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# AMERICAL

## JOURNAL

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

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS



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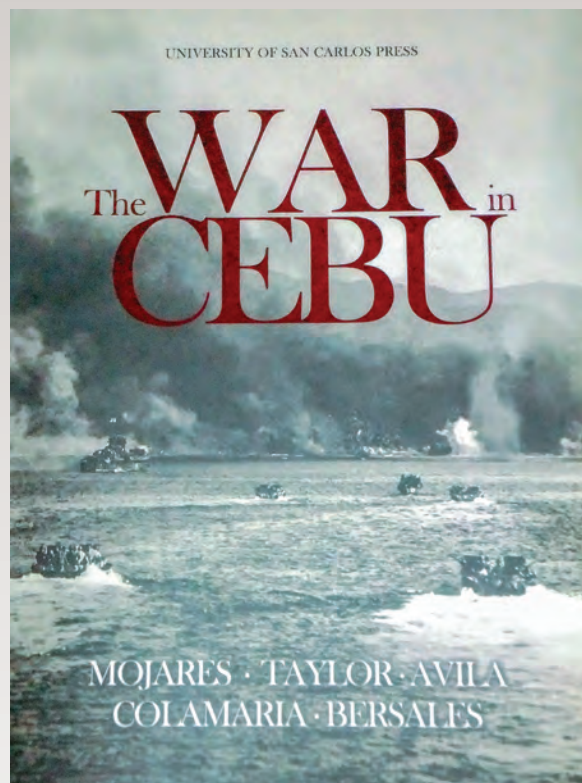
## Now Available!

A rare opportunity for ADVA members to understand the total story of the enemy's barbarity in World War II, the heroic resistance of a people oppressed and the sacrifices of the Americal Division to liberate the island of Cebu, the Philippines.

Co-authored by the ADVA's WWII Historian Dave Taylor, Americal Legacy Foundation Historical Advisor David Colamaria and historians on the island of Cebu, the

Philippines, this unique book is not available for sale in the USA. Only fifty copies were shipped from the publisher, The University of San Carlos, Cebu City, the Province of Cebu as a favor for the assistance of Americal historians.

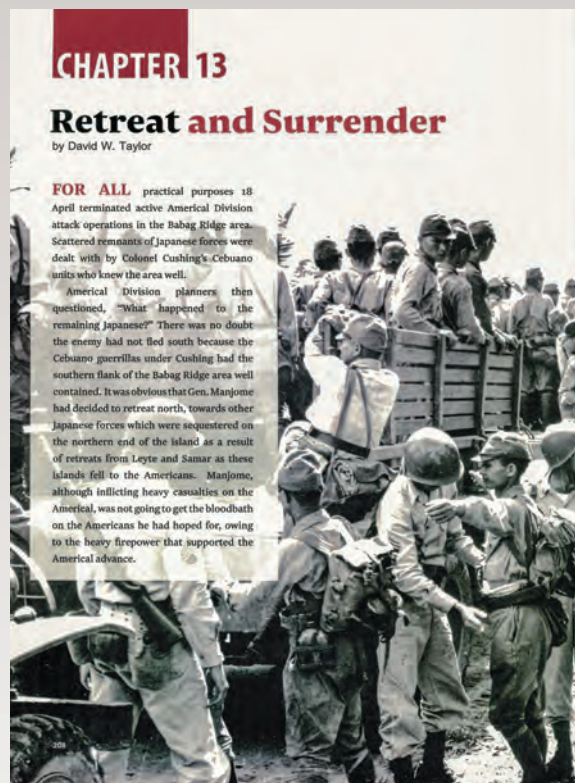
All proceeds will go to the Americal Legacy Foundation. The sale price of this large, hardcover coffee-table size book (9-inches x 12-inches, is the same price as sold in Cebu, the Philippines (\$50 American Dollars equivalent).



## The WAR in CEBU

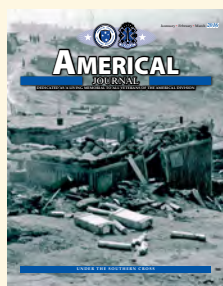
Fourteen chapters in 260 pages with nearly 500 images of sacrifice, suffering and despair, but also of resistance and triumph, including many photos of the Americal Division in action on Cebu. World War II as it happened in Cebu, The Philippines!

**Copies will be sold on a first come – first served basis. Limit of two books per customer.**



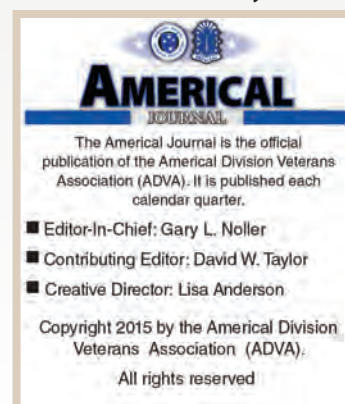
Book price is \$50 plus \$5.00 shipping & handling. Make all checks (\$55) to the order of: **Americal Legacy Foundation**. Mail check to: **David W. Taylor, ADVA Historian, 970 Kenner Drive, Medina, Ohio 44256-2908**. Expect delivery in 7-10 days.

Questions please contact David W. Taylor: 330-722-7455 or [dave.taylor@zoominternet.net](mailto:dave.taylor@zoominternet.net).



## Cover: FSB Mary Ann

Begins recovery after heavy enemy attack on March 28, 1971  
Photo by Robert A. Spangler



## Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant

I want to begin this column by wishing all ADVA members a belated Happy New Year. I hope your 2016 got off to a good start.

The association's new member gains for this reporting period are very good. We picked up twenty-nine new members which is good for a period of time when new member applications coming in tend to slow down. Compared to this same reporting period in 2015, this number is double that. Of these twenty-nine new members, nine joined as life members, another impressive statistic. Eighteen annual pay members upgraded to life membership during this quarter. Our count of former members reinstating their ADVA membership was down slightly, with only six mailing in dues checks for reinstatement. Hats off to member Richard Ellashek who was hot on the new member recruiting trail this period. Richard brought in three new members who are company D/5/46th veterans.

The "re-recruiting" program initiated in June 2015 proved to be moderately successful. From that mailing to 450 former members, seventy-four former members mailed in dues checks to be reinstated in the ADVA. That is a response rate of 16.5% which is fairly good for this type of recruiting campaign. NC David Chrystal's invitation to re-join was mailed again at the end of January to 430 former members. These names are chosen at random and were not part of the first mailing. The mailing includes a pre-addressed envelope with Assistant Finance Officer Ronald Ellis' mailing address to facilitate mailing of dues checks. We plan to once again solicit membership applications in veteran publications such as the Vietnam Veterans of America bi-monthly newsletter. We do not pick up a lot of members using this type of source, but it is a no charge advertisement and well worth the effort if we pick up a few members.

I want to take a few lines here to state our policy for following up on delinquent dues payments. As per the ADVA by laws, annual dues payments are payable on the first day of each renewal period. Renewal periods are January, May and September of each year. Six months after each renewal date (generally), the Assistant Adjutant Rich Heroux mails reminder post cards to members showing no record of dues payment for that date. If you receive a reminder post card, please mail your dues payment to Assistant Finance Officer Ronald Ellis as soon as possible to keep your membership status current. If you feel you received a reminder post card in error, please contact me and I will research the payment records.

January 2016 annual pay renewal notices went to the Richardson, Texas post office for mailing on December 28, 2015. By now all January 2016 annual pay members up for renewal should have the mailing. If you have not already done so, please mail your dues payment as soon as possible. If you are a January 2016 annual pay renewal and have not received a renewal notice, please contact me and I will re-mail your renewal notice and annual pay membership card.

**I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SENDING ME YOUR NEW MAILING ADDRESS WHEN YOU MOVE.** Each time the association mails correspondence or a publication to an invalid address for a member, the USPS notifies us of the new mailing address (if they have it) and charges us \$.59 for the service. It's more if the notice is for a Journal or calendar mailing. Fifty-nine cents may not seem like much, but over a year it mounts up. We had an unusually high number of address changes from the USPS after the 4th Quarter 2015 Americal Journal mailing. The easiest way to notify me about an address change is via email. My email address is listed at the bottom of the back cover of each Americal Journal. If you prefer to call, my cell phone number is 972-412-0089. If I do not answer, you can leave your new information on my voice mail. Written notification should go to the Adjutant P.O. box number listed on the back cover of each Americal Journal.

### Corrections (Unit)

**Ronald H Backstrom**  
D/2/1st Inf

### New Members

#### Norman Bair

3/82nd Arty  
Roswell, NM  
★ Self

#### William L. Bennett

5/46th Inf  
Deltona, FL  
★ Self

#### Joseph A. Bria

3/16th Arty A Btry  
Brookfield, IL  
★ David Germain

#### Virgil Curry

26th Cmbt Engrs HHC  
Waxahachie, TX  
★ Roger Gilmore

#### Michael Cundiff

C/2/1st Inf  
Athens, GA  
★ Roger Gilmore

#### James S. Davis

Div HDQ - CC  
St. Augustine, FL  
★ Self

#### Donald DeGain

Odessa, FL  
C/3/21st Inf  
★ Self

#### James D. Dresser

D/5/46th Inf  
Easley, SC  
★ Richard Ellashek

#### Nick Evans

4/21st Inf  
Cullman, AL  
★ Slater Davis

#### Lamar C. Glover

17th Cav H Trp  
Abbeville, AL  
★ Self

#### Alfred E. Hegwood

D/5/46th Inf  
Prescott Valley, AZ  
★ Roy Abbott

#### Richard Kantrow

B/1/52nd Inf  
Hamden, CT  
★ Conrad Geibel

#### John L. Mansfield

A/4/31st Inf  
Sioux City, IA  
★ Les Hines

#### Michael G. McDonald Low

D/1/20th Inf  
Vancouver, WA  
★ Self

#### Robert F. Morgan

17th Cav H Trp  
Jacksonville, TX  
★ Self

#### Richard P. Rush

3/16th Arty A Btry  
Edmond, OK  
★ PNC Larry Swank

#### James Russell

Div HDQ  
Flagler Beach, FL  
★ Self

#### Mike Smith

D/5/46th Inf  
Ft. Collins, CO  
★ Richard Ellashek

#### Preston H. Stallings

3/14th Arty C Btry  
Jacksonville, FL  
★ Spencer Baba

### ADVA MEMBERSHIP 31 January 2016

World War II	366
Vietnam	2,532
Cold War	7
Associate Members	206
Total Members	3,111



### New Paid Life Members

#### Linwood Blackston

A/4/31st Inf  
Baltimore, MD  
★ Roger Gilmore

#### Dewey D. Davide

D/5/46th Inf  
Huntington Beach, CA  
★ Richard Ellashek

#### Charles G. Hollis

1/14th Arty D Btry  
Pahrump, NV  
★ Self

#### Nick Jarvela

E/3/1st Inf (Recon)  
Ashland, WI  
★ Les Hines

#### Sylvester Joseph, Sr.

A/1/46th Inf  
Louisville, KY  
★ Warren Neill

#### Paul C. Larson

B/1/6th Inf  
San Mateo, CA  
★ Terry Ivey

#### Larry D. Tallacus

B/2/1st Inf  
Sequim, WA  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

#### Don Taylor

C/1/52nd Inf  
Iowa Park, TX  
★ James Clark

#### James R. Wagner

D/5/46th Inf  
Breezy Point, MN  
★ Mike Smith

#### Nolan Cross

B/3/1st Inf  
Ravenna, OH  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

#### James A. Fivian

D/1/52nd Inf  
Griffin, GA  
★ Bob Kapp

#### Noah E. Halfacre

HHC/4/21st Inf  
Murfreesboro, TN  
★ Bill Maddox

#### Jack D. Knisely, Jr.

E/1/6th Inf (Recon)  
Huber Heights, OH  
★ Roger Gilmore

#### David Kroll

A/1/46th  
Clifton, IL  
★ PNC Rollie Castronova

#### Norman L. Linto

HHC/2/1st Inf  
Oxford, MI  
★ Joe Perez

#### James W. Malone

D/5/46th Inf  
Goodspring, TN  
★ PNC Rollie Castronova

#### Roland J. Mantovani

6/11th Arty D Btry  
Staten Island, NY  
★ PNC Rollie Castronova

#### Vernon J. Mavencamp

245th FA  
Hagerman, ID  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

#### Dale Melton

C/5/46th Inf  
Casey, IL  
★ Self

#### Ernest R. Mitchell

3/18th Arty Serv Btry  
Sublette, IL  
★ Bernie Carroll

#### Douglas B. Norman

Associate  
Lancaster, MO  
★ Self

#### Chester T. Pasco

1/14th Arty HHC  
N. Canton, OH  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

#### Bobby Peck

1/46th Inf  
Lawrenceburg, KY  
★ Ron Green

#### George V. Robbins

1st/1st Cav C Trp  
El Paso, TX  
★ Self

#### Joe V. Schwartz

C/1/6th Inf  
Dripping Springs, TX  
★ Don Ballou

#### Norm Smith

55th Arty G Btry  
San Francisco, CA  
★ John W. Anderson

#### James J. Treacy, Jr.

A/1/6th Inf  
Brookline, NH  
★ Self

### Re-instated Members

#### Stan Grimes

B/6/56th Inf  
Fort Morgan, CO  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

#### Glen A. Lippincott

A/3/21st Inf  
Sciota, PA  
★ R. Lippincott

#### Lamar Richardson

E/4/31st Inf  
Detroit, MI  
★ Self

#### Victor Ruiz

26th Cmbt Engrs HHC  
Rio Rancho, NM  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

#### Jose Vargas

26th Cmbt Engrs HHC  
Northglenn, CO  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

#### Lorne White

D/1/6th Inf  
Kodiak, AK  
★ PNC Ronald Ward

### New Associate Members

#### Lori A. Harnish

Scottsdale, AZ  
★ Self

#### Jerry Liebhart

Naval Support-Saigon  
★ Self

### TAPS LISTING; MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

#### World War II Veterans

#### Malcolm S. Cate, Jr. \*

26th Sig Co  
Waltham, MA  
Date Unknown

#### Leonard A. Corvelli \*

26th Sig Co  
Wyomissing, PA  
September 15, 2015

#### Renato J. Della Rocca \*

132nd Inf Rgmt Co K  
Venice, CA  
December 17, 2015

#### John B. Fitzgerald, Jr. \*

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Devon, PA  
November 2, 2013

#### Joseph Iniquez \*

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Lombard, IL  
2006

#### William F. Kellner \*

182nd Inf Rgmt  
Stoneham, MA  
Date Unknown

#### William F. Krentz \*

132nd Inf Rgmt Co M  
Southgate, MI  
Date Unknown

#### Samuel J. Morrell\*

Unit Unknown  
Toms River, NJ  
December 28, 2015

#### H.L. Poshard \*

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Carmi, IL  
Date Unknown

#### Louis Ramirez \*

132nd Inf Rgmt  
Silvis, IL  
August 6, 2008

### Vietnam Veterans

#### Grady W. Bowers

C/4/21st Inf  
Lugoff, SC  
October 31, 2015

#### Daniel M. Fitzgerald

Unit Unknown  
Westfield, MA  
November 13, 2015

#### James. M. Forsee \*

5/46th Inf  
Shawnee, KS  
September 19, 2015

#### David R. Frierson

C/3/21st Inf  
White River Junction, VT  
August 16, 2015

#### Jack Griffin \*

23rd MP Co  
Athens, GA  
December 24, 2015

#### Al Horner

B/2/1st Inf  
Coulterville, IL  
November 9, 2015

#### Rick Smith

Unknown Unit  
Evanston, WY  
December 9, 2015

#### Homer A. Stephens \*

26th Cmbt Engrs Co B  
Marysville, PA  
October 21, 2015

### Associate Members

#### Kay Lane \*

(Mother of Sharon  
Lane, KIA)  
Canton, OH  
August 14, 2015

\* ADVA Member

## Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore: Chairman, Board of Directors

### Americal Legacy Foundation Web Site

The Americal Legacy Foundation web site ([americalfoundation.org](http://americalfoundation.org)) continues to be a solid source for getting out our mission's message of preserving the Americal Division legacy. We do this through monuments honoring the Americal Division and scholarships to deserving children and grandchildren of ADVA members.

During our initial months in operation we picked up several donations from ADVA members and web site visitors. PayPal is our medium of payment and this donation payment method should make it easy for donors to make any size donation.

The Legacy Store link features items of Americal Division interest for sale to ADVA members, Americal Division veterans, and other site visitors. The popular book about the history of the Americal Division in WWII titled *Under The Southern Cross* is now available for purchase through the website at a cost of \$19.00 plus a shipping charge. In addition, the 2016 edition of the Americal Legacy Calendar is available for purchase on the website.

New web site features include a gallery of the Americal Legacy Foundation's monument building and fund grants history and a new blog page. The history of Americal Legacy Foundation monument program can be found under the About Us link. The blog link is on the site home page and is an idea put forth by Foundation advisor and WWII historian David Colamaria. The idea of using social media to communicate our mission was discussed during an impromptu meeting at last year's Norfolk reunion. David helped us with ideas on how to proceed with the blog. Web site administrator and Foundation director Gary Noller took the plan to fruition and placed some recent Foundation news events on the blog page late last year. We plan to continue with blog updates as news about programs and events arises.

### Americal Legacy Foundation 2016 Calendar

The 2016 Americal Legacy calendar was mailed in early November 2015. This edition is one of the finest the Foundation has issued. Board member David Taylor and creative designer Lisa Anderson did a superb job with picture selection and layout. Our thanks go out to the ADVA members who submitted photographs from their collections.

Once again the response from the ADVA membership has been truly remarkable. To date, we have received just under \$18,000.00 in donations. Our goal is to reach the \$20,000.00 mark. If you have yet to donate, or are able to mail an additional donation, please put your check in the mail as soon as possible. Donations should be mailed to Foundation director Gary Noller at P.O. Box 1268, Center Point, TX, 78010. If you do not receive your 2016 Americal Legacy Foundation calendar, please contact me at the phone number listed on the back cover of this publication. We, the foundation directors, deeply appreciate your past support with generous donations and look forward to continued support from all ADVA members.

### Americal Monument at Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Our long awaited approvals for the Fort Sill Artillery monument project have come through. The final approval

had to come from the Department of the Army's Installation Command in charge of gift programs. I received word via email that it had been given in late December and a formal document arrived on January 11.

Our next step was an on site meeting with the contractors selected for the foundation and granite work and with the Fort Sill Department of Public Works and Fort Sill Museum Director. ALF Director Noller and I went to Ft. Sill on February 1-2 for the meeting.

The two contractors selected to do the work are local companies. Willis Granite Company is located in Granite, Oklahoma and they will be doing the stone work for the granite pedestals that form the monument. Boyles and Associates is a Lawton company that will be doing the concrete work for the base and sidewalk that connects the base to the main walkway. Both companies have done work at Fort Sill and we are confident that they will do a first class job for this monument honoring Americal Division artillery units attached to the Division during its three eras of activation.

The design concept for the Fort Sill Artillery monument is consistent with other monuments currently in place at Constitution Park. Gray and black granite monoliths describing the division history will sit atop a reinforced concrete pad poured in the shape of the Americal Division shoulder patch. A five-foot wide walkway connects the pad to the circular main sidewalk that permits visitors to view all monuments as they walk around. One black granite monolith with text describing the history of the Americal Division sits in the middle of the pad. The rear portion of the concrete pad supports two gray granite monoliths which lists Artillery units assigned and attached to the division during the three eras of activation. One pedestal lists all World War II artillery units; the other lists all Cold War Era and Vietnam War artillery units. A mediation bench of black granite will be placed between the two gray granite monoliths. More details on construction progress will be forth coming in a future edition of this publication. We will also keep members apprised of the progress through the Americal Legacy Foundation website blog.

### Scholarship News

The last issue of the Americal Journal contained a remembrance of deceased ADVA member and long time supporter of the Scholarship Program Albert (Al) Cotta. In early January, five ADVA members made the trip to the Gulfport, Mississippi Armed Forces Retirement Home where Al resided for many years. The ADVA members attended a memorial service for Al and other recently deceased home residents. We were escorted to the memorial service by Bob Macy, Al's longtime companion at the retirement home. Bob is the executor of Al's estate. Bob presented the Foundation with a \$10,000.00 check drawn from Al's estate in accordance with Al's will and dedicated to the Scholarship Program. Bob also presented the Foundation with a generous donation of his own for future monuments funding.

We, the Foundation directors, are extremely grateful for Al's generosity to ADVA and the Legacy programs over the years, particularly the scholarship program and his remembrance of ADVA in his will. We also thank Bob for his generous donation to the Foundation, and the aid and assistance he provided to Al during the years they resided at the retirement home.

## Locator Service Returns

By Gary L. Noller

### Americal Locator Service

The americal.org website was created in late 1994. Volunteers created the site to give the Americal Division Veterans Association a presence on what was then referred to as the World Wide Web. It would not have been completed without the gracious efforts of Anthony E. Greene, Kevin Sartorius, and my brother, Gregory Noller.

The ADVA website was one of the very first unit associations websites on the internet. In the early days Tony Greene maintained the locator service and Kevin Sartorius updated the guest book. In time I took over these duties and continued to provide interactive features on americal.org.

A problem with website maintenance is presented by hackers who are able to plant unwanted code in the website. This is commonly achieved through automatic posts in features such as a guest book or blog entry. In order to have added control and eliminate as much of this as possible every entry submitted to americal.org was viewed one at a time and evaluated for website security. But even this did not keep everything in line.

A few years ago americal.org underwent a renovation and updates were made to improve website security and prevent hackers from gaining access. In the process many features on the old website were not carried forward in the new version. Veterans were beginning to use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. These services were not around in 1994 when americal.org was first created. Although many Americal Division veterans utilize social media it has not and probably cannot give the level of service of a dedicated locator feature.

In December 2015 the ADVA website underwent another renovation and I am happy to say that the locator service will be attempted once again. At the 2015 reunion in Norfolk the ADVA Executive Council approved a one-time expenditure of \$300 for professional services to transition americal.org to a new software. This will make it much easier for updates to take place. The change has also allowed viewers to make contact with the ADVA an easier and more direct process.

At the current time the locator service is broken down into the three eras of Americal Division and 23rd Infantry Division activation- World War II, Cold War, and Vietnam War. As locator requests are received further subcategories are expected to be created. In the previous locator categories for infantry were broken down by battalion and others were at the branch level.

Locator requests come in the form of an e-mail message to me. There is no automatic posting so it may be a few days or even a couple of weeks before the locator request is placed on the locator page. The request consists of two parts: **Looking for** and **Contact**. The Looking for should describe in detail who or what is being sought. The Contact must at minimum include a valid e-mail address and can include additional contact information such as telephone number and postal mailing address. Requests may be edited for clarity and space limitations.

PNC Jim Buckle (RIP) told me many years ago that he

thought the single most important thing the ADVA could do for its members was to help them locate their wartime buddies. I believe Jim was correct and the ADVA has benefited hundreds of Americal veterans by providing them with contact information to locate their buddies. If you would like to place a locator request please send it to me by e-mail at amcalvn@aol.com. I will be happy to post it for you.

### Current Locator Requests

**Looking for:** Anyone who knew my father, Doyle Ed Mason, served in Vietnam under the Americal. I would like to get to know some of his fellow soldiers. Contact: Timothy G Mason; [Lord\_drakonis69@yahoo.com]

**Looking for:** Anyone that remembers my cousin, Edward (Ed) Kenslow, from Tulsa, OK. Drafted in 1968, served in 196 LIB as a radio operator through 1969. Contact: Charles Speir; [scoutmaster77@sbcglobal.net]

**Looking for:** An unnamed veteran. I received a letter asking for information on a veteran from someone doing a history on the Korean and Vietnam Wars. All I have is that a vet was from Gardiner, Maine, was in D/4/21 Inf., and that he was in country from July 1968 thru May 1969. Contact: Roger J. Paradis; [swpost4@ne.twcbc.com]

**Looking for:** Anyone stationed with C Co., 523rd Signal Battalion. I was also stationed on LZ Crunch (AKA) Minh Long. Contact: Ronnie Kiger SGT RET; [rskiger@hotmail.com]

**Looking for:** After action reports or other information about the large engagement of the quad 50 on hill 270 from May to July 1971. I was in G battery 55th Arty. Contact: Richard Russell; 918 855 7119; [msgsrjr@cox.net]; 2531 W. Fairview St. Tulsa OK. 74127

**Looking for:** Any veterans who served with Alpha Company, 5/46/198th LIB in Vietnam from 1967-1972. To date have already located over 300 who served with the unit. Contact: Ellen Gause; [ogause@ec.rr.com].

**Looking for:** Jack Zubak or David Twang 198 LIB 9th Support 1967-68 Contact: D.R. Longo, Sr. [drlongosr@aol.com]

**Looking for:** I am looking for information on my fathers service in Vietnam. His name is Sgt. Gerald Wayne Adams. I know that he served in Chu Lai with the Americal Division around 1970-71 at LZ Dottie. Contact: Tony Adams [skinsfan.1976@yahoo.com]

**Looking for:** I served in the chaplain's office, HHC, 4th Trans. Command, (1st Log. Command) in Saigon in Oct. 1968-69. The NCOIC of our office was SP4 Martin Kennedy. He wore an Americal patch. I would like to make contact with him. Contact: Jerry Stilling, 93 Union St., Crystal Lake, IL, 60014. [geraldstilling@att.net] 815-459-8369

**Looking for:** Anyone who remembers me. I went over on the Gordon with the Ft. Hood bunch, 9th Support, then to 1/46th on Hill 69. Was C Co. 4th platoon medic, then C Co. Sr. Aid. Contact: Johnny (Doc) Walker; walkin-j-ranch@hotmail.com



## Nominating Committee Report

By Lee Kaywork, Chairman

The ADVA Nominating Committee, in accordance with ADVA bylaws, has developed a slate of candidates for the 2016 association election. In addition to me the members of the Nominating Committee include Tom Packard, Connie Steers, Jay Flanagan, and Gary Noller.

Bylaws allow the nomination of candidates from the field by obtaining signatures from 15 current ADVA members. No nominations were made from the field. Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant, verified that each nominee is currently active in the ADVA with all dues paid.

Ballots will be mailed approximately April 1 with a return date of no later than April 30. Ballots are to be returned to me in the pre-addressed envelope that will be provided with the ballot. I expect the tabulation to be complete no later than May 15. Newly elected officers will be notified by June 1 and will take their posts on July 1 for a two year term.

Eleven candidates will be elected to positions on the Executive Council. It is not necessary to vote for eleven candidates but if a ballot is returned with more than eleven candidates marked the ballot for Executive Committee will be void. After the Executive Council is set the Nominating Committee will facilitate the selection for the position of Chairman of the Executive Committee.

The candidates for each position are listed below in alphabetical order along with their Americal unit and current residence location. Incumbents are designated with an asterisk (\*).

A voting ballot will be created with names listed according to a random drawing.

Bylaw amendments may also be on the ballot. Before a bylaw amendment is placed on the ballot it must be reviewed by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is required to indicate its recommendation to approve or to reject the bylaw amendment.

## Slate of Candidates

### Commander

Robert Cudworth  
11 LIB  
Moosic, PA

### Sr. Vice-Commander

Connie Steers  
B/4/21/11  
Hicksville, NY

### Jr. Vice-Commander

J. Reginald (Reggie)  
Horton  
A/1/6/198  
Roxboro, NC

## Executive Committee (Select no more than 11)

Roy A. Abbott \*  
HHC/1/46/196  
Chino Valley, AZ

Robert M. Anderson  
23 Med. Co.  
Centerton, AR

Cary B. Bacall  
523 Sig. & A /23  
Admin  
Long Lake, MN

David A Chrystal, Sr.  
23d MP Co.  
Centralia, MO

Robert K. Cowles  
E/1Cav/11  
New Berlin, IL

David D. Eichhorn  
HHC & C/3/21/196  
Fleming, OH

Grant Finkbeiner  
B/5/46/198  
Maspeth, NY

John J. (Jack) Head  
E/4/21/11  
Indianapolis, IN

Gary L. Noller \*  
B/1/46/196  
Center Point, TX

Verner N. Pike \*  
23 MP Co.  
Cary, NC

Richard Ropele  
E/1/6/198  
Corona, CA

Robert G. Short  
C/1/46/196  
Kalamazoo, MI

Richard K. Smith \*  
23 MP CO.  
Friend, NE

Gerry Thacker  
A/4/3/11  
Sun City, CA

Tim Vail  
C/1/46/198  
Roanoke, VA

## Americal Legacy Foundation Scholarship Application Deadline April 1, 2016

See complete details and an application form is available at the Americal Legacy Foundation website at [americalfoundation.org](http://americalfoundation.org).

Completed application forms together with all required enclosures must reach the Americal Scholarship Program Chairman at no later than 1 April of each year. The application form requires the following of the applicant: name, address, marital status, date of birth, place of birth, high school attended, high school graduation date; father's name, occupation, mother's name, occupation, sponsoring ADVA member's name, dates with Americal Division, unit, and highest rank or grade; if parents are deceased, name and address of guardian; name and address of school to be attended; and applicants signature.

Completed applications should be mailed to William Bruinsma, 5425 Parmalee Rd., Middleville, MI 49333.



## Vietnam War 50th Commemoration Commemorative Partner Program

By John G. Woyansky, A/2/1 Inf.

In September 2015 I attended the 196th LIB Reunion in Daytona Beach and joined other 2/1 Infantry veterans in the hospitality lounge. I made a point to tell Rich Rinaldo that the ADVA scheduled their annual national reunion for 28 Oct.- 1 Nov. in Norfolk, VA and that the 2/1 Infantry Chapter would be there. I told him that I had been communicating with Rich Heroux, commander of B/2/1 in 68-69, and then current president of the 2/1 Infantry Chapter. Rinaldo thought that he knew Heroux and that since he lived in Newport News across the river from Norfolk he would attend the Americal reunion as well.

Long story short, Rich Rinaldo and Rich Heroux recognized each other and they had crossed paths during their time with 2/1 Inf. in Vietnam. Rich Rinaldo talked up the 50th Commemoration Commemorative Partner Program (CPP). Rich Heroux is the ADVA Assistant Adjutant and some inroads were made to have the ADVA become a CPP partner. ADVA members discussed at the Norfolk business meeting and approved a motion to participate in the CPP. I was asked by Rich Rinaldo to be the Chairperson.

After the reunion researched the Vietnam War 50th Commemoration website and completed and submitted the application. I accepted the position of chairperson with Rich Heroux and Roger Gilmore as committee members,.

The Americal Division Veterans Association was formally recognized as a Department of Defense Vietnam War Commemoration Commemorative Partner on 22 DEC 2015. CPP Partners are required to provide at least two events during the 2015-2017 years to meet the objectives of the program.

For more information go to: <http://www.vietnamwar50th.com/>

The commemorative program will include activities and ceremonies to achieve the following objectives:

1. To thank and honor veterans of the Vietnam War, including personnel who were held as prisoners of war (POW), or listed as missing in action (MIA), for their service and sacrifice on behalf of the United States and to thank and honor the families of these veterans.

2. To highlight the service of the Armed Forces during the Vietnam War and the contributions of Federal agencies and governmental and non-governmental organizations that served with, or in support of, the Armed Forces.

3. To pay tribute to the contributions made on the home front by the people of the United States during the Vietnam War.

4. To highlight the advances in technology, science, and medicine related to military research conducted during the Vietnam War.

5. To recognize the contributions and sacrifices made by the allies of the United States during the Vietnam War.





**Dear editor,**

I recently received my Americal Legacy Foundation calendar. Looking through the photos I noticed the photo for "November" include Major General Lloyd B. Ramsey. I visit a previous neighbor at the local retirement community where MG Ramsey lives. Upon meeting General Ramsey I presented him my copy of the calendar and a 198th BDE lapel pin. He asked me to immediately put the pin on his shirt. MG Ramsey had an extensive career in the Army and his last assignment was to command the Americal Division in Vietnam. I wanted to let everyone know that he is 97 years old, active, and living comfortably in Roanoke, Va. [Late news: MG Ramsey passed away on February 23, 2016.]

Doug Giffin; B/1/6/198

**Dear editor,**

I was at a flea market in Kingston, Arkansas and I found an old newspaper that was of special interest to me. The main topic in this newspaper was the death of President Franklin Roosevelt and about his funeral.

This newspaper also had articles about the time and dates that we attacked Cebu and the night attack when I was wounded. It also had the information about the attack of Bohol along with the April 12, 1945 attack when we pushed the Japs off the Babag Ridge overlooking Cebu City. The Americal Division was named as the attacking force. We forced the Japs to withdraw from the high ground around Cebu City. After this battle there was no more major fighting on Cebu. I think I pulled the last patrol against the Japs in August 1945 just before we were sent to Japan on August 24, 1945.

Ray "Pop" Poynter, 1SG Ret.

**Dear editor,**

Everyone is invited to LZ Maryland. This is a weekend event for all Vietnam veterans and supporters. It will be held June 18-19, 2016 at the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium, MD. This is near the junction of I-695 and I-83 in Baltimore County. For more information go to <http://vietnam.mpt.org/lzmaryland/>.

Jack Murphy; B/1/1 Cav.

**Dear editor,**

I want to sincerely thank the Americal Legacy Foundation for the picture of the APCs on the cover of the 2016 Americal calendar. It warmed my heart to see a representation of what I once did. I am sure you made a lot of 11 Deltas very happy. Again, thank you.

Lawrence Christie; B/1/1 Cav.

**Dear editor,**

You may remember me from an article you kindly wrote about me in the Americal Journal several years ago. I would like to inform you that the Oklahoma Military Hall of Fame (OKMHF) inducted an Americal soldier, Spec. 4 Donald Sloat, Co. D, 2/1 Infantry, who was killed in Vietnam and only recently awarded the Medal of Honor. His recognition came in November 2015 at the OKMHF annual event. Sloat's brother Bill accepted the award from me (photo) and members of his family received a commander's coin.

The OKMHF has inducted other Americal soldiers in past years. These are LTC (Ret.) Mike Slonicker (2013), a helicopter pilot with the 174th Assault





Helicopter Company (AHC); MAJ Frederick J. Ransbottom (2013), killed at Kham Duc on 12 May 1968 while serving with E Recon, 2/1 Infantry; and SGT William E. Wright (2014), also with E Recon, 2/1 Infantry, at Kham Duc.

I served in the 1/52 infantry from July 1969 to July 1970 as an infantry platoon leader, and was the founder of the OKMHF in 1999. I was pleasantly surprised to see Les Hines, ADVA Vietnam Historian, at the 2015 OKMHF event, I am corresponding with him about the division's history.

MG Douglas Dollar (Ret.); C/1/52/198

### South Mid-West Chapter News

By Gray Rellon; Chapter Reporter

A contingent of SMW Chapter members attended the quarterly memorial service held at the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH) in Gulfport, Mississippi on January 4, 2016. They attended the service to honor the memory of ADVA charter member, founding National Adjutant, and chapter member Albert (Al) Cotta who passed away at the AFRH in October 2015.

Chapter Commander Cameron Baird was accompanied by chapter members Malcolm and Beverly East, National Adjutant Roger Gilmore, PNC Ronald Ward, and PNC Gary Noller. They were escorted to the memorial service by Robert Macy, AFRH resident and long-time friend of Al Cotta.

Macy had the sad chore of clearing Al's items from the AFRH. This included two sacks of Al's ADVA certificates, awards, and documents. The photo above shows Cameron Baird sorting through the items while Gary Noller (left) and Bob Macy (center) observe.



### Great Mid-West Chapter News

By John (Dutch) DeGroot; Chapter Secretary

The Great Mid-West Chapter held a meeting during Winterfest in New Glarus, Wisconsin on Saturday, January 16, 2015. The meeting opened with a prayer; a moment of silence for our service members, veterans, and MIAs; followed by the pledge of allegiance. In attendance were Commander Dale Belke, Dutch DeGroot, NC Dave Crystal, Joe Kotarba, Bill Stucker, Steve Reisdorff, Dennis Laird, Larry Flinders, John Mathews, John Murphy, Mike Iverson, Lynn LaRock, and Jim Van Den Heuvel.

John Mathews made a request that the members of the 1/1 Cav keep coming back to Winterfest in honoring our late comrade Terry Babler. The floor was opened at this point and a discussion was brought up on the leadership rotation in the ADVA. Points were made that the same individuals were always running things. There was also the point made that there was no one stepping up to fill these volunteer jobs. It was recommended that vacancies be announced in the newsletter so those wishing to volunteer could apply.

Commander Belke said he must step down after many years of dedicated service to the chapter. Doc Williams was nominated in absentia. ADVA National Commander Crystal shall contact him to see if he will accept. The vote was unanimous. Great Midwest Chapter shall be once again meet at Winterfest 14 January 2017 at 0830. There was then a closing prayer by Commander Belke and a salute to the colors to close the meeting at 1040 hours.

#### **Dear editor,**

Co. C, 5/46 Infantry will hold our eighth reunion on July 14-17, 2016 in Nashville, Tenn. Location is the Comfort Suites Airport and all of Charlie Company members are welcome to attend. This offers a great time to reunite with brothers and catch up on what is happening today. We usually eat meals together and have some entertainment for everyone. There are a lot of things to do and see in Nashville and it will be happy to see all of you again. Contact Dale Melton, meltonfarms@gmail.com, 217-232-5398 or Ed Arndt, edwardarndtjr@yahoo.com, 615-479-6297 for all the information.

Dale Melton; C/5/46/198

*2016 ADVA National Reunion  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
September 14 – 18*

**HOTEL**

The headquarters hotel is the Crowne Plaza Albuquerque conveniently located at 1901 University Blvd. NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87102. A room rate of \$90 per night plus 13% tax has been established for the reunion dates of September 14-18 inclusive. Reservations must be made directly with the hotel by calling 866-384-4934. You must specify that you want the special ADVA reunion rate at the time you make your reservation. The rate cannot be changed at time of check-in. Reservations must be made no later than August 20, 2016 to qualify for the special rate. The number of rooms held at the special rate is limited so make your reservations early. After August 20 or when all special rate rooms are reserved the hotel may offer additional rooms but only on a space available basis and at the regular hotel room rate. Ask the hotel about special rates for arrival before September 14 or departure after September 18. Room reservation includes up to two free breakfasts per day and free wireless service in guest rooms. The hotel has free on-site self-parking. Arrangements are being made for a free shuttle to and from the hotel for Thursday arrivals and Sunday departures only.

**GETTING THERE**

Albuquerque is located in the north central part of New Mexico on the historic cross-country Route 66 and is easily reached today by Interstate Highways 25 and 40. It is also a stop on the AMTRAK Chicago-Los Angeles route. It is served by the Albuquerque International Sunport which is conveniently located about five miles south of the reunion hotel. Seven airlines offer frequent service in and out of the Sunport. The airport ground transportation includes taxicabs as well as reduced rate shared shuttle service.

**WEATHER AND ALTITUDE**

Albuquerque is known for its dry climate, bright sun, and large day-night temperature differentials. September is an excellent month to visit the area but be sure to bring a light jacket to wear in the early morning and when the sun has set. Daytime high may be as much as 80F but cooling to 55F very quickly at night. The altitude varies widely from 4,900 feet at the Rio Grand River downtown to 6,700 feet in the foothills of the Sandia Heights. If you take the aerial tram to the top of Sandia Peak you will enjoy a panoramic view from at an elevation of 10,400 feet and much lower temperatures than in the city.

**THURSDAY — OPEN DAY FOR EVERYONE**

No group tour is planned for Thursday to allow everyone to plan their own excursions in the Albuquerque-Santa Fe area. There are many exciting things to see and do and with a little advance planning a very productive and enjoyable day can be arranged. Santa Fe is located about one hour north of Albuquerque via I-25. Beyond Santa Fe are attractions in Taos and Angel Fire. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial State Park in Angel Fire is a three hour drive from the hotel.

Albuquerque highlights: See the website at [www.visitalbuquerque.org](http://www.visitalbuquerque.org) for official Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau information. They will mail you a free visitors guide upon request. Some popular Albuquerque attractions include the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center, Historic Old Town, Albuquerque Museum, Maxwell Museum of Anthropology, National Hispanic Cultural Center, Petroglyph National Monument, Sandia Peak Aerial Tramway, Turquoise Trail National Scenic Byway, and ABQ Biopark Zoo.

Santa Fe highlights: Santa Fe is about an hour north of Albuquerque on I-25. The New Mexico Rail Runner Express makes several trips between downtown stations in Albuquerque and Santa Fe. Upon arrival in Santa Fe a free shuttle provides transportation to several old town Santa Fe attractions. Information about Santa Fe may be found at [www.santafe.org](http://www.santafe.org), the official travel site of Santa Fe. Popular Santa Fe area sights include Loretto Chapel, Bandelier National Monument, Bataan Memorial Military Museum and Library, Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, Santa Fe Plaza, New Mexico History Museum, Georgia O'Keefe Museum, and Palace of the Governors.

**FRIDAY GROUP TOUR**

A special group tour will begin loading buses at 8:30 AM on Friday, September 16. Tentative plans include stops at the Anderson-Abruzzo Albuquerque International Balloon Museum, the Unser Racing Museum, and the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History. These museums are not large but they have excellent quality and do a great job of depicting the diversity of Albuquerque. Lunch is included with the Friday tour and will be held at The Cooperage, a well known Albuquerque restaurant privately owned and operated for 40 years. After lunch the tour will proceed to the nearby New Mexico Veterans Memorial and hold the annual ADVA memorial service in honor of all departed veterans who served in the Americal Division. This memorial consists of a 25 acre park, museum, library, and amphitheater. It has many memorials dedicated to branches of service, wartime era, and military units. The tour will return to the hotel by 4:00 PM and the remainder of the evening will be open.

**SATURDAY MEETINGS AND BANQUET**

The annual membership meeting will be held on Saturday morning. Saturday afternoon is open for all to enjoy the day out or to visit in the hospitality room. The evening banquet will conclude the reunion activities for another year. The banquet offers a choice of entrees and has limited seating. Seat selection will be provided at the reunion so be sure to know who is in your group and provide this information when required.

**MORE INFORMATION**

You may obtain more information as it is provided on the REUNION tab on the [americal.org](http://americal.org) website. An update will also be provided in the April-May-June edition of the Americal Journal magazine. Reunion chairman is Ronald Ellis. Send him an e-mail at [re196thlib@aol.com](mailto:re196thlib@aol.com) or call him at 903-738-9897. Reunion registrations are to be sent to PNC Ron Ward, 280 Vance Rd., Protem, MO, 65733-6346. Please provide your phone number and e-mail address with your registration in case reunion staff needs to contact you about late changes in the schedule.



## ***ADVA 2016 Albuquerque Reunion Registration Form***

Please use this form to pay your registration fees and purchase event tickets. Make checks payable to ADVA 2016 Reunion. Send completed registration form and payment to PNC Ron Ward, 280 Vance Rd., Protom, MO, 65733-6346. Please include your e-mail address if you wish confirmation of your reservation to be sent to you. Make lodging reservations directly with the hotel at 866-384-4934.

MAIN ATTENDEE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ UNIT/YRS: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

GUEST(S) NAMES(S): \_\_\_\_\_

ADVA MEMBER: ☐ YES ☐ NO

1ST TIME ATTENDING? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Registration Fee: Current member ADVA \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee: Americal Veteran but non-member of ADVA \$35 \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

This includes a one year membership in ADVA

Each additional guest \$20 x \_\_\_\_\_ number of guests \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Friday Tour and Lunch \$50 x \_\_\_\_\_ number of tours \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Banquet \$50 x \_\_\_\_\_ number of Prime Rib \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 x \_\_\_\_\_ number of Salmon \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$50 x \_\_\_\_\_ number of Vegetarian \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to ADVA 2016 Reunion**

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

Do you plan to stay at the reunion hotel? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ DON'T KNOW

How do you plan to arrive in Albuquerque? ☐ CAR ☐ AIRPLANE ☐ OTHER

If you are flying, please list planned:

Arrival Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Arrival Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you require a mechanical lift to board a bus? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Explain any special accommodations or requests: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Send completed form and payment to PNC Ron Ward, 280 Vance Rd., Protom, MO, 65733-6346.**

## CHAPTER 16

### ATTACK ON FIRE BASE MARY ANN

© By Andy Olints

[Continuation from previous editions of the Americal Journal – Editor]

I arrived back at Fire Base Mary Ann after a seven day R&R (rest and relaxation) in Australia. I had a nice time there and it was great to get out of the field for ten days. Once back at Mary Ann I learned that it would be two days before my company would be re-supplied in the field. That meant I got to spend two days on Mary Ann doing nothing, since the only way for me to get to my company was on the re-supply helicopter. Tim Selover and Mark Olson offered let me stay in their bunker for the two days that I would be on Mary Ann. Tim and Mark were former members of my platoon.

A fire support base by the name of LZ (landing zone) Mildred had been re-opened, and Tim and Mark had volunteered to go there with Delta Company's mortar team. Lt. Tom Schmitz, my former company commander, was in charge of LZ Mildred. I always thought that it was very scary to re-open a base. First of all, not many men would be on the base and everyone would have to be on alert at all times. Also, the enemy in the area would not want a base so close to them. Usually, the first few days of a new base, the enemy would try to attack it. I give a lot of credit to Tim, Mark and Tom for going out to this new base when they could have stayed on the supposedly safe FB Mary Ann.



**Damaged bunker. Bunkers were pre-fabricated of heavy wooden beams in Chu Lai and flown by heavy lift helicopters to Mary Ann. Earth filled ammo boxes and sandbags were used for protection.**

Not only did Tim and Mark offer me their bunker to stay in, but they also told me to help myself to anything that was in the bunker. I had all the soda and treats I wanted, and they also had a battery-operated tape recorder. I listened to a tape of Janis Joplin for hours. The guys on the base treated me great. I had no duties to do and no guard duty at night. I knew a lot of guys on the base and I would visit people in different bunkers. One time I stopped to watch a mortar team practice. This mortar team took their job seriously and wanted to be as good and quick as possible when they were needed in a real fire mission.

Most of the guys on the base had a nice suntan. I didn't have a suntan because I had been out in the mountains and you don't get much sunlight going through the tall trees. This dipstick kid on the mortar team looked at me and said, "Looks like we have a new guy on the base." He started to give me some bullshit until one of the other guys on the squad told him who I was.

The bunker I was staying in was actually two bunkers. Each bunker was a container made out of metal about eight feet square with an open door on one end. The two bunkers faced each other and were about five feet apart. Connecting one bunker to the other was a wooden roof. Two layers of sand bags covered the tops of the bunkers and the wooden roof, and another two layers of sand bags were on the sides of each bunker. I felt very safe in the bunker and had a great night's sleep lying on an air mattress.

Fire Base Mary Ann was built around May 1970 and it was now March 26, 1971. I felt very secure on the base and so did a lot of the guys. After supper at night a lot of the guys, including me, would walk around to visit the guys in other bunkers. When the base was first built we always carried our M-16 rifles with us. Ten months later, a lot of us didn't carry them because we felt so safe on there. Usually by ten o'clock at night everyone went back to his own bunker and stayed there till daylight the next morning. If a soldier went out after ten, he stayed on the dirt road in the center of the base. Also, if he was out after ten and encountered other soldiers, he had to say in a loud voice, "Friendly," which meant, "I'm a stupid ass and I am walking around the base in the dark and one of my own men might shoot me." Some nights when there wasn't any moon out, it was very dark. On the nights it rained, it was even darker.

There were twenty-two bunkers around the outer edges of the base. In those twenty-two bunkers was



a company of infantry soldiers. From one bunker to another bunker was a trench line dug about two feet deep. Twenty feet farther out from the trench line was barbed wire that went all around the base. After an infantry company spent from fourteen to thirty days out in the field, they came to the base for a four-day rest. Usually, after a mission, most companies had about sixty men still in the company. With twenty-two bunkers, that meant about three men to each bunker.

Guard duty at night extended from about 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. Eight hours of guard duty divided by three men comes out to a little less than three hours a night for each man in a bunker. The men in my bunker would do one and a half hour shifts. That meant twice a night I had to get up to pull guard duty. The combination of the darkness and physical exhaustion made it very hard to stay awake at night. I would do everything I could to stay awake, like think about home. I would sit outside the bunker and look



**Damaged American weapons and radios.**

into the darkness and many times I thought I saw some movement

outside the base. When it rained I would stay inside the bunker, look out the window (no glass, just an opening), and stare at the darkness. I have to say that more than once I did fall asleep. With three platoons in the company and six radios that meant one radio for about every six bunkers. If the soldier on guard duty for an hour and a half had a radio in his bunker, he would call in a situation report about every hour to the radio operators in the Tactical Operation Center (TOC) on the base.

The inner part of the base had soldiers working inside bunkers. I never got to see it, but I assumed that the Tactical Operations Center was located in the same bunker as the battalion commander. A group of radio operators performed their duties there. These radio operators



**Enemy weapons and ammo.**



had radio contact with all the companies in the battalion. They plotted on a large map the location of each company and platoon that was out in the field. Radio contact between the TOC and the companies in the field continued twenty-four hours a day.

Every night, inside different bunkers, the mortar TOC was staffed by soldiers from two different mortar teams, the four-deuce (4.2 inch) and the eighty-one (millimeter) mortars. Someone from each of the teams was always at the mortar TOC waiting to get the location of where to fire the mortars. Once a fire mission was called, all sixteen men on the mortar teams went into action, and believe me, they did their job. The leaders of these teams were excellent. If a mortar team member didn't take his job seriously, he was sent back to the field. The eighty-one mortars were used for close-range mortar rounds and the four-deuce mortars were used for a long-range mortar rounds.

The artillery section of the base

was used in the same manner as the mortar section. The 105 (millimeter) artillery guns were used for the shorter fire missions and the big 155 (millimeter) artillery guns were used for long range work. I once heard that the 155 artillery guns could fire a round fifteen miles away. I also heard that no platoon was to travel any farther than fifteen miles from the base. That way there was always artillery support for the infantry.

During the day the infantry company that was on the base got three hot meals a day. This company was kept busy taking out light patrols around the base. When the men were not on patrol, they had classes in infantry training. Other things the infantry company had to do were to fill sandbags with dirt and place these sandbags around the bunkers. A two-foot trench that circled the base also had to be dug and maintained. I guess the main idea was to keep the infantry company occupied. When I was on the base, I always found a way to write letters home. I guess I did

a little work and then somehow found a place to hide and write those letters. I have to say that being on the base was a lot better than being out in the field.

After two great days of being on Fire Base Mary Ann, I was told to get my M-16 and pack ready and to get on the re-supply helicopter that was flying out to my company in the field. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon and I was sitting near the re-supply helicopter pad when the helicopter landed. A team of guys loaded C-rations, ammo, mail and a few cases of soda onto the chopper for the guys in the field, and much to my surprise, there wasn't any room for me. The door gunner on the chopper called to me and said the chopper was taking out the re-supplies first and then they would come back and take me out to the field. That sounded great to me. If they didn't come back to pick me up, I could stay on the base for four more days till the next re-supply day.

I watched the helicopter fly south. To the right of the helicopter was a very large mountain. Straight and to the left of the helicopter was a valley. I had worked that area before so I kind of knew where the helicopter was going. I sat on the helicopter pad all alone, telling myself that the helicopter was not coming back to take me to the field. Then off in the distance I saw that helicopter coming back to the base. It landed and the door gunner told me the chopper was low on fuel and that they had to fly back to their base to get more fuel. I was told to stay put. They were going to come back and get me and take me to the field. I smiled and said, "OK." It was getting late in the day and no pilot wanted to go out to the field late in the day.

I really felt I was going to get four more days on the base and



**Cavity dug under large boulder outside perimeter. A hand grenade was tossed into the cavity to explode any possible booby traps. RPG round was left untouched.**





**Destroyed CONEX shipping container.**

it wouldn't be my fault that I didn't get to the field because the chopper didn't take me there. I made sure I stayed on the helicopter pad, but I knew that chopper was not coming back. A different helicopter landed and at least fifteen South Vietnamese artillery soldiers got onto the helicopter that was taking them back to Chu Lai. I remember thinking, "Look at those little shitheads climbing into the helicopter. I bet they're going to be paid and then they will spend a month with their families in Chu Lai." They seemed extra happy. I sat alone on the chopper pad and kept looking east to see if that chopper was coming back for me.

At least forty-five minutes later I saw a helicopter heading towards the base. I just couldn't believe it. It was almost dark on March 27, 1971, and I was actually getting on a helicopter and being flown out to my platoon in the field. Little did I know that God was watching out for me. I didn't know it at the time, but a company of North Vietnamese soldiers had already surrounded Fire Base Mary Ann.

My platoon seemed happy to see me back in the field, and I have to say I missed seeing the guys in the platoon. When the platoon was re-supplied with food and ammo, they were also given two cases of soda, and everyone in the platoon got two cans. Even though I had been out of the field for twelve days, Frank Strzempka made sure that the platoon saved two sodas for me.

Once I settled in at the platoon night laager, I was given the orders for the next day. I was told to take my squad and set up an ambush on the river very early

the next morning. I was then told that there was a lot of movement on the river and that I should have the squad ready for some contact with the enemy. I hate to say it, but I felt good getting in the hammock that night. I felt like I was back with the guys where I belonged.

I had no problem getting to sleep, but around two-thirty in the morning I heard some noise off in the distance. I actually said to myself, "B-52 bombers must be dropping some bombs in Laos," which was not too far from where I was in the field that night. I went back to sleep and a short time later someone woke me up and told me that Fire Base Mary Ann was under attack by the North Vietnamese. Our platoon had two radios and both radios were getting information about the attack on Mary Ann.

Once our radio operator got some information, he would whisper the information to the guy next to him and that information was passed around through the platoon. The first information I heard was that two body bags were needed. Then I heard that four body bags were needed. I knew then that the bombing I had heard earlier was the mortars and rockets that were being fired at Mary Ann. I could still hear the mortar rounds but could not see any of the explosions that hit the base. We were too far away to see anything. For the next few hours we really didn't get a lot of information. I knew only that the base had been attacked by the NVA, that four soldiers had been killed, and that by about four o'clock in the morning on March 28 most of the fighting on the base was over.

Once daylight appeared and the men in our platoon



**Ruins of one of the command bunkers.**



could walk around our night laager, I got word that our company would be flown to Fire Base Mary Ann. We were told that help was needed on the base and our company had been selected to fly to Mary Ann as soon as possible. The first thing our platoon had to do was to find a landing area for the helicopters to pick us up. That didn't take very long.

All three platoons in the company regrouped at this landing area and sat there and waited for the helicopters to arrive. I'm guessing we sat there from seven o'clock in the morning till eleven o'clock before the helicopters arrived. It was the first time ever during my tour in Vietnam that we had fifteen helicopters and two gun ships pick us up out in the field. The helicopters picked up all the men in the company and headed to Fire Base Mary Ann. My helicopter was flying at about three or four thousand feet in the air, and I sat in the door of the helicopter with my feet hanging out.



**Items hidden by enemy under large boulder. Grenades, wire cutters, ammo magazines, and rifle are visible**

After about ten minutes of flying, I got my first look at Mary Ann. I couldn't believe it. There were about ten bunkers on fire and a lot more bunkers with smoke coming out of them. As I looked down at Mary Ann, I could see two gun ships circling the base. My helicopter circled the base a few times and then it was our turn to land. Usually, five helicopters could land on the base at the same time, but on that day only two helicopters could land at once.

Once my helicopter landed and I got off, the first thing I noticed were about twenty body bags laid out on half of the helicopter landing area. I started to count the body bags as I walked off the landing area. I stopped counting when someone yelled to us to go to our assigned bunkers and stay there. We were also told to try and fix up our bunkers in case of another

enemy attack. Zeddie Bell, Frank Strzempka and I went to the bunker we had been assigned for those times when we were on the base. Our bunker was in the southeast area of the base.

Once we were at our bunker, we could see that it was blown up from the inside out. The enemy had used homemade bombs called "satchel charges," and had thrown them through the doors or openings in the bunkers. During my months on FSB Mary Ann I had spent many hours filling sandbags and putting them on top of the bunkers and on the sides of the bunkers, thinking these sandbags would protect us in case of a mortar attack. I never considered that the enemy would throw satchel charges through the door openings.

Every bunker I looked at was blown up and the only thing I could think of was, "What happened to the guys in the bunker?" I looked at my bunker and wondered if I would have been killed had I been on the base and in that bunker during the attack.

Before I describe what I saw as I walked around the base, I want to tell you what I think were the circumstances that led to the NVA attack on Fire Base Mary Ann. From the very first moment I set foot on the base, I felt someone was watching me. Mountains and trees surrounded the base, and some NVA had to be watching every move that was made there. I'm sure that from the very first day the base was opened, the North Vietnamese were planning an attack at some point in time.



**Destroyed bunker overlooking water point**





**An unexploded bangalore torpedo left behind in concertina wire. Sandbag placed on wire to hold it open and protect from snags.**

Around February 1971, Charlie Company captured over six hundred NVA weapons and some ammo and rockets in the area around Fire Base Mary Ann. Delta Company captured boats that were used to transport those weapons to other areas. I'm sure the NVA were not happy about losing those weapons, and I believe it was at that time that the NVA finalized a plan and made the decision to attack Fire Base Mary Ann. I'm sure the NVA knew which company captured their weapons (Charlie company) and where the company was located, and they wanted to get even with them. I'm also sure that the small platoon of South Vietnamese artillery soldiers stationed on Fire Base Mary Ann contained at least one person who was giving information to the NVA.

After seeing the base following the attack, I knew that the enemy who attacked the base knew exactly where every bunker on the base was. They also knew where the important bunkers were, like the TOC bunker, the medics' hooch, and the officers' bunkers. I believe that when the NVA decided to do something, they made a plan, and once that plan was agreed upon,

they made sure everyone involved knew exactly what to do. The NVA made scale models of the bases they wanted to attack and had their men study them. The NVA rehearsed the planned attack over and over. By the time the day was set to attack a base, everyone thoroughly understood the job he had to do, and if he was not killed, he accomplished it.

I was told that during the NVA attack, hundreds of rocket and mortar rounds landed on Fire Base

Mary Ann. Obviously, the NVA had put considerable thought and effort into deciding where to place the rocket launchers and mortar tubes on the different mountains surrounding the base. Once the NVA determined the locations for their artillery, they had to transport the rocket launchers and mortar tubes and ammo to the desired locations. It took a lot of manpower to move the rocket launchers and mortar tubes to the proper locations and yet go undetected while doing so.

Another part of the attack plan was a team of North Vietnamese soldiers called "sappers." The sappers were trained to sneak through or cut through the barbed wire that was placed around the base. Sappers breached the wire at FB Mary Ann in the early hours of the morning in total darkness. They could not make a sound because they didn't want to be detected in the wire. Once through the barbed wire, they had a definite plan of where to go and what to do. They would blow up bunkers and kill as many people as they



**Barber chair on top of destroyed bunker on southwest side of base. Bunker made from modified Conex is in background.**



could. Sappers were widely and successfully used in attacks on a lot of bases throughout Vietnam.

I believe that about fifty sappers were used to attack Fire Base Mary Ann. This is just a guess at the amount of sappers involved because no one will ever know the real number. As I walked from bunker to bunker after the attack, I personally counted ten dead sappers. Most of them had black shorts on, no shirt and no shoes. Every sapper had a straw basket very similar to a knapsack on his back. In the basket were enemy hand grenades and satchel charges. Some of the sappers carried AK47 rifles while others carried handheld rockets.

I always had a feeling that sappers were on the base undetected and in position to blow up bunkers at least an hour before the attack began. Once they started blowing up the bunkers on the south side of the base, they directed their rockets and mortar rounds to land on the northern sector. To add to the surprise of the attack and the darkness of night, the NVA dropped in a few mortar rounds



**Photo taken from VIP pad at south end of base looking to southeast. Song Trahn river in the background. Smoke is from a smoldering bunker fire.**

of tear gas to confuse the men on the base.

The sappers on the base never seemed rushed. I was told that in some cases the sappers would kill an American soldier and then take time to remove the soldier's wallet, watch, and ring. Sappers used whistles to signal to each other. Some sappers would talk in English and if an American soldier replied out of the darkness and confusion, the sappers would shoot him. With their carefully planned and efficiently executed

attack on Mary Ann, the NVA were able to inflict many casualties and much destruction on the American infantry there.

Now I would like to describe what I saw and heard as Zeddie Bell, Frank Strzempa and I walked around Fire Base Mary Ann after the attack. I will write only about the men that I knew on the base.

As Zeddie, Frank and I left our assigned bunker, we noticed in the trench line next to the bunker a 12" x 12" box of American hand grenades that had never been used. Within six feet of the bunker were two M16 rifles and two steel helmets. I never found out if anyone had been killed in the bunker.

Right behind my bunker was the Tactical Operations Center. Zeddie, Frank and I were on our way to see if there was any damage to the Tactical Operations Center, but before we could get there, we were stopped by one of the radio operators who worked there. He said to me, "Andy, we just got word from Division Intelligence that the NVA are going to attack Mary Ann again tonight." He told me to get my men ready and to stay alert all night because it was probably going to be another bad night. That was



**View from south hill looking to northwest. Boulder can be seen outside wire at center left. Conex boxes in center of photo were used to store resupply items. Artillery positions are located on top right.**



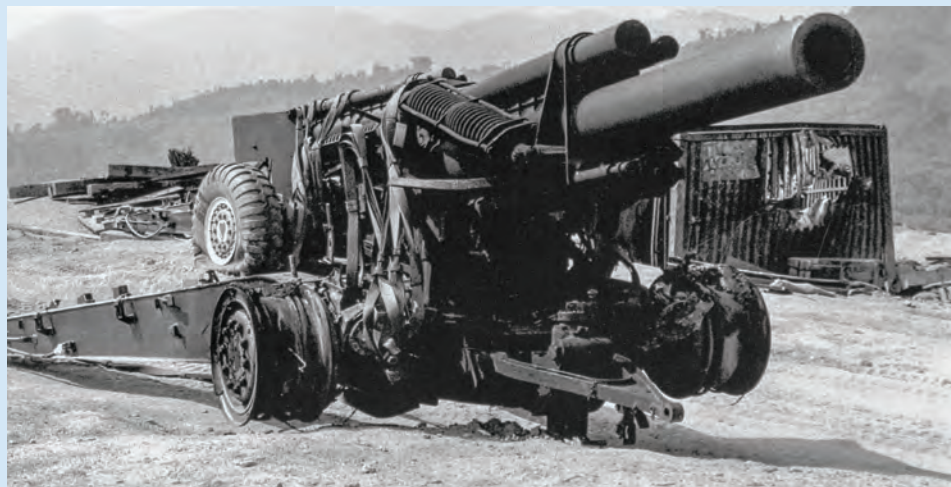


**View looking generally north to south along east side of base. Song Trahn river is down hill on left of photo. Artillery piece and ammo in center. TOC is located at the top of the far hill, left side of road.**

something I didn't want to hear.

Zeddie, Frank and I continued on our way to the Tactical Operations bunker. The bunker was built underground and was about twelve feet wide and about twenty-four feet long. The bunker had steps that led down to the interior. The bunker roof was made of wood and had lots of sand bags piled on it. As I was looking at the bunker, I could see that it was caved in and that black smoke was coming out through the roof. I wondered if anyone had survived the bombing of that bunker. Then I was told that everyone in the bunker had been wounded and that some of the men had been wounded more than once. Col. Doyle and Capt. Spielberg had been wounded. Lt. McKay was my platoon leader in the months of August and September, and he had been wounded several times in the bunker.

I got to talk to Lt. McKay a few years after the war and he told me what had happened to him during the attack. He said it was dark inside the bunker and he was lying in his bed when he heard an explosion. He tried to get up, but another explosion went off, wounding him. Lt. McKay



**Artillery piece extensively damaged by enemy explosives.**

wore thick glasses and couldn't see much without them. The second explosion had knocked his glasses off and he told me he had a very hard time seeing anything after that. He said the enemy used tear gas and that scared the hell out of him. Lt. McKay also told me that the enemy kept throwing hand grenades into the different rooms of the bunker. By the time Lt. McKay was helped out of the bunker, he had thirty percent of his body burned. He also had shrapnel wounds from the hand grenades. He asked for new glasses at a hospital in Vietnam and also in Japan. But each hospital told him that he would get glasses at the next one. Finally, after thirty days and after being relocated to a hospital in the States, he finally got a new pair of glasses. He was pissed.

The next bunker that Zeddie, Frank and I went to was the command post of Charlie company. Once again, the bunker was caved in and all the sandbags were scattered on top of any wood that had been used to make the bunker. There was black smoke coming out of the bunker and I could see blood on the nearby dirt. I was told that everyone in the bunker had been wounded and that Captain Knight had been killed. I was heartsick. I had always admired him for his leadership and never thought that he would be killed.

The next bunker that we stopped at was near the mess hall. A friend of mine by the name of John Norman was living in this bunker. John and I went to NCO school together and John had a re-supply job on the base. When I got to his bunker, John was there and told us what had happened to him. First, he showed us two rockets that had landed on his roof and that were





**Enemy weapons and ammunition policed up after the attack and placed in back of 5/4 ton truck. Bamboo baskets filled with grenades and satchel charges were worn on the back by enemy sappers.**

stuck in the sandbags on the roof. The rockets never exploded; they were duds. John told us that if the rockets had exploded, he would have been killed. John also told us that two other men were with him in the bunker. He said that all three of them lay on the floor as the sappers were firing their AK47s through the door of the bunker. The bullets were flying over his head while he was lying on the floor. No one in the bunker was wounded.

We moved on to the western part of the base and stopped at a bunker that was still burning. This bunker had been used by the Echo Recon platoon, and Lt. McGee had been staying there. I met Lt. McGee a couple of times. The first time I talked to him he had been wounded and was in the hospital. He was a graduate of West Point and that very much impressed me. I was standing next to the bunker in the area where he was killed. The sappers went into his bunker and shot everyone in there. Then two sappers dragged him out of the bunker while he was still alive. Somehow Lt. McGee got into hand-to-hand

combat with the sappers. Lt. McGee boxed at West Point and I'm sure he was fighting for his life when one of the sappers shot and killed him with an AK47 rifle.

Right next to the helicopter pad that was used for re-supply was the building where Bill Meek stayed. The building was about twelve feet square and made out of wood with sandbags around the outside. As I first looked at the building,

all I could see were two walls still standing, a wooden floor, and a caved-in roof. Very close to the building were two dead sappers. I just stood there and hoped that Bill was OK. Someone told me that Bill's legs had been badly hurt, and that he might have had two broken legs due to the roof and sandbags collapsing on him. Bill was in the hospital in Chu Lai.

On the other side of the helicopter pad were the two bunkers belonging to Tim Seloover and Mark Olson. I had stayed in these bunkers two nights before the attack on Mary Ann. As I approached the bunkers, I could see that the sappers had thrown a satchel charges into each one. These bunkers were made of steel and when the satchel charges went off, everything on the inside was blown to bits. The sandbags on the outside were blown away from the bunker. As I stood there looking at the bunker, I knew that if I had been sleeping inside, I would have been killed. I'm sure that once the sappers attacked the base and a lot of explosions went off, I probably



**Wooden battalion TOC bunker burned to the ground. Metal sheeting on roof collapsed into the excavation. Culvert halves formed a guard position on top of the TOC.**



would not have left the bunker. I would have just lain in bed thinking that our own artillery was firing their guns at the enemy out in the field. It was just hours before the attack that a helicopter had flown me out to the field late in the afternoon. Someone was certainly looking out for me.

As I walked to the area where the mortar teams were located, I looked for the bunker where Don Rice and Bob Stainton stayed. Their bunker was blown up and their roof was caved in. I was told that Don had been very seriously wounded. I found out that when the attack first started, Don was sleeping in his hammock inside the bunker. The bunker took a direct hit from a rocket or mortar round. Don was struck with shrapnel, which resulted in Don losing an eye. Don also had blood in his other eye and couldn't see.

Don told me later that the bunker was on fire and he could actually feel a wind draft so he crawled to what he hoped was an opening in the walls of the bunker. Once Don, unable to see, got outside of the bunker, he called out for help. Two people heard his call for help and approached him. Then these two people started to take his wallet and his watch. Don yelled, "What the hell are you doing?" Then he heard the two sappers talking in Vietnamese. Don couldn't see them, but he started punching them. The two Vietnamese sappers picked Don up and carried him off the base.

When the sappers got about one hundred feet off the base, they dropped Don on the ground. At the same time, with the help of the flares that were going off, a few of Don's friends saw the sappers and Don outside the base and started shooting their M16s at the sappers. Before the sappers ran off into the woods, they shot Don in the arm and leg. Don was one of the first to be put on a medevac helicopter and sent to a hospital in Chu Lai.

Bob Stainton was not in his bunker when the attack first started. I did find out that Bob and some of the men on the mortar team started firing flares into the air so the men on the base could see. It took a lot of guts to be out in the open with no protection, firing mortar rounds (flares), while the enemy overran the base. I give Bob and the other guys a lot of credit for doing what they did.

Located close to the mortar teams' bunkers and mortar tubes were six artillery guns. All six guns had been blown up. Each gun had two tires and both tires on all the guns were burnt off the rims from the explosions. I did notice that most of the American artillery rounds around the sides of the guns were not blown up.



**U. S. soldier examines remains of a safe that was in the battalion TOC. Safe was used for classified papers and to store payroll.**

We moved on to the northeast side of the base near the trench line to look at some of the bunkers still burning. We met one of the guys in Echo company who worked in supplies on the base. He told me that Dave Thomson had both feet blown off. When the rockets and mortars started landing on the base, Dave got out of his bunker and ran towards the trench line. One or more of the sappers spotted him and right when Dave jumped into the trench line, one of the sappers threw a hand grenade at him.

Dave landed on the grenade at the exact time it exploded. While Dave was yelling for a medic, the sappers threw more grenades at him, and Dave got a lot of shrapnel in his arms and face. I had seen so much carnage and destruction in the last half hour that I was just happy to learn he was alive. I really didn't think about him losing his feet.

Dave had been my point man in the months of July and August. Before that he had walked point in Que Son Valley. Eventually, Dave had been offered a job on the mortar team on Fire Base Mary Ann. After a few months on the mortar team, he got a job in Echo company supply. Dave had been drafted into the Army for twenty-four months of service. After basic training, infantry training, and twelve months in Vietnam, Dave had eight months remaining of his military obligation.

Dave, like a lot of Vietnam veterans, volunteered to extend his tour three months in Vietnam so that he would have fewer than six months left on his twenty-four month military obligation. Therefore, he would be eligible for the Army policy of releasing from service any Vietnam troops who returned to the United States with fewer than six months of active duty left. Because Dave had this nice "safe" job on the base, he decided to extend his tour for three months and wound up getting severely wounded.

I headed back to my bunker and all I could think about was how anyone had managed to live through the previous night. I don't think any words could ever describe what those men went through. I never really talked about the night of the attack on Mary Ann to any of my friends who were on the base that night. I'm sure it would not be an easy thing to talk about.

The unofficial casualty count was thirty American soldiers killed and seventy American soldiers wounded on Fire Base Mary Ann. The unofficial casualty count for the North Vietnamese was fifteen sappers killed on the base and an undetermined number of enemy soldiers reported killed outside the base by helicopter door gunners and artillery.

A few minutes after I got back to my bunker, I noticed that Chaplain Davidson was walking along the bunker line talking to the guys. I'm sure the Chaplain had spent all morning at the hospitals in Chu Lai talking to the wounded. The Chaplain was making sure the guys still on the base also had someone to talk to. I very much enjoyed the Chaplain so I went right over to him.

After seeing how we all were doing and determining whether we wanted to talk about anything, the Chaplain started talking about Dave Thomson. The first thing he said about Dave was, "I met a wonderful person today

who was so glad to be alive. His name is Dave Thomson and he lost both feet last night." That's when it first hit me; Dave lost both feet. I was heartsick. A little while later a friend of Dave's brought over two cases of soda. Dave's friend gave me the soda and said, "I know Dave was in your platoon and I'm sure he would have wanted his old platoon to have the soda." The gesture by Dave's friend and the severity of Dave's injury left us with nothing to say.

During the course of the day a large helicopter, a Sikorsky Skycrane, had been picking up the artillery guns that were blown up on the base and taking them back to Chu Lai for repair. The Skycrane would bring out a new artillery gun and take away the damaged one. These Skycranes were something to see. It seemed that everyone on the base would stop and look at this big helicopter fly in.

I was standing near the helicopter pad when a Skycrane approached the base. I just happened to be looking north in the direction of a large mountain. As I was looking at the helicopter, with the mountain in the background, I noticed a flash of light coming from the mountain. The flash of light was a rocket, fired at the helicopter by the NVA. I could see the rocket in the air coming towards the base. As I watched the rocket, I could see that it was going to land about two hundred feet short of the base. A lot of other guys saw the rocket being fired. Then I saw our artillery team aim their guns at the area the rocket came from.

In less than a minute after the enemy fired one rocket at the base, the artillery team fired at least ten artillery rounds right in the area where the enemy was. Each time an artillery round hit the trees in that area, the branches of the trees



**Destroyed radio gear recovered from TOC remains.**





**Contents of safe burned inside battalion TOC.**

would blow apart. With each round that the artillery fired, there was a round of cheers from the guys on the base. I'll never know if the guy who shot the rocket was killed or not, but I'm sure those artillery rounds scared the hell out of him.

During the afternoon a lot of the guys in Delta company picked up the weapons that had been left on the base by the wounded men in Charlie company. There were also quite a few weapons that the sappers had left on the base, like AK47s, hand grenades, rockets and satchel charges. These also had to be picked up and brought to an area near the mess hall. I have no idea who picked up the fifteen dead sappers inside the perimeter, but I did see them loaded onto a pickup truck that was on the base.

About five o'clock at night we got word that hot food had been sent out to the base from Chu Lai. We

were directed not to have too many guys go at once to the mess hall. There were to be no groups of men together as possible targets. I remember we had fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn and milk. After getting the food, four of us sat around the bunker where I was staying. We had just sat down (I was sitting on a steel helmet), and I was ready to enjoy that fried chicken, when a rocket fired by an NVA flew about fifty feet over our heads and landed down the hill from the base. As three more rockets were going over our heads, we ran to the trench line for cover.

I hid in the trench, hoping that one of those rockets didn't land on me. I made the mistake of making eye contact with one of the men in my squad. It's really something to be looking at someone who has fear in his eyes when he is looking at me with fear in my eyes. We both didn't want to die and it is a little humbling to have someone look at you when you're afraid. About fifteen minutes later we got out of the trench and went back to the bunker looking for our food. There it was, the fried chicken was on the ground along with the mashed potatoes and corn. I didn't pick up the mashed potatoes and corn, but I did pick up the fried chicken. I rubbed off the dirt and had a great meal.

It was getting dark, so Capt. Kirkey gave orders that fifty percent of the men in Delta company had to be awake all night on the bunker line. I had no problem with that because I just felt that the NVA were going to attack the base again that night. My bunker was blown up but still had a roof and walls. I just couldn't go inside that bunker at night. I dug a small hole in the ground and tried to sleep in it. If you ever heard the expression that someone slept with his eyes open, well, that was me all night. I think I heard every noise on the base. I was alert all night and I'm sure most of the guys were the same way. There was no contact with the enemy that night.

The next morning about nine I got word that Capt. Kirkey wanted my squad to go out on patrol. I was to get my squad and meet Capt. Kirkey at a bunker on the west side of the base. When I met up with Capt. Kirkey, he told me to take my squad and walk out about three hundred feet into the woods, turn and walk to my left for about three hundred feet, come back to the point where I started, and then go three hundred to the right. I was to stay in radio contact all the time with him. I wanted to say to Capt. Kirkey, "You have to be kidding me," but I didn't say a word to him. No one in the squad said anything. We had been given orders to go out on a light patrol and we were going.

When I got to the trench line, I looked out into the





**Destroyed Conex box. Enemy sappers threw satchel charges into bunkers resulting in many of the casualties take by U. S. forces.**

woods and said to myself, "I don't like this at all." I knew we were surrounded by the NVA, who were watching our every move. Why did we have to go out there and prove that the enemy was still around? From the trench line to the woods was about one hundred feet of open area. It had been defoliated with Agent Orange. My point man moved out first about twenty feet from the trench line. The second man was about ten feet behind him. I had moved about two feet from the trench line when the enemy fired four mortars rounds at us. The rounds landed very close to the tree line, which was about eighty feet from the point man. Both the point man and the second man ran back to the trench line, and our whole squad took cover in the trench when the four mortars rounds exploded. Capt. Kirkey was right there in the trench line observing us and told me we didn't have to go out. He was convinced that the enemy was still watching us.

An American spotter plane flew over the area around Fire Base Mary Ann after the attack. Quite often the pilot in the plane would spot

enemy movement and call in the location of the enemy to the artillery unit on the base. At least five times a day for the next three days after the attack, the artillery would fire their guns at the enemy. One of the nights after the attack the spotter plane noticed headlights from a truck that was moving along a river to the west of Mary Ann. Word got out on the radio that lights were spotted and there was going to be a fire mission. I was wide-awake when the guys in artillery started firing their six guns. It was very dark out and I could see the flashes

of light from the guns when they were fired.

Someone told me that this fire mission was called "Roadrunner." He explained that a "Roadrunner" is a planned fire mission on a road or river. The plan is to fire as many rounds on a given length of the road, not at one spot, but in a line. The fire mission lasted about one-half hour and I thought it would never end. Think about this; six artillery guns firing for one-half hour. How many rounds did they fire? I don't know but if a soldier didn't have any hearing loss before the fire mission, he certainly had hearing loss after it. The noise was unbelievable.

I think it was the third day after the attack that I once again saw the dump truck with the fifteen dead sappers in it. The truck was headed to the garbage dump at the northern part of the base. I didn't see what happened to the sapper bodies, but I was told that they were burned in the garbage dump. Burning enemy bodies is not proper military procedure, and a lot of officers got into trouble over it.

Later on in the third day after the attack I was surprised to hear that a company of South Vietnamese



**Members of Echo recon sift through remains of bunker destroyed by two RPG rounds.**





**Destroyed S-4 hootch. Blood stains from slain enemy sappers is visible on ground.**

soldiers were being flown out to Fire Base Mary Ann. My first thoughts were, "I hope they don't try to kill us at night." I just didn't trust the South Vietnamese soldiers.

Because South Vietnamese soldiers had been assigned to the southern half of the base, my platoon was told to move out of our bunkers to the northern half of the base. Frank Strzempka had taken his Seiko watch off in our former bunker and laid it next to his M16 there. When we were told to move, he grabbed his M16 and pack but forgot to pick up his watch. We were only fifty feet from the bunker when Frank realized that he forgot his watch. Frank went back to the bunker but someone, most likely

one of the South Vietnamese, had already taken the watch. Frank was about six feet two inches tall and weighed about one hundred eighty pounds. The Vietnamese were generally about five feet tall and a hundred pounds. At first I thought that Frank was going to hit a few of the Vietnamese and I was hoping Frank didn't kill one of them. He wanted his watch. Somehow I got Frank to walk away from the bunker without his watch.

It had been three days since the attack and the spotter plane was still seeing movement out in the mountains west of Mary Ann. The spotter plane would call in a fire mission and the artillery would fire their guns. Once in a while the

enemy would fire some rockets at the base, but none of the rockets landed there. I was still tense and felt that at any time the base could be attacked.

Everyone still had a hard time sleeping and about twelve o'clock on the third night after the attack, movement was spotted very close to the tree line west of Mary Ann. I was listening to the platoon radio when a soldier on guard duty said he had movement outside the barbed wire and called for a fire mission. One of the mortar teams fired a few rounds at the movement and everyone just waited. There was no more movement in that area. The next morning I heard that a dead North Vietnamese soldier was observed lying in the location of the movement from the night before.

There was very good news on the fourth day after the attack. Our company was going to Chu Lai for a few days of rest. A Chinook helicopter would fly us to Chu Lai. A Chinook could carry about thirty men at a time so the whole platoon could get on one helicopter. I was surprised that when the Chinook landed on the base, the first platoon of Charlie company got off. Charlie company was the company on Mary Ann when the base was attacked. They had lost a lot of men either killed or seriously wounded.

Amazingly, only four days later, Charlie company had replacements of men and was back out at Fire Base Mary Ann. When the first platoon of Charlie company got off the helicopter, our first platoon of Delta company got onto the helicopter to fly back to Chu Lai. I watched the men in Charlie company walking to their assigned bunkers. As they were walking to their bunkers, our artillery guns started firing at movement out in the jungle. When



**Collection of damaged U.S. weapons and other gear picked up after the attack.**



**New mess hall was moderately damaged in attack. After the attack it became the battalion TOC.**

the guns started going off, the men in Charlie company started to run to the bunker line. I felt so sorry for them. The sounds of the guns just scared the hell out of them.

The Chinook helicopter returned to pick up my second platoon of Delta Company, and we were on our way to Chu Lai. Once at Chu Lai we got a hot meal and clean clothes. It was late in the day so I headed to the NCO club for a few drinks. We had a building to sleep in, but I still couldn't sleep inside. I slept out in the grass for that first night back at Chu Lai.

The Americal Division base at Chu Lai was very large, and there were only two ways for soldiers to get to different parts of it. The first one was to get a jeep ride from one of the guys in the company area, and the second way was to get on the road and hitchhike. Usually, the first truck driving by would pick any soldier up and take him to where he was going.

On the morning of April 1, I wanted to go to the hospital to visit some of the guys who were wounded on Fire Base Mary Ann. I went alone and hitchhiked my way there. The hospital buildings were large barracks and I don't remember how I was able to locate the guys I wanted to see.

Don Rice was the first man I got to see. Don was lying in bed with bandages all over his body. Don's head was wrapped in bandages and he couldn't see me as I approached. As I got close to the bed, I kind of whispered to Don and said, "Don, this is Andy." Don spoke right away and kind of lifted the hand that wasn't wrapped in bandages. I held his hand carefully. I felt so bad that he was so seriously wounded. Don was the wounded one, but I could have fainted when I touched took his hand. All that emotion just rushed through my body.

Don talked about how he was wounded and how the sappers carried him off the base. We talked for a while till Don was tired. He said he was going home soon. I walked out of his hospital building with tears running down my face. The tears are something a person can't control. I sat on a chair outside his hospital building just thinking about him. Two nurses started walking towards me and I just panicked. I didn't want them to see me with tears running down my face. I then got up and started walking in the direction of a different hospital building.

The next person I went to see was Dave Thomson, who had lost both feet. As I was on way to his room, I asked myself, "What do you say to a guy with no feet?" I finally got up enough courage to walk into the building where Dave was. He saw me as I walked in the door and he called to me. When I got within three feet of his bed, he pulled off his blankets and showed me his wrapped legs. He then said to me, "They call me 'Shorty' now."

Dave was in a surprisingly good mood and easy to talk to. He told me that when the attack started on Mary Ann, he ran to the trench line and landed on a grenade. Dave's face and arms were cut from shrapnel. Other guys came in to visit Dave while I was talking to him. While the other guys talked, I looked around the hospital room. Across from Dave was a black soldier who was in Charlie company. I didn't know his name, but I had seen him a few times on Mary Ann. The poor guy was strapped in his bed and he appeared to be paralyzed. While I was looking at him, some medics came in and repositioned him in his bed. As I stared at him, we made eye contact. I never said anything to him, but I wish I had. To this day I wish I had said something. I talked a little more to Dave, and he also said he was going home soon.

The last person I got to see in the hospital was Bill Meek. Bill had some heavy lumber fall on his legs when his building was blown up on Mary Ann. It took a few days to get Bill up and walking, but by the time I got to see Bill, he was moving around the hospital. Bill seemed to be OK, and I spent about an hour talking with him.

I hitchhiked back to the company area. I have to say I was



emotionally drained. Everyone in my platoon was very special to me, and it was very hard for me to see these men hurt so badly. My company (Delta) stayed in Chu Lai for a few days and then it was back out to the field. Northeast of Mary Ann on the Tranh River was a new mini-firebase called FB Kathy.

There were only a few mortar teams that were stationed on Kathy, and Delta company was the infantry company that worked the area around the base. Being right next to the river was a great place for the local Viet Cong to do some farming. In one area we found a beautiful farmhouse with stone walks and shrubs along the walks. The farmhouse was on a flat area with a few veggie gardens. On the outer area of the farmhouse was an area of wild marijuana plants. We just had to name this place Marijuana Valley. Our company worked this area for about three weeks without any contact with the enemy.

I didn't know it at the time, but these three weeks were my last three weeks in the field in Vietnam. The last official thing I did was to help capture a cow. Yes, a real live cow. Once we had contained the cow, we called in to the company commander to see what he wanted us to do with it. I thought he was going to have us kill the cow. Minutes later the company commander called back to me and told me to take the cow to Fire Base Kathy, which was over a mile away.

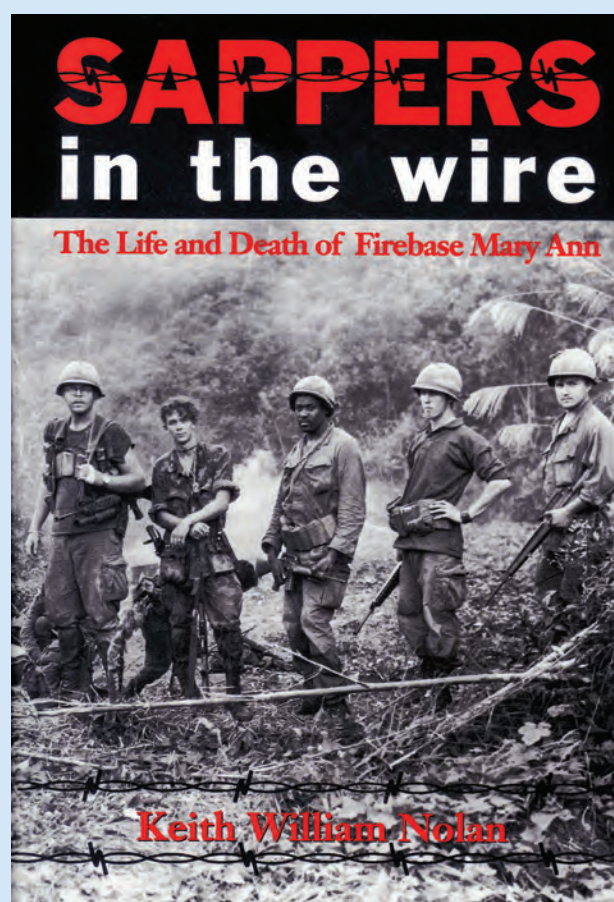
To get to Kathy, we had to walk on a flat open area, and it would have been very easy for a sniper to kill any one of us out in the open. The cow had a metal ring in its nose with a leather belt attached to the ring. I took the belt in my hand and looked at all the men in my squad. My thought right then was that I couldn't live with myself if I told someone to lead the cow to FB Kathy and that person was killed. So it was up to me to lead this cow on a mile walk to FB Kathy. I was very surprised how easy it was to lead this cow. I had no trouble at all.

As I was walking, the only thing I could think of was some poor farmer (a farmer by day and probably a VC at night) was watching some Americans take his cow. This same poor farmer wanted to get a gun and shoot the guy taking his cow. Thank God no one shot at me. As I walked up the hill at FB Kathy, all the guys on the hill stopped to watch me and the cow.

Once I was on top of the hill, the first person I saw was Mark Olson, a former member of my squad and at that time on one of the mortar teams on FB Kathy. Mark and I talked for a while and I was very happy to see him. I don't know who the leader of FB Kathy was, but whoever he was, he offered my squad some

food and a few sodas. Right before we got to FB Kathy, they had been re-supplied, and on the re-supply was a cooler filled with hot soup which had been made on FB MaryAnn. The soup was an Army version of Lipton's soup but not as good. My squad enjoyed the soup and sodas and then we had to head back to the field.

Whoever would believe that the mission to Marijuana Valley would be my last one in Vietnam? I'm happy I didn't know it at the time. Just think about it this way. You know it's your last mission and all you have to do is stay alive and you can go home. That's a lot of pressure.



**For further reading: The events preceding, during, and after the attack on FSB Mary Ann are detailed in the book "Sappers in the wire - The Life and Daath of Firebase Mary Ann" by Keith William Nolan. Nolan published SAPPERS in 1995 after extensive research of archival documents and interviews with soldiers who defended Mary Ann during the intense attack. The book is available at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).**

*Photo credits: Black and white photos by Robert A. Spangler. Color photos by Andy Olints.*

## Resolving My Mysteries of Vietnam

By Mike Ebert

MACV Advisory Team 16 Tam Ky, Quang Tin 1969

From January through December 1969, I was assigned to MACV Team 16 at Tam Ky, Quang Tin Province. Starting on 10 Mar, I began flying as an aerial observer with Americal pilots based at Chu Lai utilizing O-1 Bird Dogs. They would pick me up at "Tam Ky International Airport" in the morning or afternoon at a designated time. On the evening of 24 April at the Payne Compound mess hall Lt Shaw, USAF Forward Air Control Team Jake (The Jake FACS worked with MACV Teams 16 Quang Tin and 17 Quang Ngai Provinces and MACV advisors for the 2nd ARVN Division), showed Cpt Davis the Team 16, S2 and I some photographs taken of a highway he said was heading "straight" for Kham Duc being constructed by NVA engineers and laborers. I was very impressed, but I do not recall him giving us any grid coordinates.

On 6 and 7 May and 23 and 25 Jun we flew out to Kham Duc. The Kham Duc Special Forces camp had been under siege by elements of the 2nd NVA Division 10-12 May 1968. Rather than endure another Khe Sanh situation, General Westmoreland ordered Kham Duc evacuated on 12 May. Although it was now a year later, I found from my aerial views that Kham Duc was very impressive even in its wrecked state. If you took away the war damage it was a beautiful setting. The fact that a lot of bomb tonnage had been dropped up to and



**MACV command bunker at Tam Ky.**

including numerous B-52 strikes was very evident and still very fresh looking.

The flights to Kham Duc were two aircraft missions. One of the O-1s had an ARVN observer and that one flew low and the one I was in flew high. The low aircraft might have been at 1,000ft above ground level. We were another 500-1,000ft above them. I assume the logic was that if one aircraft went down the other would be able to loiter around, note the position, report the situation back to Chu Lai and await the arrival of a rescue helicopter. That assumes the occupants were still alive and capable of movement and could communicate with the remaining aircraft. This also assumes the remaining aircraft was not being fired upon by the VC/NVA or they were not closing in on the downed aircraft.

On two of these visits to Kham Duc we flew well to the west of it. The Team 16, S2 NCO had prepared a 1/50,000 map book of the entire Quang Tin Province for me. The maps were fitted into a large three-ring binder. Each standard map sheet took four pages to present and the binder totaled 68 pages. The problem was that since the aircraft was flying from 60-80mph you moved from one page to another in relatively short time especially if the direction of flight was opposite to that of the way the map sheets were laid out in the book. If there was no readily identifiable landmark on the ground like a prominent river bend, village, hill or mountain peak you had a tough time keeping your bearings. In the O-1 the pilot sat in the front and the observer was behind him and could not see the aircraft compass. Some distance west of Kham Duc, there



**Memorial to CPT Lloyd A Payne at MACV compound in Tam Ky.**



it was, a section of the new road, Lt Shaw had been talking about. He called it Hayes Road. I assume it was named for the first pilot who took note of it. Some of the area over and alongside the road had been defoliated. It was a two lane graded road. I took a couple of slide photos with a small Kodak Instamatic camera I carried as my proof of seeing a part of the trail system and I still have them. As the road moved around a hillside every so often on the high side we could see what looked like spider holes. These were probably entrances to bunkers built in conjunction with the road to provide shelter and protection for personnel in case of air strikes. My respect for our opponents went up 1,000% after I saw this feat of engineering and determination.

I had just actually had the privilege of seeing a section of the Ho Chi Minh trail system. Virtually all US personnel serving in or around South Vietnam heard of the trail system. But how many US personnel actually saw any part of it live? Very, very few. The MACV SOG people and their supporting pilots/crews and some USAF, Navy and Marine pilots and crews and some pilots and observers like me whose AO included the RVN border with Laos or Cambodia.

Back in Tam Ky when I saw Lt Shaw, I told him of our sightings and seeing the "spider holes." He asked at what altitude we were flying. I said I could not see the instruments from my seat but my estimate would be 1,000ft AGL and maybe less. He said we were crazy. Their SOP was not to fly lower than 5,000ft Above Ground Level over any part of "the trail!" The reason was the NVA had 23-37mm automatic AA guns out there and probably larger ones too. From subsequent research, I learned that MACV Special Forces SOG had a team on the ground west of Kham Duc in Laos on 13 May 1969 and the FAC they were communicating with ceased transmission after the team heard AA fire. The aircraft was subsequently declared missing along with the pilot and observer. So, Lt Shaw was right. We had lucked out the days we went out there.

The first time I flew in the back seat of the O-1 I put on the parachute. With it on I found out I could not move enough to the left or right to see down at the ground close to the aircraft. I wondered if a bail out was required if I could have even gotten out? The parachute was not worn again. I prayed that if we got hit and were going down, that this light little aircraft manned by a skillful pilot who was still capable of flying it would gently land in the tops of some trees and a rescue helicopter could just pick us right off their tops. Some naïve dream, eh? Well fortunately, I never had to find out. I wore a flak jacket and sat on



**Terminal building at Tam Ky "International" airport.**



**O-1 Bird Dog flown by Mike Ebert in Vietnam.**



**Mike Ebert at LZ Young on 7-8 July 1963. Overlooking Tam Ky-Tien Phouc road.**

another one. The Bird Dog's armament, if the pilot remembered to have them put on, was 4 WP rockets plus his side arm a .45 automatic or a .38 revolver. I took an M-16 with at least two bandoliers of 7 mags each. On occasion I had access to an M-79 and fired it out the side window at targets of opportunity with the pilot's consent. This was a great weapon except that the grenade's velocity was rather low. I found out by experimenting that you had to fire at the target well before you were abreast of it. You could see the grenade curving toward the target and its subsequent impact. I did not fire the M-16 from the back seat because control wires for the rudder and elevators were exposed on the floor. Why this was the case I do not know. But I did not want any shell casings that fell inside getting entangled in the wires and causing aircraft control problems for the pilot. I also had a supply of colored smoke, WP and CS grenades to toss out at interesting sightings to see if they would engender any activity on the ground. I thought about taking explosive grenades, putting them in a beer or soda can, pulling the pin and then dropping them out the window. The impact on the ground would certainly jar the grenade loose and it would subsequently explode. I finally nixed this idea as it seemed a little too risky in the confined space of the back seat with my very limited ability to move especially to bend over to get anything that fell on the floor. In addition, I had a pair of 7x50 Army binoculars and one or two canteens of water. This was a lot of equipment plus me stuffed into this little space.

I flew with numerous pilots but my favorite was WO McManus who had red hair and freckles as I recall. He

was piloting on at least one of the missions we made to see part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail system and I think on this mission we flew the furthest west of any flight. I made a remark in my journal that the road(s) seemed to get better the further west we flew. Whenever I flew with him the rocket rack was always empty by the time we landed back in Tam Ky. For example, one day we were well west of the Tranh River and we came upon about a dozen Vietnamese in black pajamas and conical hats working on a trail on a hillside. We were evidently down wind of them and they were busy and this little airplane did not make that much noise. So we evidently surprised them. This was definitely in VC/NVA territory. A couple of rockets went their way results unknown. I subsequently informed the Jake FACS of what we had seen and where. They said they too had noticed activity in the same location and were monitoring it.

On the trip back from seeing the trail, McManus said it was hot and we needed to cool off. He took the O-1 up to 9,000ft. It was about 60 degrees up there, natural air-conditioning! Once we crossed the Tranh River he said we needed to get back down. To do this he told me to make sure my harness was secure. He performed two Split S maneuvers one after the other. We were upside down at least three times by my calculations and this brought us down to about 3,000ft. On another occasion he let me fly the plane straight and level for 5-10 minutes. That was a thrill too.

Another pilot as I recall his name was Lt Linenweber. As we were flying one day, I was telling him about the flights to Kham Duc and beyond and how exotic I thought the place looked and the excitement I had of seeing a portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. One of his responding comments was that he had conducted a touch and go at Kham Duc sometime in the recent past. Wow! I thought. As I understood it, if you flew west of the Tranh River, Hiep Duc, Hau Duc, you needed to be on a two-plane mission. So at least three other people witnessed this maneuver it would seem unless he was somehow by himself. I don't know who, if anyone, I may have told this story to but subsequently some captain or major from Americal came to Tam Ky and asked me if I had heard of this event. Uh, oh, I thought. No sir, I haven't heard about such a thing. Evidently this maneuver, the touch and go, was a no no of the first order. As I recall from my reading, when Americal went back to Kham Duc in 1970, numerous booby traps were found on the remaining usable portion of



**Kham Duc airfield 1969.**

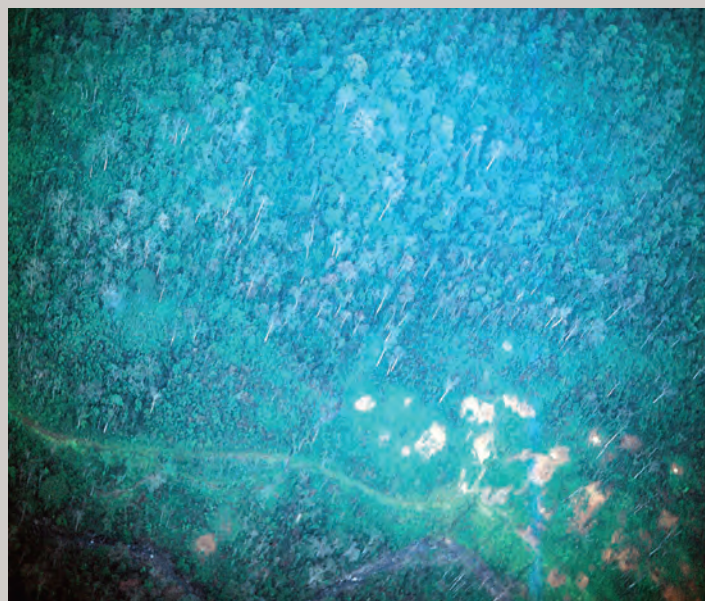


the Kham Duc runway. Were these in place in 1969? Lt Linenweber and possibly some other dare-devils had conducted this maneuver in 1969 and perhaps the VC/NVA observed and got the idea to install the booby traps.

For whatever reason I never found out what the coordinates were for the portion of the Ho Chi Minh Trail I saw. Over the years, I purchased several books hoping to find some reference to this road but came up with nothing certain. One book I did purchase is Vietnam from Cease-Fire to Capitulation by Colonel William E. Le Gro of the US Army Center for Military History (1981). On page 3, Le Gro says that in 1973 after the cease-fire, the NVA shifted sizable logistical units from Laos into South Vietnam as it developed the Rt14 corridor south from Khe Sanh. One reason for this project was that although the east-west distance was relatively short, the Monsoon season in Laos differed from that in the parallel area in Vietnam. The original Rt14 or QL14 passed through Kham Duc and ended at Thoung Duc in Quang Nam Province. Highway LTL4 would then be used to travel east from there and finally intersect QL1 to go north to Da Nang. So the NVA essentially built a new road south from Khe Sanh to some point in Quang Nam Province, maybe Thoung Duc, where it intersected with the original Rt14/QL14. Today if you go to Vietnam and want to see the Ho Chi Minh Trail, this is what you will be shown. They still evidently do not admit to being in Laos. On page 39, Le Gro says, aerial photography in April 1973, showed heavy traffic on Rt534 from Laos to Hiep Duc. Rt534 ran from Thang Binh on QL1 to Hiep Duc. Team 16 and Americal ran several convoys on this portion of the route in 1969. This was the year MACV and the Quang Tin Province government attempted to repopulate Hiep Duc. Beyond Hiep Duc, Rt534 was impassable to vehicles with bridges out etc. Rt534 intersected Rt14 several kilometers northeast of Kham Duc and followed it to Kham Duc. There, Rt534 turned generally west for several kilometers before petering out. On Page 23, it says by 1973 Hiep Duc was an important NVA logistics center. From this it can be concluded that the Rt14 "Ho Chi Minh Trail" was not yet functioning and some other route from Laos was being utilized to account for the heavy traffic.

The mystery for me continued until it was finally resolved in September 2014 when I visited the National Archives II in College Park, MD. I reviewed a file labeled Kham Duc. I had seen much of the information it contained previously in other

references such as the Americal Operations Files that were recorded by Les Hines. Then I came to a few pages stapled together labeled Hwy 9661. Highway 9661 is stated as originating at YC766026 in Laos from where it traveled east from Hwy 966. I copied all of the coordinates given. I also reviewed many 8x10 black and white photos in the file of various places on Hwy 9661. At home, I noted and traced the progress of the coordinates on the 1/50,000 topographic maps I had managed to obtain. They moved progressively east/northeast toward Kham Duc. From the Special Forces Camp alongside the airstrip at Kham Duc it is approximately 24.5km straight-line distance generally west southwest to the above intersection. On the ground because of the difficult terrain and trying to find the lowest and most level route the distance could be 40km or more. This then was the road begun perhaps in 1968 that had advanced to within 6-10km of Kham Duc and then apparently further construction stopped in early 1969 until perhaps sometime in 1972 when it resumed, joining Hwy 534 and supporting heavy traffic in 1973 to Hiep Duc. Obviously, the NVA had also invested the resources, time and effort into making Hwy 534 a functioning highway once again from Kham Duc to Hiep Duc. After all these years I felt a sense of satisfaction to know that I indeed had seen what I had seen and it was where it was said to be. So you can call it Hayes Road, Hwy 9661 or Rt 534, it is the same road. I wonder if this route, the part going into Laos, is still in use today or if it has returned to Mother Nature's realm?



**Roadway part of Ho Chi Minh trail system in area of Kham Duc.**

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