returned to the organization on 19 February 1943. On this same day the 803rd and 807th Fixed Radio Station Detachments with two officers and 19 enlisted men arrived and were attached to the 26th Signal for quarters and rations.

Preparations for movement of one-half of the Company to the Fiji Islands were begun on 27 February, 1943. Some equipment was packed, crated and moved to Kukum Beach. At 0900 on 1 March 1943 the 1st Echelon with four officers embarked aboard the United States Navy Transport American Legion which sailed at 1530. This echelon arrived at Lautoka, on the Island of Vita Levu (in the Fiji Group) at 0800 on 6 March 1943 and was transported in vehicles of the 37th Signal Company to a bivouac with that company. From that date until 27 March 1943, a half-day training schedule was put into effect. Basic subjects were reviewed including Articles of War, personal hygiene, sanitation, courtesies and customs, etc. The second half of the day was devoted to rest, recreation and liberty.

The second echelon remained on Guadalcanal and operated the existing signal systems. On 24 March 1943 the second echelon embarked aboard the United States Navy transport John Penn for the Fiji Islands.

Since it was decided to establish Division Headquarters on Bengasi, just south of Nandi, the 26th Signal Company bivouac area was selected in the vicinity of the proposed command post and the first echelon established camp to be prepared for the remainder of the company when it arrived.

The second echelon arrived at Lautoka, Vita Levu (Fiji Islands) at 0800 29 March 1943 and debarked at 1000 Hours and were transported by truck to the bivouac area. Work was begun immediately to establish the interior communications system.



America Radio School operated by the 26th Signal Company. The school could accommodate 65 students. The tables were wired for speed grouping and netting. (National Archives)

The message center was to perform normal operations at Division Headquarters, regular schedule and special messenger services; plus an additional two couriers for use at the airfield at Nandi. Normal division radio nets were established. An SCR 299 was set up in the signal company bivouac area, remotely controlled from the Division Command Post operating on the II Island Command Net.

The usual Command Post Telephone and telegraph installations were installed with trunks to attached and adjacent units, plus numerous service units. A switching central was operated at Black Rock but was subsequently eliminated and anew one was located at Namaka. Personnel from this section also operated the Commercial Exchange at Lautoka. Two open wire circuits were installed by the Wire Construction Platoon to Momi Bay, approximately 15 miles long.

A new training schedule was set up so as to provide a complete refresher course for the entire command. Since operations of the interior communications were mandatory, the company was divided into two sections. The first section attended classes for one week, while the second section performed all the communications functions and company details. For the second week the process was reversed.

A vigorous division training schedule became effective 1 September 1943 including a Command Post Exercise on the Yoko Range 17 to 19 October. Throughput November and December preparations were made for moving from the island. Boxes and crates were made and equipment not in use was crated and readied for shipment.

Four officers with 80 enlisted embarked aboard the Transport S. S. Libra on 19 December 1943 at Vunda Point, destination Bougainville. All signal services and communications terminated at 2400 on 31 December 1943. Wire trunks were taken over by the 637th Tank Destroyer Battalion. Five officers and 125 enlisted moved by truck to Vunda Point at 0700 hours on 3 January 1944, loaded and embarked aboard the Transport President Jackson. The ship sailed at 1500 on 5 January 1944, and joined in a convoy heading for Bougainville.

The first elements of the America Division arrived at Bougainville on 25 December 1943, consisting of one combat team (164th Infantry and the 245th Field Artillery) and the relief of the 3rd Marine Division began. The second combat team (182nd Infantry and the 246th Field Artillery) landed at Empress Augusta Bay on 28 December 1943 and the third combat team (132nd Infantry and the 247th Field Artillery) landed on January 1, 1944. Finally on 12 January 1944 all the remaining units of the division (221st Field Artillery, 57th Engineers, 26th Signal Company, 125th Quartermaster Company, Division band, 721st Ordnance and Special Troops, arrived.

During the months of December 1943, January, February and up to 7 March 1944, the enemy was disposed northeast along the Laruma River; east, occupying Hills 1000, 1111; south occupying Hills 600, 250; southwest along the Torokina River occupying Hill 260, then south along the Torokina River to the coast, completely encircling the Empress Augusta Bay area occupied by XIV Corps.

The terrain of the area was extremely rugged, with precipitous hills ranging in height from a few hundred feet to some two thousand feet, all densely wooded. Valleys were for the most part swampy (chest deep) and

covered with dense jungles. Fighting during this period consisted mostly of sniping, ambushes and patrol actions, with destruction of a few Japanese pill boxes near the south of the Torokina River.

The XIV Corps was disposed with the 37th Infantry Division in defense of the western sector of the perimeter, along the east bank of the Laruma River, running northeast to the Piva Road. The 3rd Marine Division was in defense of the eastern sector of the perimeter.

Relief of the 3rd Marine Division was completed on 15 January 1944, with the Americal Division disposed so that the 164th Combat Team was on the left (north) sector, the 182nd Combat Team in the center (east) sector and the 132nd Combat Team was on the right (south) sector with the 2nd Battalion, 164th Regiment in Division Reserve, in the vicinity of the 132nd Infantry. All service units were in close proximity of one another, along Piva Road. Headquarters, Americal Division, was located near the junction of Piva and Corps Road. Main roads within the Americal Division sector were Piva, Division, Americal, Matheson and Grier. All good sandy roads – dusty however when dry.

The mission of the XIV Corps was to defend the perimeter within which the air strips – Torokina (fighter planes), Yoke (bombers) and Piva (bombers) were located along a good road net, and an advance naval base, etc. Late in February it became apparent that the Japanese would attack the perimeter. All units of the division made extensive defensive preparations. Patrol activity was increased, front line units dug in, cleared lanes of fire in front of positions and secondary lines of defense were established and prepared. All units routed some of their communications circuits over alternative routes.

As anticipated, the Japanese launched their attack at 0615 hours; 8 March 1944 after their artillery had laid down a barrage within the perimeter. Amount of damage was insignificant, the greatest being temporary and partial disruption of wire communications.

Shells landing at or near cables usually damaged all the wires in the cable. Shelling periods were of short duration and damage to wires was quickly repaired.

Early in April the 26th Signal Company began construction of a serial cable, beginning at the junction of Piva and Division Roads, running three miles in swampy, sandy soil. It was necessary to sink 55 gallon steel drums to prevent poles from pulling over and to hold back sand so that poles could be set. Construction-type vehicles were obtained on a loan basis from the 271st Signal Construction Company.

Attacks by the 164th, 182nd and 132nd Combat Teams resulted in the capture of Hills 250, 260, 600 and 1111. Subsequent attacks by the 132nd Infantry with elements of the Fijian Infantry Regiment attached drove the Japanese from Hills 65, 165 and the hill mass of 500 and 501. The 1st Battalion of the 24th Infantry crossed the Mavavia River and moved eastward to the west bank of the Saua River.

On 14 November 1944 the Americal Division was detached from the XIV Corps and attached to USAFNORSO. Elements of the 11 Australian Division began relieving elements of the Americal Division. Amphibious training for the Americal Division was resumed on 4 December 1944.

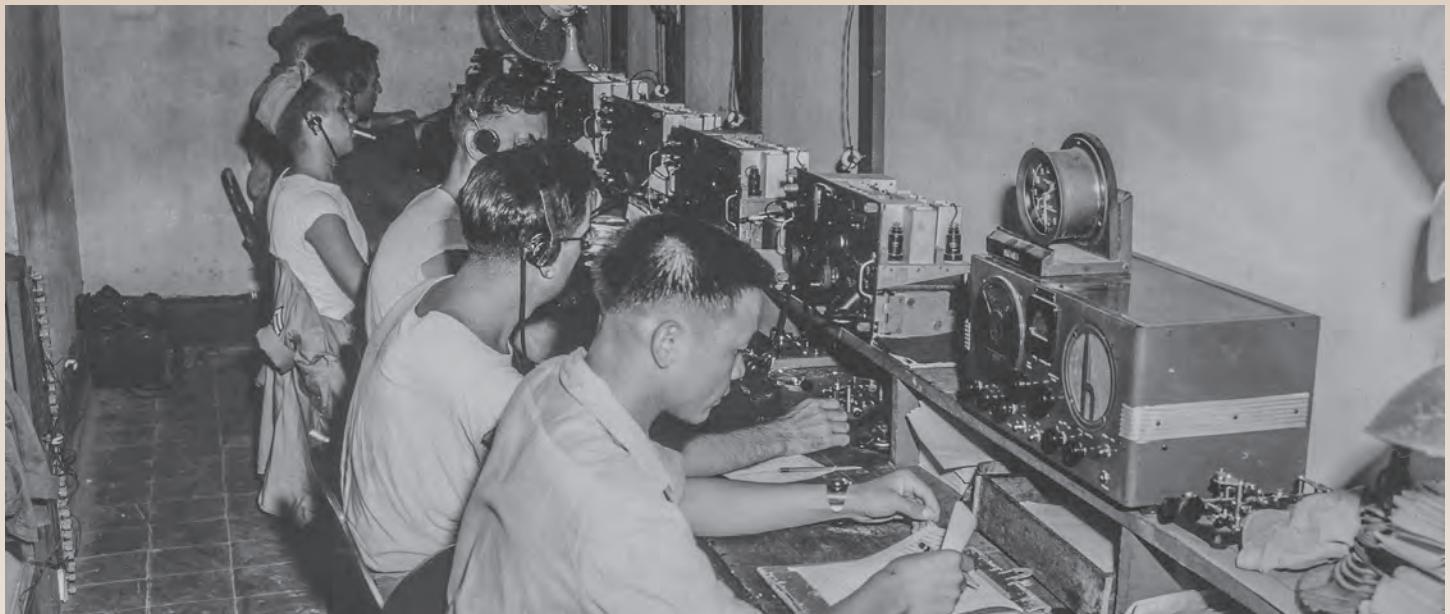


T/3 Jack I. Levy of Dorchester, MA shown on right and T/3 Forrest W. Ecks of Reading, PA shown on left, were operators and instructors at the Americal Communications School (26th Signal Company) on Bougainville. They are operating the Code Practicing Machine. (National Archives)

On 8 January 1945, 5 officers and 68 enlisted men of the 26th Signal Company boarded the S.S. Palau Laut, destination Leyte, Philippine Islands, arriving on 21 January. Debarcation was begun and headquarters Americal Division moved to Capoocan on the north side of the island. The division then became part of the X Corps. The remainder of the company arrived on Leyte on 28 January 1945. Soon thereafter work began policing some wire circuit to Valencia since Americal Division Headquarters was to operate a forward command post there. This circuit consisted of two field wire line circuit pairs operated in parallel as a single telephone circuit. This wire was installed hastily by the 98th Signal Company (Heavy Construction), who had also projected open wire circuits running over the same route and to terminate at Ormac. This circuit was 27 miles long and was routed along the only road connecting Ormac-Valencia with Caoocan. Many small groups of Japanese infested the hills on both sides of this road and there is considerable evidence of their having cut the wire numerous times. The road ran over high and rugged mountains, across rivers and many long, open rice fields.

Much rain fell and a good portion of this circuit, being on the ground, was rendered inefficient. Raising it into the air and hanging it on trees and lance poles where possible, improved its efficiency somewhat and later, when the repeaters, Type EE-89 were installed, considerable improvement was noted. The circuit was, however, a source of considerable trouble and numerous personnel and much time was required to keep it in operation.

On 28 February 1945 a construction team laying wire between Limon-Lanoy, received sniper fire from three Japanese soldiers. T/5 Billy Bowen opened fire, using a Thompson submachine gun, caliber .45 and dispersed the Japs, killing one and wounding another. PFC McEvers and PFC Orinko, Motor Messengers, picked up one live but emaciated Japanese in the vicinity of Lanoy. The prisoner was brought to Valencia and turned over to the MPs.



Americal Division Communications Room on Cebu (National Archives)

The mission of the division was to "mop-up" the scattered pockets of Japanese resistance on Leyte. The 164th Infantry and the 182nd Infantry (less 1st Battalion) operated in the Valencia-Ormac-Polompon-Villaba area. The 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry was moved to Catbalogan on Samar, and subsequently under command of Brigadier General Lecount Slocum, attacked and took by amphibious assault Capul and Biri Islands, destroyed all Japanese installations and drove the Japanese from northwestern Samar. On 7 March 1945 the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry was returned to Capoocan on Leyte and reorganized for the forthcoming V-2 Operation.

The 26th Signal Company provided officers and enlisted personnel to provide communications within these units and to assist in the successful completion of all these operations.

Early in March, 1945, the Eight Army assigned the Americal (less the 164th Infantry) the mission of attacking and destroying by amphibious landings, the Japanese installations and forces on Cebu-Mactan-Bohol and Negros (Oriental).

The 26th Signal Company moved to Cebu in one echelon and landed with the Americal Division during 26 March 1945 at Talisay. Work began immediately on the installation of the interior communications system. With the advancement of the division, communications were continuous and progressive and the system was subsequently expanded so that radio circuits were established with units on Mactan, Bohol, Negros and two networks to Headquarters, Eighth Army on Leyte, and so that all units located in or around Cebu City were included.

On 4 May 1945 the Chief of Staff directed construction of two field wire circuits to Catmon, the probable location of Headquarters, Americal Division. Work was completed on 16 May 1945. However, it was decided to locate in the vicinity of Liloan instead, and on 4 June personnel of the 26th Signal Company began construction of communication installations in the selected area.

The division assembled in the Liloan area during the last two weeks in June and was relieved of all tactical responsibility. A sixteen week training program beginning 1 July 1945 followed. On 15 August 1945 at 2110 hours all operations against the Japanese on Cebu were ordered halted. At Liloan in northern Cebu on 28 August 1945 all Japanese on Cebu surrendered to the Americal Division and the war was over.

The division was loaded onto transports on 31 August and sailed for the occupation of Japan on 1 September. The first units began arriving in Yokohama on 8 September and by 1200 hours on 10 September all units had moved from docks to their assigned areas. The 26th Signal Company was located in close proximity of the Division Command Post at Fuchinobe, northwest of the dock area. Under the "point system" high point officers and enlisted men were transferred to the 43rd Division which departed Japan on 28 September 1945, destination, the United States.

Later, in November, the Americal Division was relieved of his occupation status and returned to the United States. The 26th Signal Company, along with the Division Headquarters, was ultimately deactivated at Fort Lewis, Washington.



Americal Division's Communications Building on Cebu (National Archives)

## 26th Signal Comendations and Decorations



### Meritorious Service

#### Guadalcanal

- M/Sgt. Walter Robinson
- T/Sgt. Louis Fabbo
- S/Sgt. Joseph Crippa
- T/3 William Gold
- T/3 Frank Lawrence
- Sgt. Francis X. Bride
- T/5 William Leahy
- Pfc. Leonard Corvelli

#### With the 108 Regimental Combat Team Mindanao

- Cpl. W. H. Webb
- Pvt. G.H. Nelson
- Pvt. L. McMahan
- Pvt. H. R. Kaiser

### Comendations

#### Northeast Samar Operations

- S/Sgt. Forrest W. Ecke
- T/4 Harvey J. Koski

### Purple Hearts

- T/5 V. W. Castracane
- T/Sgt. J. L. Allen
- T/5 C.O. Bellamore
- T/5 Liszka
- T/5 J.A. Merithew
- Pfc. R.D. Texter
- Pfc. L.E. Frates
- Pvt. D.V. Andrew
- S/Sgt. S. Cohen
- Pfc. F.W. Murphy

### Bonze Stars

- Lt. Col. L.S. Wells
- Maj. H.T. Miller
- Capt. E.P. Cook Jr.
- 1st Lt. C.R. McNeil
- S/Sgt. S. Cohen
- S/Sgt. H.A. McKenny
- Sgt. F.J. Lyman
- Sgt. T.E. Lyons
- Sgt. H.R. Steidinger
- Sgt. H.M. DeLong
- T/5 W.J. Walsh
- T/5 R.A. Loveridge
- T/5 A.J. Gouin
- T/5 A. D. Reid
- T/5 W.P. Leahy
- T/5 J.J. Small
- Pfc. J.W. Bailey
- Pfc. B.B. Bowen
- T/5 T.C. Ashbrook
- T/3 E.J. Carney
- T/4 E.W. Quinn
- T/5 F. W. Baus
- Pfc. W. J. Kelly
- Pfc. H.L. Davis
- Pvt. L. Bollinger
- Sgt. J. Valente
- T/4 W.V. Sanders
- Pfc. R.R. Bingaman
- Pfc. J.A. McGovern
- S/Sgt. J. Finocchio
- T/4 J.D. Hennis
- T/4 W.J. Seretta
- Pfc. J.D. Hennis
- T/4 W.J. Seretta
- Pfc. J.A. Hanely
- Pfc. H.G. Munro
- Pvt. W.C. Parton

The ordinary mission of a signal company is to provide wire, radio and messenger services within a division sector, which is usually restricted to a few miles to and laterally between its combat teams; and to its rear echelon and service and other auxiliary units.

A Signal Company's table of Organization and equipment further limit its personnel and the range of its equipment to even efficiently operate within this same limited area. As can be seen from all the campaigns participated in by the 26th Signal Company, in the various terrains from deep jungle to the open plains of the Philippines; from assisting adjacent divisions or having sections attached to units distant from the Americal Division, the demand for services and the services provided by the 26th Signal Company were far beyond the its capabilities and its contributions more often resembled a Corps or Army-level signal unit.

At no time throughout the South Pacific operations did the personnel of the 26th Signal Company fail to provide all the communications demands placed upon it.

*WWII Historian's Note: This article was originally printed in the Americal Newsletter in the fall of 1991 with no photos. Now that we have an excellent collection of 26th Signal Company photos from the National Archives, this article is printed again to document the outstanding work of the division's signal company in World War II*



From the 26th Signal Company came "Americal"

Part of the Legacy of the 26th Signal Company is that one of its soldiers, Private 1st Class David Fonseca, proposed the name "Americal" for "Americans on New Caledonia" which was so designated on 24 May 1942. Fonseca left the Army as a Sergeant.

## Quilt of Valor stirs memories, gratitude for Americal WWII Veteran

By Nasreen Iqbal, The Oklahoman



Americal WWII Veteran Don Wright, with his Quilt of Valor is surrounded by his daughters Donna Wright Hammond (left) and Linda Wright Anders (Center) and wife Carol B. Wright.

When 21-year-old U.S. Army Sgt. Donald R. Wright learned that his older brother had been killed on the South Pacific island of Guadalcanal during World War II, his heart sank.

He was fighting on the other side of the same island when he heard the news about his brother William.

"Five Wright brothers served their country during World War II ... four Wright Brothers returned home," a newspaper in their home state of Illinois reported.

It's difficult even today for the 93-year-old veteran to talk about how he fulfilled his soldierly and brotherly duties.

Wright buried his brother on Guadalcanal and used a wooden cross and gun cartridges to mark the site.

Looking back, Wright said, it would have been wonderful to give his brother a quilt, soft to touch and beautiful to look at, made with love and prayer, similar to the one Wright received Dec. 19 from the grassroots foundation Quilts of Valor.

'I don't deserve this'

Quilts of Valor was founded in 2003 by Catherine Roberts, of Delaware, while her son, Nat, was serving as a gunner in the U.S. Army in Iraq.

Quilting while Nat was gone was a way for Roberts to direct her energy toward focusing on his safety instead of anticipating the worst.

Debbie Bass, Oklahoma County coordinator and quilter, became a coordinator after her husband, Terry Bass, a Vietnam War veteran, received a quilt two years ago.

"I don't deserve this," Terry Bass said.

"That's the most common response I get," Debbie Bass said. So far, she has presented four quilts to veterans in Oklahoma County.

After a veteran or loved one requests a quilt online, a national coordinator contacts a state coordinator who then contacts a coordinator in the county where the veteran lives.

The county coordinator then finds quilters who have signed up to volunteer through the foundation's website. More than 95,000 quilts have been presented to veterans across the nation.

Wright, a tall man with blue eyes and a quick wit, was surrounded in his Oklahoma City home by his wife, Carol, daughters Donna Wright Hammond and Linda Wright Anders, his pastor and some friends when Debbie Bass presented him his quilt of valor.

"Thank you so much," he said with misty eyes. "I don't deserve this."

"Yes you do, Dad, you deserve so much," Hammond said.

Wright's quilt is red, white and blue with stars and American flag patches.

The phrases "thank you," "welcome home" and "hope" are stitched throughout.

The presentation prompted Wright to look back on his life and military experience.

Wright was raised on a wheat farm with four brothers and two sisters. His father farmed and later worked as a supervisor at International Harvester Co. in Canton, Ill.

His father instilled into him a strong work ethic that Wright passed on to his daughters.

"He was only late to work one day in his life," Hammond said of her grandfather. "And that was the day he learned that William had died."

Shortly after Wright graduated from high school, his older brother helped him get a job as a draftsman for Western Electric Co.

On Jan. 14, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 8633, ordering U.S. military services into action. In January 1942, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Wright's regiment, the 132nd Infantry, was deployed.

"We didn't know where we were going," Wright said. "We'd look up at the stars from our ship and try to guess."

The ship took him to Australia, where soldiers were housed with hospitable civilians.

Though he didn't know it at the time, Wright said, his brief stay in Melbourne was a pause for military heads to determine the nation's next move.

"We were in private homes and had breakfast in bed," Wright said with a smile, "I thought, 'This is a great way to spend the war.'"

'Growing up' on Guadalcanal

Soon he was on his way to Guadalcanal.

Four years and four months later, Wright had lost and buried his brother, battled malaria, attended more than 50 funerals and learned to treasure blessings such as water and family.

With each emotional, mental and physical blow, the sense of security he knew as a child on the family farm faded away.

"That's called growing up," Wright said.

Through it all, his positive outlook and sense of humor remained intact.

"I have been blessed my whole life," he said.

Wright is the father of five and grandfather of 23. A job promotion brought him to Oklahoma in 1957.

"This reminds me of when I came back from war," he said on the day his quilt was presented. "I was on a train



Don Wright with Debbie Bass, Oklahoma County Quilts of Valor Coordinator and a quilter herself.

going through Nebraska and at the stopping points there were people from the Salvation Army and the American Red Cross giving soldiers food and supplies and hot chocolate. I realized that we have the support of people back home. It just put a lump in your throat."

A patch on the back of his quilt reveals the first name of a stranger, the person who made his quilt. It's a reminder that a soldier still has the support of the people at home.

#### How to help

For more information on the Quilts of Valor Foundation, to register as a volunteer or to request a quilt for someone you know, go to [www.qovf.org](http://www.qovf.org)

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Guadalcanal gravesite of LtCol. William C. Wright, prepared by his brother Sergeant Don Wright.

## Before The Quilt-There Was Valor

By David W. Taylor, ADVA WWII Historian

The above story opens the door to a future series in the American Journal about the WWII experiences of American WWII Infantryman Don Wright. For the past several months I have been reviewing Wrights memoirs, his substantial collection of photos and talking with this Veteran not only about his WWII experiences but the country as it was prior to and during the war.

Wrights family was a patriotic family as so many were back in the post-depression era. While five of the Wright brothers served in the military during the war, our focus will be on the three brothers, William, Howard and Don, who served in the 132nd Regiment of the American Division. As noted in the article above, the oldest brother, William, commanded the 3rd Battalion of the 132nd and was killed by Japanese machinegun fire while leading a patrol up front of his battalion's advance. Don personally saw to it that his brother, along with help from his fellow soldiers, was given a proper burial.

It fell to the 132nd Regiment on Guadalcanal to attack the Japanese in the infamous Mount Austen (Hill 85) area. As Wright notes, "Because the 1st and 3rd Battalion became bogged down getting up Mount Austen, they committed the 2nd Battalion that I was in. So on Christmas Day 1942, we entered into the jungle to move up the hill. We had three chaplains in our regiment, two protestant chaplains and one Catholic chaplain. The Catholic chaplain came over and blessed us because he knew what we were going to get into"

Wright continues, "It took us two days moving through the thick jungle, sniper fire and you name it, to get to Hill 27. The slopes were treacherous. Water became more precious than ammunition. We had one canteen of good water issued to us and a second canteen for whatever water we could find, even if it meant pushing some leaves away and finding a small puddle. It would be brackish and smell, but we could get some Halizone tablets to put in the canteen to kill the bacteria. We were supposed to wait one hour but when you are thirsty, you don't wait an hour."

There was a small water hole at the bottom of a ravine that we suspected the Japanese were using as well. They used it and we used it but neither side took a shot at the other side when getting water, because we didn't want a body fall in the water to contaminate it"

Wright respected his enemy, the Japanese soldier, but he respected the American soldier much more for what he could accomplish. "We didn't sell the Japanese soldiers short. They were good fighters and they had training and experience fighting in jungle warfare before we arrived, while our experience was training in New Caledonia. But the American soldier learned and adapted faster than any other soldier in the world, and we also became good jungle fighters."

Wright remembers, "The stench of dead Japanese soldiers lying in the tropical heat of 110-120 degrees was overwhelming and something you can't describe. It was worst when it was the smell of our own dead that we couldn't get to immediately. The smell of dead bodies would get on your clothes just by being close to the bodies, and you could never get that smell completely out of your clothes"

Don Wright's memories of WWII with the American will be featured in future issues of the American Journal.

## The Cow

By Matt Connor River Boat South, 1968

River Boat South was an MP unit of the 198th Infantry Brigade, stationed on a small hill overlooking the Song Tra Bong River. We patrolled the Song Tra Bong from the mouth of the South China Sea, approximately a mile or two inland, looking for VC smugglers and contraband on the Vietnamese fishing boats.

We had a road bulldozed from the riverbank, up the hill to our base camp. There were six or seven bunkers around the perimeter of the hill. They rotated a platoon of infantry in and out as our perimeter guards. It was their break from being out in the field.

There were about six MP's and an OIC stationed there, along with two or three engineer types who were assigned as "boat drivers."

Our boats were 18 foot, fiberglass Boston Whalers with a single outboard motor. If I recall right, they were 75 HP Johnsons.

It was a heavy boat with an M-60 machine gun mounted in the front, boxes of ammo, two MP's and the driver. One of the boats usually carried an interpreter.

We could not initiate any action unless our PF fired first or we were fired upon. Our boats patrolled day and night from a small dock at the base of the hill. Radio contact was between the base camp and boats with standard FM radios. The base radio was manned and had contact with Chu Lai Base if we needed anything.

There are many stories out there of the legendary River South Patrols. This is a "cow" story. *Nothing to do with fish.*

At some point, a cow from the village on the north side of the hill died. As the tide came in and out, it washed this very large cow up the beach to the base of our hill and entombed it between several large rocks.

Now, when I say large rocks, I mean *LARGE* rocks. They were bigger than your standard Volkswagen Beetle, probably closer to a minivan. They were pushed up against the bottom of the hill as part of our perimeter. There were a lot of them.

The cow got wedged between three of these boulders and was about four feet down. The tide from the South China Sea is quiet, in and out, which we all listened to at night while on guard duty.

We would listen for the patrol boat guys on midnight shift and watch for the reflections and movement on the water below to know when they came in for gas or breaks.

We could not hear a dead cow. When exactly Elsie was deposited there we don't know. It was a while before we knew, but we knew!

Picture Vietnam, very hot every day, very humid. Things tended to decompose rather quickly. After what we figure was at least a week, maybe more, we started to notice a strange odor in the air. Its stench began to permeate the entire base camp whenever the tide was out.

We began to investigate the source of the strange aroma. Someone finally leaned out far enough over the edge of the hillside to see an object in the rocks. We went down to the beach and walked about 50 yards to the rocks. I got elected to climb up and actually look down at what used to be a bovine.

The majority

of it was still there, along with maggots, flies and some other things that were moving around. I vacated the area and had everyone go back to the hill. I immediately informed my Lieutenant where the stench was coming from. "We need to get someone to get that thing out of there. It's terrible, Lieutenant!"

The Lieutenant, being an officer, pondered the situation. He thunk and thunk.

"Connor," says he, "I have to go to Chu- Lai and report to the Captain at the Officers Club. I'll be gone a few hours. When I get back, I want that cow gone!"

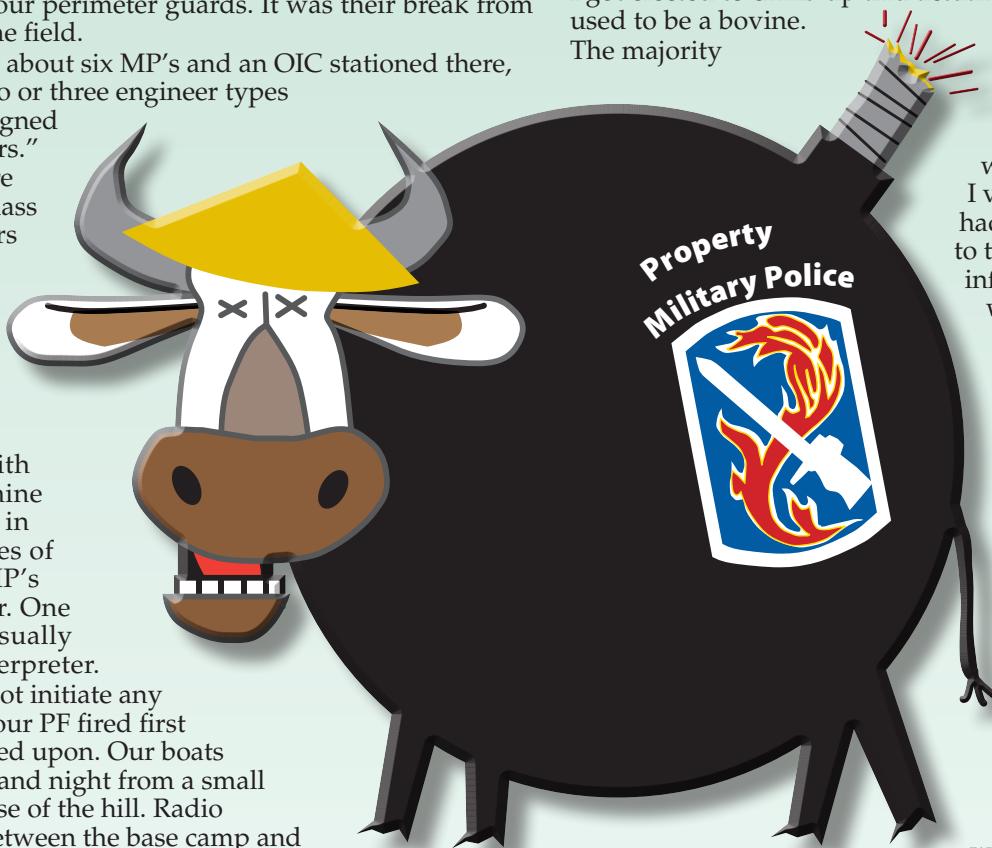
Now get my jeep and call the boat to take me across the river." "But, Sir...." "GONE, Connor, GONE!!!"

I knew he was a little crazy, and he knew I was a little off center bubble. When I tried to ask, "How?" he just smiled and repeated, "GONE." Then he left.

In the rear of the CP we had an ammo bunker, built in. I don't know why we had some of the explosives we had. I know that after this incident, they refused to restock us anything but ammo. I think the Marines on the next hill complained.

I know I had help with this project, but no one wanted to admit it later. Joe Foti (FODE) from New York was one of the original MP's from the 11th Brigade who trained with us in Hawaii. At the time, he volunteered to help. Later he clammed up like a Cherry Stone in Cold Spring Harbor, and didn't know where Hawaii was. "Somewhere south of da Bronx, right?"

A jeep got loaded with 20 pound shaped charges, 10 pound shaped charges, bunches of little one pound blocks





Photos 198th Military Policemen on river patrol (Roger Thompson)

of TNT, lots of blasting caps, a lot of det cord (PETN), and electrical wire and a hand cranked detonator. I think there might have been some beer involved there somewhere, but I'm not sure how much.

We needed beer to get close to the rocks and set the charges. I say "we," but no one else wanted to lean over there and help. I was lucky that someone was nice enough to hold my ankles while I set this up.

I had it all mapped out in my mind. Det cord with a cap into the 20 pound shaped charge, over to a couple blocks of TNT, over to another 20 pounder, etc. This was very scientific. The shaped charges were going to blow the thing down, between the rocks, deeper into the beach.

There were two-three Claymores involved. The thought at the time was that they would help break up the rotten bovine and help drive the pieces into the hole, even deeper.

All of these items had to be lowered gently down between the rocks and laid upon the rotting carcass in just the right order so that it would all explode at the same time and push in the same direction - down!

The final wire came off a Claymore, I think, and ran down the beach a good 50 yards. It was safe at that distance because we had all those big rocks around the explosives. Even a shaped charge couldn't split one of those huge boulders.

I knew enough about what I was doing that we were safe. I wired up the hand crank and we were ready.

*"Fire in the Hole!"..... That made it official. Four or five of us watched and... NOTHING!*

I pumped and pumped that little hand crank... *NOTHING!* Then I got to thinking about it. There was a bunch of blasting caps wired in there and a long length of wire over to where the cow was. Not enough spark! *What now?*

One of our more electrically challenged individuals suggested that there was a 12 volt battery in one of the boats, down the beach. That's 100 yards down, on the other side of



the cow. A couple guys ran down there while I checked the charges - after disconnecting the hand crank. So we were back to stage one - wired and ready. I knew what I was doing, or thought I did.

They finally got the battery back down the beach. All this set up had taken a couple hours and everyone wanted to get it over with before the Lieutenant came back.

Hell, if he came along now and said, "No you can't use all those explosives on a cow," someone would have to crawl in there and take it all out.

We finally got the battery set up and ready. We were 50 yards down the beach, well away from the charges that were set. We were going to get that damn stinky cow out of there and get a decent night's sleep without all the Kleenex stuffed in our noses.

Again..... *"Fire in the Hole!"* I touched the wire to one battery terminal, then the number 2 wire.

There was an explosion that made us think San Francisco just sank into the ocean. It was enormous. The ground shook.

Our feet sank into the sand a little more. A cloud formed, like a small Hiroshima!

Wow, we all stood up from our crouched position in the middle of a beach and marveled at the sight.

Then it happened. *"Stuff"* - BIG stuff - started falling from the sky! Stuff we had never seen before. Stuff we had never smelled before. Stuff we never imagined before.



Did I mention smell? This was something I had a brief "sniff" of while placing the charges. That was bad. This vile odor was enough to gag a maggot! And suddenly it was raining chunks of vile odors. Chunks were falling on us and around us and weren't stopping.

*"Run for it!"* We had 100 yards to cover before it stopped falling. We didn't make it! Ever hear of projectile vomit? If you have kids, you know what I'm talking about. We would run two steps, double over and barf.....Run two more steps double over.....

The beach was covered with all kinds of strange things that day. A lot of stuff was never seen by us again, because no one wanted to go back there. High tide couldn't come soon enough to clean that up.

The Lieutenant came back an hour later. He mentioned that the smell was lingering. I told him "the cow" was gone, the smell would be gone later. The bottle of scotch he brought back with him was used to cleanse the nostrils that night. He never mentioned it again.

The next day I called Brigade and ordered a new battery. Stolen by the Vietnamese fishermen during the night.

FODE forgot where Da Bronx was after that and no one questioned him.

## Point

By Ralph (Batman) Bateman

It was probably half an hour before the sun would begin to illuminate the eastern horizon and there was a quiet bustle of activity on the hilltop where the 1st Platoon, Delta Company, 4th of the 21st Infantry had established their laager the previous evening. No night patrols or listening posts were sent out during the night and the plan was to move out in about 10 minutes.

I had borrowed a flashlight and was just finishing the letter to Dad that I had begun during my guard duty.

27 Sept 1969      Dear Dad,

*Received your letter dated the 19th and appreciate your concern about me walking point but when I missed out on the radio (RTO) job, I jumped at the chance to join the 1st squad as A team leader. They need me in 1st squad and a friend of mine is the squad leader. I can read a map better than anyone else in the platoon, so when we go on patrol and I walk point, I'm in charge. As A team leader, it's my call who walks point and why should I ask someone to do a job that I do the best? I also get recognition from the officers because when we go out into the field, on a large company operation, 1st Platoon, 1st Squad always has point. I'm hoping that I'll make Specialist 4th Class (SP/4) by this time next month.*

*My platoon is currently on stand by status because today the 3rd platoon came under heavy fire but so far they haven't taken any casualties. E Company, our recon company, was hit Thursday and Friday and lost 12 men which may effect what my platoon does for the next week or so. My old platoon leader, Slick, is now Delta Company Commanding Officer.*

*During stand down, someone stole my pants which contained my wallet and the calendar you sent. I recovered my wallet, but it was soaked. Could you please send me another calendar because it drives me crazy not knowing what day of the week it is? So far your packages have been great and I'll send some pictures home soon.*

*Also, you will notice the checks that I am including with this letter. Poker winnings! I've been playing a little poker with the guys in the platoon, when things are quiet and they keep donating to my college fund.*

Love, Ralph      P.S. 302 days left

I stuffed the letter and three checks into the envelope and worked up some spit to seal it, placing the sealed letter in my ammo can, which contained anything that I wanted to keep dry. It would be a day or two before I could get the letter out on a resupply chopper, so I stored it with my deck of cards, my pen and writing paper, my C-Ration hot cocoa and crackers, Dad's pre-sweetened Kool Aid, my tooth brush, soap, heat tabs, matches, a Zippo lighter (which had an engraved peace sign on one side and on the other side a Combat Infantry Badge – a musket, on a light blue background surrounded by a wreath of laurel), a dry pair of socks, a transistor radio, a camera, and a well worn Playboy magazine.

Pulling a full canteen of water off of my ruck sack, I carefully began to pour a pack of pre-sweetened cherry Kool Aid into the tepid water. By now I had adjusted to doing many things in the dark, using my sense of touch to align the opening of the canteen with the Kool Aid package and feeling the sugary mixture run between my fingers as I cupped them around the mouth of the canteen. I screwed the black plastic top onto the canteen and shook it for a few seconds before I shoved it back into the canteen holder.



**Author by well at old French fort.**

I closed and sealed the ammo can as Gerber, my squad leader, came over and squatted down next to me.

"We'll be moving out in a few minutes. I want you to walk point this morning. Are you ready?"

As I secured my ammo can to my rucksack, I nodded to him and returned the flashlight to Gerber.

He had a map and spread it on the ground in front of me. He pointed the red beam of the flashlight on the map and used his finger to point at our current location. The hill top where we had laagered for the night was 5 kilometers east of the South China Sea and in the rugged, dry hills that created the southern border of the Rice Bowl, the focus of the 4th of the 21st.

He traced a line from our current position to a village on the coastal plain. "We are supposed to rendezvous with a company of Regional Forces at lunch time to run a coordinated operation along the coast this afternoon. Do you see any problems?"

Regional Forces were the local militia, the Vietnamese equivalent of the National Guard, and many of our operations were coordinated with them. They were poorly trained and disciplined. Most of them were too young to carry a weapon and we called them "cowboys", which was not intended to be a compliment.

The distance and terrain didn't look like a problem and we had been patrolling these hills for the last 2 weeks, which gave me a sense of confidence. "Shouldn't be a problem. I want Tom walking second. Tom and I work well together and he knows how to stay quiet."

"That's what I thought." Gerber whispered as he folded the map and slipped away, making sure that the rest of the men in his squad knew their assignments.

The men of the 1st platoon quietly finished their individual preparations for the day's operation, checking weapons, ammo and their backpacks before moving out toward their rendezvous.

I stood up, shaking out my green headband and then folding it neatly before I wrapped it around my forehead and reaching around behind my head, I tied it in a knot. I stretched, trying to limber up, unsuccessfully.

Taking a bandolier of M-16 ammunition, I put it over my head, hanging it on the right side of my chest and then tossed the 2nd bandolier over my head so the 2 bandoliers criss crossed my chest. Each bandolier contained four clips and

each clip containing 18 rounds of ammunition for my M-16. I carried 6 additional bandoliers of M-16 ammunition inside my ruck sack. As point man, I wasn't expected to carry any M-60 ammunition, like the other riflemen in the platoon.

Leaning my M-16 against a convenient rock, I put my green sweat towel over the barrel and leaning down, I grabbed the loaded rucksack by the right strap and jerked it up as I lowered my shoulder and caught the weight of the over stuffed pack. I quickly shifted my body and grabbed hold of the other arm strap with my left hand behind my back and swung the weight of the rucksack on to my lower back. After a few seconds of adjustment, I was ready to go.

Leaning over, I grabbed the towel and wrapped it around the back of my neck. I used the towel to keep the sweat, which soaked through everything within minutes, out of my eyes during patrol.

As I reached for my M-16, Tom walked up and whispered, "Are you ready?"

I just nodded, appreciating that I didn't have to wait. I made my usual comment to Tom, "Cover my ass" and moved out toward the east, where the horizon was just brightening in anticipation of the day's blazing sun.

I preferred to walk point and the rest of the men in the platoon appreciated my willingness to take on a job that no one else wanted. I grew up in the country and was in the woods hunting at a young age and those experiences transferred well into my job as a combat infantryman.

The sun was inching over the horizon and I was heading east, so I tried to mark a trail that avoided moving directly into the blinding morning sun. I walked slowly, being acutely aware of any noise as I broke through a line of sparse vegetation. The air was still which I appreciated because too many of the men behind me had splashed on bug juice in an attempt to keep away the ever present flies and mosquitos, but when there was a breeze that odor could be detected down wind, giving away our position. My nose was alert for the pungent smell of the local hand rolled cigarettes, the tell tale fragrance that warned me of the presence of a gook, and in this area there were no friendlies.

The squad leaders were very effective behind me, making sure that the rest of the platoon moved along quietly through the rough terrain.

As I walked, I shifted the weight of the rucksack on my back without even thinking about it, just like rolling over in my sleep. The sweat had already soaked through my green t-shirt and bandana which was wrapped around my head to keep the sweat out of my eyes. The green towel, at the base of my neck, was beginning to get heavy with moisture and I decided to swap it out on our next break.

One foot in front of another – over and over – thousands of times a day. Exhaustion and the constant rhythm of each footstep made day dreaming easy, but this job didn't allow any break in attention and I had to constantly focus on what was going on in front and around me.

I avoided trails which could contain the deadly booby traps we all feared. My focus was on the terrain out in front of me – light under brush and small trees scattered on low hills that stretched east toward the South China Sea, just a few miles away.

The underbrush began to thin out and ended with a line of eucalyptus trees bordering a small glade. The glade was

covered with twelve inch high brown grass and floating above the grass was a thin layer of morning mist which gave the clearing in front of me a surrealistic appearance.

As I stepped into the clearing, I saw movement to my left and immediately dropped to one knee. The man behind me did the same and I knew that behind him the string of more than two dozen infantrymen all dropped, alert to possible danger ahead.

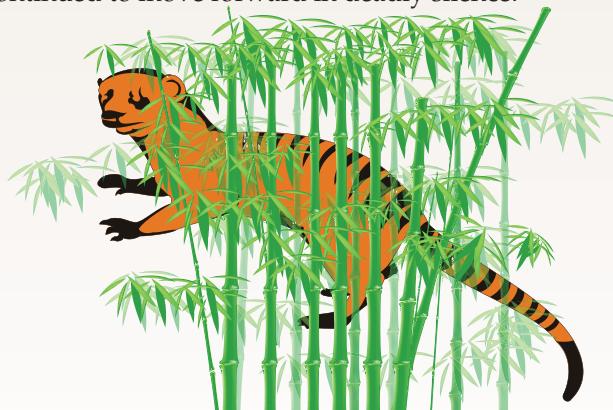
Staring at the brush that had attracted my attention, I studied the area as my M-16 followed my eyes, searching for danger. Scanning the brush line with my finger caressing my trigger, I was ready to unleash a quick spray of .223 caliber steel jacketed destruction across the clearing. As point man, my weapon was never on safety, and behind me I could hear the quiet metallic clicks as everyone, down the line of men, prepared their weapons for action in response to my movements.

There was the movement again, a bush swaying slightly and after a few nervous seconds, I realized that it was an animal that had stopped me in my tracks. Relaxing, I watched a small brown furry head stick out of the bushes and within a few seconds a mongoose, with beautiful brown fur and large alert eyes, stepped into the clearing and intently scanned for danger. Her ears rotated like radar disks, seeking out the slightest sound as I remained motionless about fifty feet away. Her tail seemed to have a life of its own, twitching anxiously as it stuck up from her smooth, sleek body.

She turned, glancing back into the underbrush before she began to walk slowly across the glade. Behind her, emerged five perfect little innocent versions of the mother mongoose. They followed her into the clearing with perfect spacing, triggering a silent chuckle as the parade marched along. Mom's tail cut through the layer of mist, extending above it like a periscope cutting through a soft white sea of mist. Her little ones followed obediently behind, with tails that could not quite reach the mist above.

As the ceremony continued across the clearing, I noticed that the mist left tiny droplets of moisture on their tails, which caught the early morning sunlight as they exited the southern side of the glade. I followed the family's departure until the tails disappeared into the background.

I let out a sigh and spent a moment enjoying my unsuspected reward for walking point that morning and felt human for a few seconds. But it was back to work and as I stood up, I grunted, readjusting my ruck sack, and motioned to the men behind me that everything was OK and we continued to move forward in deadly silence.



## The Village

### By Bill Lupton

This morning we get up at 0400. We eat, shit, and then trundle down to the flight line before dawn. The pilots tell us a friendly unit will pull an early morning sweep through a village and they may need a blocking force.

Sitting on the port side of the cargo bay, I dreamily listen to the jet engines wind up to their 6,600 operating RPMs. Barely audible in the dim predawn light is a Skeeter steadily revving-up its Lycoming 6-cylinder gasoline engine. Its resonance engenders a coffee grinder on steroids. The pilot lifts up a few feet, hovers, and then cautiously ventures out from the revetments.

The little bubble slowly moves to the beginning of the runway where Mister Thompson pulls a 180 and begins his take off. Loaded with three people, two machine guns, and ammunition, the little underpowered Korean-era bubble job needs all the take-off room he can get. The four D-model gunships follow the Skeeter, likewise overloaded with a variety of guns, rockets, and the bulbous forty-millimeter cannon mounted under the chin bubble, the Frog, giving the ship a silly profile.

Our slicks lift up with care, maneuver to the edge of the runway, where after a pause, we get clearance from Ky Ha tower. The three aircraft fly down the runway in formation and, as the resonance of the air changes, the choppers lose their ground cushions and pick up forward momentum, almost jumping when attaining flight speed. We fly straight east into the wind until the aircrafts gain sufficient speed to bank right and follow the coastline south.

I sit with my eyes closed enjoying the gentle drumbeat of the Huey vibrating beneath me when Perez gives my elbow a nudge and points out the window. Peeking just above the horizon is a vibrantly blood-red sun suspended in sickly dark gray mist, ominous, as if conveying a malevolent warning for the day's events.

Instead of cutting across the narrowest part of Chu Lai and heading southwest toward LZ Dottie, we continue farther south along the coast, past MAG 13 and the southern bunker line before turning in a westerly direction. Our three-ship formation flies about two thousand feet higher than normal; I drift in and out of slumber as the ships fly in a long lazy rightward circle, our gunships trailing us.

AAAROOOOM!!! My eyes shoot open as a reverberating series of explosions reaches all the way to our altitude. I look out my side of the helicopter in time to see the second volley of a WWI type of artillery barrage exploding next to a village. The rapid fire of the artillery continues as our ship rotates lazily causing us to look out the other side of the helicopter as the blossoming gray smoke loiters over the ground.

As the formation continues turning, I switch back to the left side of the cargo bay to watch a nine-ship combat assault land in the rice paddies adjoining the artillery smoke. The grunts pour out both sides of the ships; as the slicks tilt forward for takeoff, the sun sparkles callously atop the rotor blades. The formation lifts up easily and flies back to LZ Dottie for the next lift. Gunships from the 174th Aviation, the Sharks, cover the tree line as the tiny ants of the CA form their line along the edge of the ville. Our slicks circle several more times before changing direction toward LZ Dottie.

Relief, no blocking force needed. My eyes drift closed once more as the anxiety of the operation subsides. Then our helicopter makes an abrupt right bank, splitting away from the formation. Flynn, sitting starboard, fears sliding out the helicopter and grabs Bezanson's neck with the crook of his elbow, holds it in a death grip, and refuses to let go. Fearing a similar fate, Bezanson clamps onto the seat frame and flails with his other hand for Flynn to stop choking him. Nothing but gorgeous blue sky fills my view as I almost experience cardiac arrest especially when Mister Clark puts the chopper into a precipitous dive to prevent coning the blades. Panic erupts in the cargo bay. We are all going to die!

The helicopter levels off as my heartbeat returns to elevated normal; I stick my head into the wind to watch the top of a small hill approach. The machine gunner leans forward to yell that we need to get out. "No shit Sherlock," I say to myself as the pilot brings the ship to a hover just feet above the ground, the squad leaps out and squats, squinting against the dust storm thrown up by our rotor wash. The helicopter does not take off. I look back to see the gunner frantically waving us to get back on, so we all scramble back on board. The helicopter still does not take off. The gunner now screams for us to get off the ship. We re-exit the helicopter, squat, squint, and this time the chopper flies away.

First squad finds ourselves sitting atop a long abandoned French fortification. As the Scorpions circle around us, a low ship followed by a high ship, we orientate ourselves to the situation. The engineered fortress is triangular shaped with one fighting bunker on each corner sunk into the earth and connected with trenching. Perez covers me as I climb down into one trench and endeavor to peer inside the dimly lit bunker.

The dawn sun blinds my vision as my eyes struggle to penetrate the shadows of a corner dugout. I load my 45-cal pistol to supplement my blooper's single shot and carefully venture into the redoubt only to discover to my relief that it is empty. Next, my attention turns to the interior dugouts as I venture cautiously through the connecting trench into the center of the fort. Inside the hub of the triangle lays a command bunker, and next to it is a dugout that could be an aid station or an ammo bunker.

Upon arriving at the mouth of the command bunker, it becomes disconcerting to discover that a defender can fire at me from two opposing directions no matter where I stand in any of the trenches. Further examination of the inside of the corner bunkers shows the builders incorporated drainage holes, embrasures, and reinforced everything with a crafted bamboo skeleton. Apparently, at one time the entire trench system had overhead cover, which is now a burned out hulk of bamboo framing. Sneaker like ARVN combat boots and metal ammo boxes litter the emplacements.

Along two sides of the fortress are large pine trees, some growing near the rusting barbed wire, and on the third slope, the fields of vision are clear and looks over the target village where constant rifle fire emanates. A smoky fire line moves slowly across the width of the hamlet. Coming from the opposite side of our bastion, we hear persistent shooting from some other unseen unit a little further south with firing volume similar to what takes place below.

The Skeeter finds one corner bunker holds a slew of 60mm mortar rounds, and he reports this to Captain Moe commanding the high gunship. As we wait for engineers to



**"this time  
the chopper  
flies away"**

fly in to blow the mortar rounds, we stand in the ditch facing the village below and watch the fire line progress through the ville. Shortly, a few black clad villagers rush from the crotch of the hamlet into the wet rice paddies. A few at first, and then a flood of white-capped ink dots stream away from the gunfire, the edge of the hamlet now resembles a disturbed ants' nest.

"Hey, Sarge, check this out below," I point, and Sergeant Wood radios the report to Scorpion Six; in turn, Six orders the Skeeter to go take a look. In short order, Skeeter emerges from the east side of the ville and flies low over the fleeing villagers in a small circle then returns to the hamlet where he re-disappears below the tree tops. Mister Thompson reports nothing but women, kids, and old folks rushing through the mushy rice paddies hell bent for the road leading to Quang Ngai City. "What are these assholes shooting at so much?" I ask Rowe, who stands beside me watching this unimaginable carnage.

"Shit if I know," he replies, shaking his head too. We continue observing until a slick delivers a pair of engineers with high explosives to blow the mortar rounds. After they set the charges, everybody hustles into our trench to await the explosion.

KaaaBOOM!!! My head rattles inside my helmet causing us to push ourselves back against the side of the ditch as debris rains down among us. A huge chunk of bamboo lands right between Rowe and me, encouraging us to hide even further underneath our helmets. "How much H.E. did you bring with you?" Rowe asks one of the engineers, who himself is impressed with the violence of the blast.

"There were oodles of mortar rounds in that bunker. We had to get them all," he replies, scrambling over the parapet to survey the damage. Impressively, Mission Accomplished, for the entire corner of the fort lies strewn down the hillside. The slick returns for the engineers and shortly thereafter,

another arrives for 1st squad. For the whole hour and a half that we occupy Hill 85, the ground forces never let up their shooting – not even once!

The helicopter flies us back to LZ Dottie where the crew ties down the rotor blade, and we lounge around the deep grass growing outside the barbed wire. The guns fly support for the friendly unit later that morning but nothing happens afterwards. Well rested, we fly back to Chu Lai at 1700.

I enter our hootch to see Sergeant Desjardins and redneck Johnson, the two left-behinds for the day, huddled midway in the hootch bullshitting each other. They express annoyance at me when walking past and Johnson sardonically remarks, "It was probably Lupton who ratted on them."

I turn when reaching my bunk, "What are you talking about?"

"Somebody ratted out the friendly unit," Johnson sneers, "it probably was you, too, wasn't it?"

"I don't know what you pair of a-holes are talking about."

I drop my ammo and bloopers on the bed then unhook my web belt. Some feel distrustful towards me when I refuse to take sport in bullying the local laborers. I step a few feet towards them feeling the need to nip this shit in the bud. "Screw you, Johnson." If there is going to be an ass-kicking contest, let it begin now. Neither moron cares to pursue the matter.

Several days hence, somebody points to an article in the Stars n' Stripes that a company from Task Force Barker made 128 kills and captured three weapons. At the same time, a sister company lays claims to a similarly high body count, also few captured weapons. Other rumors circulate it was Mister Thompson who grumbles about the operation to his flight leader, Lieutenant Staffa, who reports to Major Watke. For whatever the reason, the matter as I know it dies there, and refuses to let go.

## Tribute to Dennis Rodgers

By Jerry (Doc) Wiese

*Dear Mrs. Rodgers,*

It is with great sadness that I hear of the passing of your son Dennis. I know that this must be a very difficult time for you. I wish that there was something I could say to ease the pain that you must be going through right now.

Dennis was, without a doubt, my best friend when we were in Vietnam together. I still consider knowing him as a Brother in Arms to be one of the most treasured memories of my life. I thought that I might share just a few of those vivid memories of Dennis and myself together with you and your family so that you might have a better understand the meaning of the term Band of Brothers.

They say that you shouldn't make good friends in combat. The reasons are obvious to most and to be honest about it, I didn't really like Dennis too much when I first met him. I thought he was a little arrogant. Everything was Texas this or Texas that and I just plain didn't like him. But on our very first mission together I discovered what a guardian angel Dennis could be.

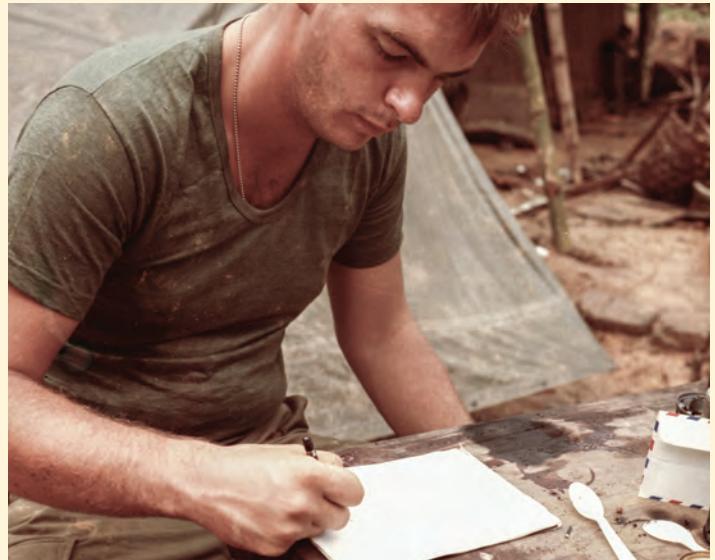
He might have told you about the way we were transported to and from the combat zone by helicopter. We literally sat on the floor of the Hueys with our legs hanging over the sides- no seats, no seat belts. Because they wanted to avoid as much ground fire as possible, they flew us at an altitude of several thousand feet.

I remember sitting next to Dennis in the doorway once and feeling the sensation of sliding out the door as the aircraft did a hard banking turn. Your son grabbed me by my rucksack and yelled as loud as he could, "You @#% idiot. Are you trying to learn how to fly?" After that Dennis and I just got along really well.

Dennis and I had a big laugh over that episode when he came to visit my wife and me a couple of years ago. After Dennis left my wife asked me if that really happened like that and if I could have really fallen out of the helicopter if he hadn't grabbed me. I told her that that was the way I remember it and that I'm certain there are names on the Vietnam Memorial Wall of people who fell out of helicopters.

After that day on the helicopter Dennis and I got along really well together. I loved hearing about his life growing up in Texas and all of the things he did while living there. And he always had those catchy little sayings that he would throw at me. I remember once when he was talking to an old Vietnamese woman and he kept calling her "Sugar Burger". She just looked so puzzled at him.

It seemed like every plant in Vietnam was hostile. Either it was poisonous or it had thorns that would reach out grab at you and your equipment. Dennis got a poisonous thorn imbedded in the palm of his hand once. It got all festered up and when I finally saw how bad it was I thought I should call in the medevac and get him to a hospital. He told me to just use my knife and dig the "son of a bitch out."



So that's what I did. I was so proud of my work that I took a picture of him holding his hand up for the camera. There he was with that dirty palm and a clean bandage and he was grinning from ear to ear. He called it my "first open-hand surgery".

Dennis was also always chewing and spitting tobacco sauce everywhere we went. I remember teasing him that all the enemy had to do if they wanted to find us was follow the spit trail. I still have a photo I took of him spitting on the ground.

I was only 18 when I first got to Vietnam. When Dennis found out that my birthday was on May 16 he did something that I will never forget. In our C-rations was a pound cake that came in a can. Most of the guys liked it very much and seldom did they give it to someone else. We also had some hot cocoa mix. Dennis took the cocoa mix and made thick syrup with it and then poured it over the cake and then gave it to me. Of all the birthday cakes that have ever been made in my honor; that is the one I will always remember the most.

Dennis and I always pooled our resources together. We built our hooch together and shared everything from food to ammo. We usually got resupplied by helicopter every three days or so.

We went through a typhoon together while we were in the jungle and it was a most unpleasant experience for everyone. It may be hard to believe but we were soaked to the bone. Everything was wet. We couldn't be any wetter than if we jumped in a swimming pool. I remember my hands were all wrinkled up like they do when you stay in the tub to long. We were both freezing to death.

When Dennis visited with my wife and me we talked about us huddling like baby chicks trying to stay warm by robbing heat from each other. I told my wife that I hugged him tighter than I've ever hugged her. She thought that was very funny and I suppose it is in a way. But I remember being very wet, cold, and hungry.

There was a small stream of water and mud coming in on one side of our hooch and going out the other. Because

of the bad weather, we couldn't get resupplied by the helicopters and we were down to our last can of beans and franks between the two of us. I managed to get a piece of C-4 lit and was trying to heat the can up for both of us to eat. I had the lid of the can bent over and was using it like a skillet handle and when it got too hot I dropped the entire can of hot beans and franks right in the mud. Dennis got very upset about this and began chewing my ass out about it. He finally stopped screaming and said "Oh well, what do you want, the beans or the franks?" and we scooped them out of the mud and ate them. As God as my witness that is the truth.

Dennis and I were supposed to dig foxholes near our hooches. We got tired of doing that all of the time. We decided to take a chance and say the hell with it. We didn't dig one. As fate would have it, we were attacked and both Dennis and I ended up behind a rock that wasn't much bigger than a garbage can. There we were holding our M-16s over our heads and shooting behind us without ever taking aim. The rock rally wasn't wide enough for both of us so I would shove him so I could have cover and he would shove right back. We made a vow after that to dig a foxhole every night.

I have on occasion been invited to speak to the senior class of a local high school about my time in Vietnam. I remember a young girl asking me why a medic like me would risk his own life to save the life of someone in combat and what would make me want to leave and safety of cover and go to someone who was injured in combat.

I thought about for a moment and asked her if she knew the people sitting around her desk. She said she did. I asked her if she would be willing to give her very own life for any of those people and she said no. Then I asked her what if they weren't just friends but rather they were her own brothers, sisters or even her own Mom or Dad. Would she then be willing to lay her life down to save one of them? She said she wouldn't want too but that she probably would do it because they were her family.

I explained to her that that was exactly how I felt about the men I served with in Vietnam. When you trust your life with other men in combat they become your family and I took it very personal when someone tried to hurt someone in my family.

Before my Mom died, she said that she was worried to death about me in Vietnam. She was worried because I was always in harm's way and all alone there without any of my family.

I told my Mom that I had a lot of people looking out for me and I was not without my family. Dennis wasn't alone either. He had family too.

I want you to know that I loved your son like a brother. I will miss seeing him on the few occasions that we had to get together and I will miss solving all of the world's problems with him whenever we spoke over the telephone.

There will never be another like him.

## Happy Birthday Binge

By Jim Gales

On January 5, 1972, Al Horner and I celebrated our birthdays together on Fire Support Base Maude. I remember that during that day we had to fill sandbags and spend time on a detail fixing the barbed wire.

The Army let us have all the C-rations we wanted for our birthday party. I think we even each got a can of pound cake and a can of peaches. It was almost as good as Red Velvet cake.

We passed a bottle after evening chow and each platoon guy took one sip. We then went on guard duty, stood-to in the mortar pit, and sent three guys out on night LP.

A few weeks later we got to go back to DaNang for a three day R&R. The first night we all went to the EM club to celebrate our birthdays and see a band. Mixed drinks were a quarter each and were served in Styrofoam coffee cups with ice if they had it.

I put down a twenty dollar bill. Al Horner and Frank Hagan did the same and a few more guys added to the pot. I don't think anyone had a beer.

We had so many drinks lined up on our two tables that we gave drinks away until no one wanted them. I do remember some GI passing the hat and we got enough money for the girl singer to take her top off and then run out the back door.

How we ever found our hootch after that is a miracle. We stayed up well into the morning. Someone forgot to tell us that there was an inspection of our hootch first thing in the morning. When the inspecting officer came in the front door, the squad leader shoved me out the back door as the inspecting officer talked with our captain. Sometime during the night I decided to darken my moustache and hair. I used black shoe polish on them only to discover I could not get it off. Hence I got shoved out the back door when the inspecting officer arrived.

The guys couldn't hold back the laughter. I was outside by the piss tube barfing my guts out.

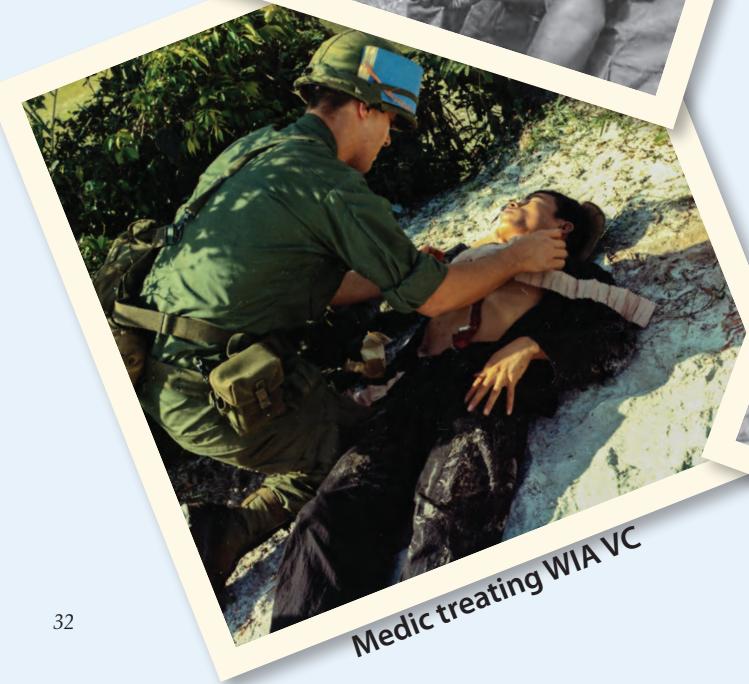
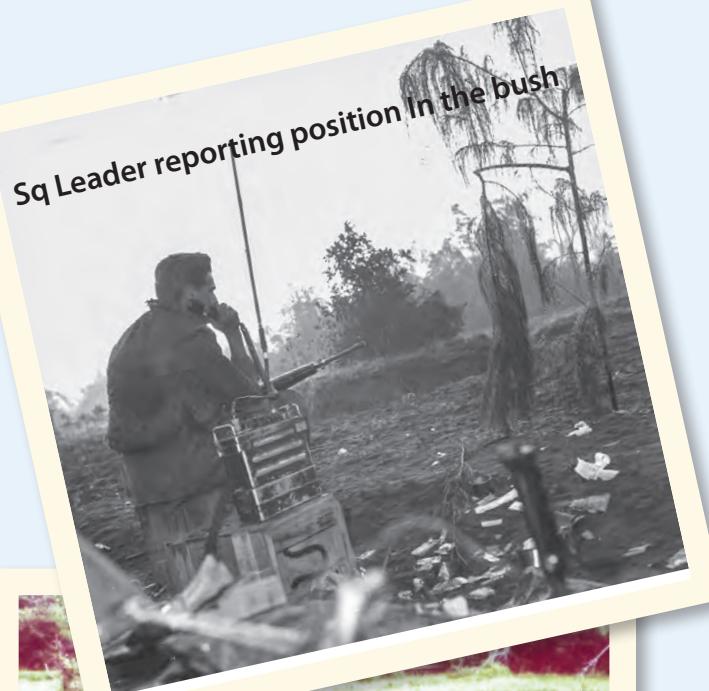
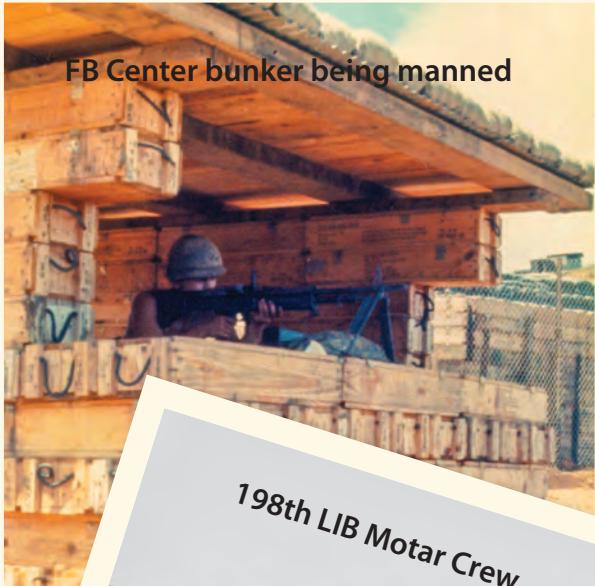
After the inspection we had to load on to deuce-and-a-half trucks to be driven up to the ridge line for duty. I stood above the cab of the truck and let the cool breeze hit me in the face and sober me up. I swore off hard stuff until the next R&R and remember it was one of the worst hangovers I ever had.

While I don't recommend for any person to celebrate their birthday in this fashion, you have to admit that at 25 cents each the price of drinks was right. The band sounded so good after twenty drinks that I believed it might have been the Beatles.

It was a wonderful 21st birthday party. It was so much fun I still remember it 42 years later. I think I can still feel the headache.

## The Faces of Young Soldiers

Photographs National Archives



## Title: Vietnam War: Defining Moment For America

Author: Joseph DiLeonardo  
Reviewer: Gary L. Noller

Two years ago Joseph DiLeonardo wrote a short story that was published in the Americal Journal magazine. The publishing of this story inspired him to write a book length first-person account of his service as an intelligence officer with the 635th Military Intelligence Detachment.

DiLeonardo graduated from the University of Santa Clara (California) in 1965 and was commissioned as a ROTC officer. He continued his education at Santa Clara and received a Juris Doctor degree in 1968. Shortly thereafter he completed additional training as an infantry officer and intelligence officer. In May 1969 he arrived in Vietnam and began duties with the Americal Division.

DiLeonardo was immediately thrust into the dynamic action in the Division Tactical Operations Center (DTOC). He utilized his college training as a lawyer and his military training in infantry and intelligence to analyze the data that poured into his section. It did not take long for him to be tested.

The early August 1969 the enemy planned a massive attack in the Americal Area of Operations (AO) and DiLeonardo quickly recognized their mission. But higher-higher was skeptical of the briefing they received from the new officer and they decided to wait it out. Events soon proved that DiLeonardo was correct in his analysis. He is still bothered by the fact that his warnings were not given proper consideration.

DiLeonardo gives an insider's view of war planning and operations that few soldiers in the field ever see. He provides many details of how things were done. But he admits, "I knew there was no 'crystal ball' when it came to intelligence assessments." He tells of correct intelligence that was not utilized. He also gives accounts of faulty intelligence that was put to use. Both errors resulted in costly casualties to Americal soldiers, friendly forces, and civilians.

But DiLeonardo's story is not confined to war. Much of the early part of the book gives an excellent description of his ancestry, the values that he learned from his parents and grandparents, and the schooling he received as a youth. These details describe the formation of DiLeonardo's character and help define his beliefs and ethics as an officer in the United States Army.

Joseph DiLeonardo was not the only one of his family to serve in Vietnam. His older brother Tony arrived in Vietnam just a few weeks before him. Tony, an Infantry captain, was severely wounded while leading a company near the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

Tony's wounding caused Joseph to realize his mortality. He says, "I had seen soldiers die in the emergency trauma center at the 23rd Surgical Hospital. I had seen dead bodies on the battlefield, mostly enemy soldiers. It was seeing my

Brother Tony in a wheel chair just shy of death that finally made me aware of my mortality. The young think they will live forever. Those who serve in a war realize very early that this is not true. We are all mortal and war makes us face that fact. We all die someday."

DiLeonardo faced a defining moment that was personal to him. But he also describes how he believes the Vietnam War became a defining moment for the United States. He states, "The Vietnam War was a catalyst for the start of a culture, counterculture war still being waged today with the stakes- the very Soul of America."

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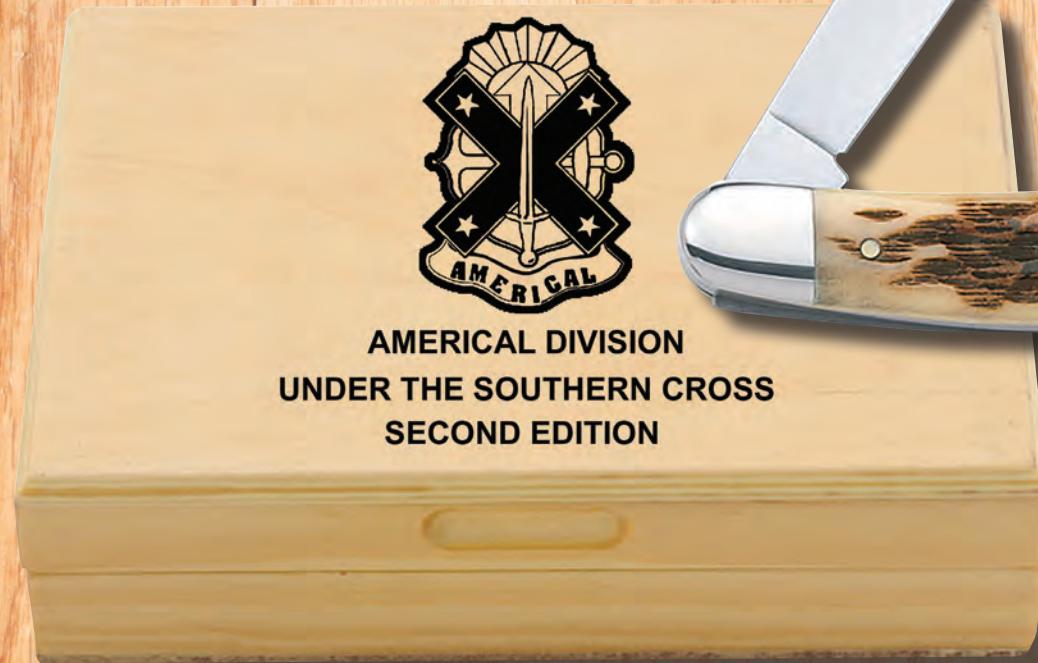
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American patriotism, social and welfare  
activities for all members, allegiance to the  
United States Government, and its flag, and to  
perpetuate the traditions and history of the  
Americal Division of the United States Army.

### Eligibility for Membership

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

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

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



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