

Laura - Some of this may be good to include -
we have six of four classes of Alums - by year 66/67 etc

12th EVAC HOSPITAL
NOVEMBER 2004 REUNION, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

Is that of
value to archives?

SUMMARY

RJ for support
RJ 11 November 2005

To: Alums '66 - '70
From: R. Harder, for Committee

R. Harder

Greetings, as we bring you memories of the 2004 reunion, as well as a report on current and future events.

In addition to report by Beth Parks, the following actions are noted:

- Garth Holmes purchased a tile to be placed on a wall at the Veterans Memorial Museum, Chehalis, WA. Tile shows name of unit and dates served in CuChi.
- Committee purchased brick for patio at AMEDD museum, San Antonio, in honor of Reunion 2004.
- Charlie Campbell, CRNA, arranged with Staff of American Association of Nurse Anesthetists for publication of color photo of OR art for October Journal. The September issue included an explanation and photos of Charlie and art. In addition, the Wisconsin hospital where Charlie worked for 22 years is mounting the OR scene to display in the hospital in his honor, 11 November.
- Beth Parks and Helen Vartigian have framed the OR print and will take it to Hawaii to place in the 25th Division museum next September.
- After this mailing is sent to those attending 2004 event, we will send similar mailing to 60 Alums who could not attend to provide them with current information. Will also invite them to Hawaii.
- Garth Holmes and Bill McDill are assisting with arrangements for Hawaii event.
- Bob Hysko has created a unit guidon (flag), including staff, which he will carry to Hawaii. It will be used to mark unit's location.

In May, I represented our unit at a formal dinner in Germany for the 212th MASH - the unit which now carries our lineage. I was the guest speaker, a high honor, on your behalf. I used stories of our war provided by 12 of you and applied them to their war. The 212th was the first hospital unit into Iraq and accompanied the 3rd Division, as you recall in our briefing. Their proud claim was, Last MASH Standing! They are the only field hospital in Europe!

We sent four of our display panels plus two flags which were among the decorations for the dinner. I took them three CDs of 12th Evac pictures and they sent back photos that will be used by the museum. As a bonus, Scott Shoner, curator, kept our reunion display in the hallway and is currently available to visitors - a full year of 12th EVAC publicity!

In September, the 212th conducted a 30-day mission in Angola for the State Department. Last week, 100 members set up a hospital in Pakistan!

Photocopy: Original placed in restricted file due to personal information

There is considerable interest in attending reunion with 25th Division, with main events 28, 29, 30 September 2006. We will have a hospitality site with the division. Our dinner is Friday night and we will attend their dinner on Saturday night. Division events are fully available to us. We will send additional information when available.

The Executive Director is arranging reduced airfare rates from the west coast. Friday activities will be hosted by the 25th Division at their post. This includes demonstrations, meal and parade in honor of the 25th Division veterans of all wars.

Please keep us informed of your e-mail and address changes. Send them to me, or to our administrative assistant, Julie, at [REDACTED] will then keep Bill informed for broadcast messages.

Our next San Antonio Reunion is in 2008!

Activities of Interest:

Chuck Wright, Vietnam marine is coordinating construction of National Medical War Memorial in Kansas City, Kansas, in honor of all medical personnel in U.S. wars.

Carolyn Tanaka, 24th Evac, who attended reunion, is featured with story of patient and their reunion in current issue of American Legion magazine.

Helen Vartigian and Connie (Jean) Evans, both nurses at the 12th Evac in 1966-67, attended the 15th annual Nez Perce Tamkaliks pow-wow celebration in Wallowa, OR, on the 23rd and 24th of July. Vartigian was visiting Evans, who lives in Idaho. Evans is proud to be a full-blooded Nez Perce Native American.

Vartigian currently volunteers for the foundation of the New York State Nurses Foundation, where she shares the knowledge gained from her experiences with the 12 Evac.

MARCH 22, 2005 – RETURN TO VIETNAM

A group of Vietnam Veterans, family, friends and guests gathered in Los Angeles, CA airport in March 2005 to begin a special journey. It was their visit to Viet Nam in three decades. This Vietnam is not the RVN that they know of 35 years ago, a time of the horrors of war and suffering. This journey was a time to reflect on our Brother and Sister Veterans and to visit Chu Lai and the site of the former 312th Evacuation Hospital where a young Army Nurse served and was killed on June 8, 1969. Her name is on the black granite panel 23 W, line 112 of our WALL in Washington, DC. Sharon was the sole American Military Nurse to have been killed in hostile fire although seven other female and two male Nurses also died in the Vietnam War.

The Sharon Ann Lane Foundation Clinic begun in 1999, was built in memory of an Sharon because she had compassion for all her patients, Vietnamese and American, soldier or civilian, friend or foe because she was 'their' Nurse.

She especially loved the children who came under her care in Ward 4. Today, this clinic continues her commitment and service to America and her Nursing legacy to the people of Viet Nam.

The SAL-F clinic is located in the Tam Hiep commune, Nhui Thanh District, Quang Nam Province, Viet Nam and was dedicated on March 22, 2005 with a group of profoundly moved and often tearful American Vietnam Veterans, their families and guests in attendance. The Vietnamese Medical Staff of the Commune, District Hospital and Peoples Committee were our gracious hosts and warmly welcomed us to the clinic. Mr Kenneth Chern, US Embassy Consul General to Ha Noi gave keynote remarks. Mrs. Betty Tisdale, formerly of Dr. Tom Dooley's MEDICO, and currently working in Viet Nam with orphans (HALO) and Mr. Michael Boehm of My Lai Peace Park, Madison Friends also gave remarks.

A refurbished Ford Ambulance was donated by the Spring Valley, New York, Rotary chapter. Members of VVA 333, also located in Spring Valley were present. Additional medical supplies and equipment, valued at 70,000 USD and medications valued at 5,000 USD were presented to

the SAL-clinic by the Foundation. Doc Bernie Duff, former US Army Medic and an accomplished artist, presented a painting of Sharon playing with children outside of Ward 4 and hangs today in the clinic.

The delegation has been invited to participate in renovation of the Nhui Thanh District Hospital, in need of so much to improve the delivery of health care to the residents of Tam Hiep. Spring Valley Rotary Chapter with the aid of VVA 333 is considering building a school with a computer lab and making a wide spectrum of books, in English available to the residents.

The Foundation is interested in erecting a Day Care Center to be located near the SAL-clinic so that mothers may leave their children while they are at work. This facility in such close proximity to the clinic hopefully will encourage more women to take advantage of the OB-GYN services offered at the clinic by a Ob-GYN Physician and four Nurses.

We remember our Brothers and Sisters and the friends of our service in many unique ways. We remember.

Thank you.

Kathleen A Fennell, PA-c



12th EVAC REPRESENTED IN UPSTATE NEW YORK

The 12th Evacuation Hospital is receiving considerable attention in upstate New York these days, thanks to the efforts of James Davis Nelson and Helen Vartigian.

Nelson, the acclaimed Vietnam combat artist who painted the 12th Evac operating room scene *Cu Chi, RVN, 1966-1970*, is showing a number of his works at the New York State Military Museum at Saratoga Springs. The Cu Chi scene is among them, and is considered to be one of his finest paintings. Nelson's portrait of former 12th Evac XO and CO Dick Harder is on display adjacent to the larger work.

The art show, called *They Were There*, opened on Friday, April 29. Former 12th Evac nurses Helen Vartigian and Beth Parks attended the reception, where Nelson spoke about his work. Parks photographed the exhibit for Nelson. The show also features Vietnam photographs by former *Tropic Lightning News* editor David DeMauro.

The Vietnam art show will be featured in Saratoga Springs until autumn 2006. An impressive selection of military artifacts is also on display. The museum is located in the armory at 61 Lake Avenue. Hours are 9-5, Monday-Saturday. Admission is free. At the conclusion of the show, the Cu Chi paintings will be returned to the AMEDD museum at Fort Sam Houston.

A second show, called *They Also Served: Nurses in the Military*, opened at the New York State Office of General Services Vietnam Memorial Gallery in Albany on Tuesday, May 3. The exhibition, co-sponsored by the Foundation of NYS Nurses Association, honors New York State nurses who served in the military from World War I through the war in Iraq. The nurses' exhibit is located on the concourse level of the Justice Building in Empire State Plaza. Admission is free.

Vartigian donated a pair of her fatigues and a nice collection of memorabilia for the display. Parks, who was originally from upstate New York, gave the keynote address. Several area newspapers, including the *New York State Legislative Gazette*, Glens Falls Post-Star, Altamont *Enterprise*, and the regional veterans' newsletter published feature articles about the event.

Vartigian and Parks also re-framed a print of *Cu Chi, RVN, 1966-1970*, which Vartigian had donated to the Foundation of NYS Nurses Association. The cherry-tone frame is set off by a royal blue matte and engraved gold plaque. The print is displayed in the main lobby of the Foundation's office building in Guilderland, NY.

Beth Parks, Ed.D.
June 6, 2005

CRNA Featured in Vietnam Painting

Charles Campbell, CRNA, of Madison, Wis., was featured as a model for a painting by artist James Davis Nelson of the 12th Evacuation Hospital, Cu Chi, Republic of Vietnam. The painting, which was unveiled at the 12th Evacuation Hospital Reunion in San Antonio, Texas, in November 2004, is now on display at New York State Military Museum, Saratoga, N.Y. It is on loan from the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum (AMEDD) at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio. Campbell, who served in the army from July 1966 to July 1968, is pictured in the back row, far right. Nelson used slides submitted by Campbell and others to create the painting.

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Campbell shares a Coca Cola with a Vietnamese child in 1967, in the village of Cu Chi.



Charles Campbell, CRNA, at work in 1967.

ted by Campbell and others to create the painting.

The "12th Evac" opened in 1966, and more than 37,000 patients were treated there before it closed in 1970. The hospital was located in the Cu Chi District, which was the primary site of the 1968 Tet Offensive and saw some of the fiercest fighting in the Vietnam War. The hospital itself came under frequent mortar and rocket attacks.

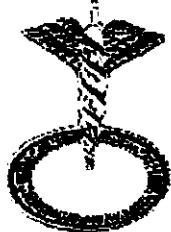
Campbell served in the 12th Evacuation Hospital during 1967. He remembers working 24-hour shifts in the operating room, "sometimes until we couldn't work anymore." In between shifts, the personnel found time for recreation such as volleyball games. After his stint in the Army, Campbell practiced in Marshfield and Black River Falls, Wis. Now retired, he divides his time between Madison, Wis., and his farm in Jackson County. He attends reunions of the 12th Evacuation Hospital, which he says is the only combat hospital to hold reunions.

The artist, James Davis Nelson, served with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Mechanized, 25th Division in 1967. In 1968 he became a division combat artist. The painting will be featured on the cover of the October issue of the *AANA Journal*. For 11" x 14" prints of the painting, as well as a copy of his book *Vietnam War Paintings*, contact James Nelson RD2, Box 13A, Jewell, KS 66949. ■



12th Evac, Cu Chi, RVN, 1966-1970, painted by James Davis Nelson ©2004.

AMEDD MUSEUM FOUNDATION MONITOR



No 29
November 2005

SCENES FROM THE MUSEUM



The current issue of the AMEDD Museum publication features this photo of one of the 12th Evac panels currently on display. The exhibit was created for our reunion in 2004. The Monitor is mailed to 22,000 friends of the museum.

**12th EVAC
REQUEST FORM**

1. T-Shirt with unit crest - \$15.00

(Sizes remaining from reunion): 14 - XX, 3 - XL, 4 - L, & 3 - M

Size: _____

Quantity: _____

Amount: \$ _____

2. Operating Room Print (11" x17") - \$20.00

Quantity: _____

Amount: \$ _____

3. Unit Roster '66-'70 - \$10.00

10 pages - 160 names

Quantity: _____

Amount: \$ _____

4. Class Photo - \$12.50

Year: _____

Quantity: _____

Amount: \$ _____

(For a "buddy" who could not attend)

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED: \$ _____

(Total cost includes postage)

Name of person ordering: _____

MAIL TO:

12TH EVAC REUNION

RVN 12TH EVACUATION HOSPITAL ALUMS

The last week in September 2006, the 25th Infantry Division Association will host its annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii. The members of the 12th Evac have been invited to share this event with them. We will have our own agenda, but will be with them for special events.

For planning purposes, we are sending you this form to gather information for planning purposes. Please complete the bottom portion and mail it back to us. Even if you are undecided, we still need the input.

We will keep you informed. With the 25th Division, we will be eligible for special travel rates, as well as the hotel rate.

July 2005

Name: _____
(Please Print)

I plan to attend I may attend

I plan to arrive by: Air Water Other

Guest(s) also attending: Name: _____

Name: _____

Name: _____

12th Evac, Cu Chi, RVN, 1966-1970

The 12th Evacuation Hospital at Cu Chi, Vietnam, performed surgery on its first wounded soldier in December 1966 and admitted over 37,000 patients before it closed in 1970. In addition to the American military, the 12th Evac also served Republic of Vietnam (RVN) soldiers, civilians and enemy prisoners. A hospital sign proclaimed, "Through these doors pass the best treated patients in the world."

The 12th Evac operating room complex consisted of two Quonset huts with a total of seven surgical cubicles. Each cubicle measured approximately 7x10 feet and contained such basic equipment as a surgical table, portable light, oxygen and nitrous oxide tanks, an anesthesia equipment table, an anesthesia machine with appropriate inhalation agents, an intravenous stand for fluids and blood, a clock, trash bucket, basins with saline, and instrument tables and stands. Nearby shelves held linen packs, dressings and sterile solutions. Each patient was carried into the cubicle on a canvas litter, which was then placed on two wooden sawhorses.

A surgical team generally consisted of two surgeons, a scrub nurse or tech, an anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist, and a circulating nurse who provided the team with sterile instruments and supplies. During mass casualty situations or when only one surgeon was available, the scrub nurse or tech also served as the assistant. Surgical teams often worked extremely long hours and operated even when the hospital was the target of mortar and rocket attacks.

Typical wounds came from shrapnel, usually generated by land mines and booby traps. A wounded individual was often peppered with dozens of wounds that contained metal fragments and other foreign matter. The wounds were debrided and cleaned, and then left open and covered with sterile dressings. If the patient did not develop an infection within a few days, the wounds were closed. Single and multiple limb amputations, abdominal wounds, chest wounds, and head wounds were also common. Patients unable to return to duty after a few days were shipped to other hospitals for further treatment and recuperation.

Cu Chi was selected in 1966 as the site of the base camp for the 25th Infantry Division, which the 12th Evacuation Hospital supported in Vietnam. Cu Chi lies about 25 miles northwest of Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, and about 35 miles southeast of Tay Ninh, located on the Cambodian border. The Cu Chi district saw some of the fiercest battles of the Vietnam War. It was one of the most heavily defoliated and bombed areas in combat history and was also the primary site of the infamous 1968 Tet Offensive.

Ironically, the Viet Cong resistance fighters also chose Cu Chi as a crucial base because of its central location along the supply route between Saigon and Cambodia. American forces in 1966 were unaware that they had constructed their base camp above a vast Viet Cong tunnel complex, in some places three or four levels deep. The tunnels themselves measured a mere 18 inches to three feet wide, but they opened into slightly larger compartments in which VC soldiers met, ate, slept, and were even treated for wounds. Rumor has it that when thousands of troops were cheering above ground at the Bob Hope show on Christmas Day, 1966, the Viet Cong were holding a token celebration right beneath their feet. The Americans were making so much noise that they never heard their enemy.

12th Evac, Cu Chi, RVN 1966-1970

The original oil painting by James Davis Nelson was unveiled at the 12th Evac reunion in San Antonio, Texas, in November 2004 and then displayed at the U.S. Army Medical Department Museum (AMEDD) at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. The painting is on loan to the New York State Military Museum, Saratoga Springs, from the spring of 2005 to the fall of 2006. Painting dimensions: 33" x 48"

Artist Jim Nelson of Jewell, Kansas, acclaimed for his work as a Vietnam combat artist and portraitist, served with the 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi, Vietnam, during 1967-68

Hand-routed wood frame by Mike Cheney of Lincoln, Kansas, features designs that include the 12th Evacuation Hospital crest and motto. Frame dimensions: 38" x 53"

Project was commissioned by COL Richard C. Harder, MSC, then LTC, XO and CO of the 12th Evac, 1970

Battle dress is depicted because the 12th Evac was subject to frequent mortar and rocket attacks at Cu Chi during 1966-68

Models (composite from period photos):

Back Row, L-R: 1LT Beth Parks, ANC, OR nurse, 1966-67; SP5 Bob Hall, OR tech, 1969-70; CPT Charlie Campbell, ANC, nurse anesthetist, 1967

Center Arc, L-R: 2LT Ann Cunningham, ANC, OR nurse, 1967-68; CPT Fred Kurrus, MC, surgeon, 1967-68; MAJ Jeriel Beard, MC, surgeon, 1970; SP5 Scott Worley, OR tech, 1968-69

Patient: One of over 37,000 treated at the 12th Evac between 1966-70

Beth Parks, Ed.D.
(1LT, ANC, 12th Evac Operating Room, 1966-67)



November 2005

**Story of our Motto "Skilled & Resolute"
(On crest for 12th Evac & 212th MASH)**

Here is a time-worn photo of me with children and an interpreter from a Vietnamese ward. I was particularly interested in the local casualties since many of our people did not care to work with their wounded. I made Vietnamese wards a particular challenge, and with Mary Frances (C Nurse) - and later, Mims' (Cdr) support, had a busy, vibrant and successful effort there for the Vietnamese wounded.

The request Mims made of me, to put words on our proposed insignia, (crest) came while I was on a long tour of twelve hour night duty and I was very tired. Mims and I had a humorous, but not totally unfounded, expectation that I would work in the office too. So, I demanded a desk and a phone for myself. He immediately responded with a tiny table and a broken phone with no wiring! Then he suggested that I develop and put the words for our insignia on his desk in the morning! So, I went on duty, torn between a mild rage and a lot of laughter, too.

It seemed quite clear to me that our entire staff of physicians, nurses, corpsmen, and our excellent dentists, pharmacists, lab technicians and all the supporting staff on the 12th Evac mission were as one. And it was proven, over and over, that all were well motivated, trained and committed to serving our wounded, sick and emotionally disabled. My personal observations brought "SKILLED AND RESOLUTE" to mind. I placed the motto on Mims' desk and he sent it forward to higher headquarters.

I feel certain that those who follow us in similar missions will honor and support these words.

"Trot" Waltraut Hurd, RN



**12th EVACUATION HOSPITAL, 1966-1970
REUNION, SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
NOVEMBER 2004**

“Reunion” for lots of veterans groups tends to conjure up a specific vision: a bunch of maudlin old poops sitting around telling war stories.

The 12th Evac reunion clearly shatters that image. What happens when 12th Evacers get together is nothing short of magical. A palpable, upbeat energy permeates the air from the time folks start trickling into the hotel until they drift away on the final day.

You expect people who knew each other or worked together three or four decades ago to act cordially and recall their shared experiences on some superficial level. You don't expect them to merge into an extraordinary whole that's remarkably greater than the sum of its parts.

If there's a good explanation for the magic that happens when 12th Evacers get together, no one has been able to capture it. Some unique blend of chemistry, reality and emotion seems to drive the phenomenon. Whatever it is, it is both spectacular and unforgettable.

Perhaps some type of gut-level bonding serves as a catalyst for this exceptional process. Re-hashing memories may play a part in it, but probably far less than you think. The focus of our time together seems as much about today as what once was, and as much about where we are heading as that which might have been.

The bonding, oddly, isn't confined to those who once knew each other in Cu Chi. It includes people who served at different times, held different ranks and acted in different capacities. First-timers, spouses, visitors and friends feel as warmly welcome and as much a part of the group as those who worked together or attended 12th Evac reunions in the past.

You may not know it, but the 12th Evac is the only Vietnam military hospital that holds regular reunions. The November 2004 event was actually its seventh. The gatherings grew out of a 1971 newsletter, the brainchild of former XO and CO Dick Harder and surgeon Jeriel Beard. Dick and Jerry worked together again after the hospital closed and decided that it would be nice for folks to keep in touch. Had it not been for these two men's foresight and diligence, the 12th Evac, like so many other hospitals, would now be reduced to a mist of scattered memories dissipating swiftly with the passage of time.

The first real 12th Evac get-together was organized by Dick Harder, MSC, and Darlene McLeod, ANC, in 1977. The gathering was held in Washington, D.C., primarily for those 20 or so former personnel who worked or lived in the D.C. area. Full-blown reunions sprouted from that modest beginning. Initially scheduled every five years in

San Antonio to coincide with meetings of the Association of Military Surgeons, the gatherings were switched to a four-year cycle beginning in 1996. The 2004 event topped 100 participants, a number that included spouses, visitors and friends.

It's hard to know just why the number of reunion attendees continues to expand. Perhaps it's because we're coming to grips with who we once were and who we are now, and we want to tie up loose ends. Perhaps it's because we are aging and becoming more in touch with our own mortality. Or perhaps it's just because we're contacting more former 12th Evacers and friends, and urging them to attend. Whatever the reason, the reunions are a real joy. If you haven't joined in because you're afraid, self-conscious or worried about being out of place, there's no need. You *will* be welcome and you'll be among friends.

Scheduled reunions are not the only opportunities for at least some 12th Evacers to get together. For example, Jerry Beard regularly coordinated gatherings of former 12th Evac doctors at American College of Surgeon (ACS) meetings. One such ACS meeting coincided with the 1993 dedication of the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C., and former 12th Evacers marched together as a unit in that celebration. The memorial's 10th anniversary in 2003 coincided with the 30th anniversary of the dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and a cadre of 12th Evacers took part in those events as well. (Our own Annie Cunningham had coaxed sculptor Glenna Goodacre to submit the entry that led to creation of the renowned women's statue. Annie serves on the Women's Vietnam Memorial Foundation Board of Directors and has gained nationwide recognition as an eloquent speaker.)

The next regularly scheduled 12th Evac reunion in 2008 will be held again in San Antonio. Dick Harder lives there and he leads a dedicated committee of former 12th Evac staffers who reside in the area. Other committee members lie scattered around the country. The overall group represents the medical corps, medical service corps, nurse corps, medical specialist corps, enlisted men and the American Red Cross. Dick jokes that all he lacks is a veterinarian.

Meanwhile, the 25th Infantry Division has extended an invitation for us to take part in its 57th annual reunion in Hawaii. The event will take place from 25 September – 1 October 2006 at the Hyatt Regency Waikiki Resort & Spa in Honolulu. The 12th Evac plans to schedule its own concurrent event and join the 25th Infantry for major activities. The prices may be far less than you imagine, with lots of optional tours available. Some basic information is enclosed, and you will receive more details as the planning progresses. Be sure to block off the dates in your calendar now.

If travel to Hawaii gives you cause for financial concern, the executive director of the 25th Infantry Division will provide discounts and travel packages. We are also checking into cruises for those who don't like to fly.

If flying doesn't bother you, but you still don't like the cost, consider getting one of the credit cards that awards frequent flyer miles for all of your purchases. You can rack

up thousands of miles by simply charging everything from groceries to gas, and it will cost you nothing (except a membership fee for certain cards) if you pay off the total every month. Hawaii is considered part of the continental U.S. for air travel purposes, and airlines that don't fly in your region will link you up with their partners so your trip will be free if you've accrued the minimum number of miles. Be sure to compare card costs and benefits, as well as airline policies, before you rely on this method. Because "free" seats fill early, book your trip as far in advance as possible.

If you would like to tour the Hawaiian Islands before or after the 2006 get-together, but you don't want to travel by yourself, take heart. You'll probably be able to hook up with other 12th Evacers who want to do exactly the same things you do. There's lots of time between now and then for you to make plans.

2004 Reunion Recap

For those of you who did not attend the 2004 event in San Antonio, a brief recounting of that event is in order.

The welcoming atmosphere at the Clarion Hotel enabled people to chat over meals and gather informally during free time. Memorabilia and displays in the meeting room brought memories flooding back, as did slide shows and films. Then there was the marvelous display of 12th Evac pictures and artifacts at the Army Medical Department Museum, for those who chose to make that trip.

High points, too, included a delightful meal at Club Giraud, which we reached by a nice stroll along the Riverwalk, and an excellent barbecue at Andy Rusinko's. Andy and his family have hosted a meal for reunion goers several times, and they always treat us royally. Our heartfelt thanks go out to them.

The educational program was excellent. We heard from two articulate young Iraq War veterans and came to recognize some of the similarities and differences between the Iraq and Vietnam situations. We also learned about oral history programs from representatives of Texas Tech University and the Office of the Surgeon General, and the value of such histories to a greater understanding of our roles and coping strategies in wartime.

Audience emotions ran high with the powerful testimony made by a former 12th Evac patient from Massachusetts, who credits the hospital and staff with saving his life. Tears also flowed with viewing of the compelling documentary *In the Shadow of the Blade*, a film that told of a restored UH-1 "Huey" helicopter's 10,000 mile journey across America and the tributes paid to Hueys by former soldiers and their families.

Presentations about the Sharon Lane Clinic in Vietnam and Ken Armstrong's orphanage in Cambodia reminded us that more work still needs to be done. Sue O'Neill, author of Vietnam novel *Don't Mean Nothin'*, has generously offered to give an autographed copy of her book to anyone who donates \$20 to the orphanage.

Chaplain John Ide, an OR tech in 1968, recalled the 12th Evac sign that proclaimed "Through these doors pass the best treated patients in the world." Many of us could not remember the sign or where it hung. Perhaps that reflects the nature of 12th Evacers to do the best they could without patting themselves on the back for their accomplishments.

Painting: 12th EVAC, CU CHI, RVN, 1966-1970

Another highlight of the reunion, and one of its most emotional moments, came with the unveiling of an original oil painting called "12th Evac, Cu Chi, RVN, 1966-1970." Commissioned by Dick Harder and painted by acclaimed Vietnam combat artist and portraitist James Davis Nelson, the piece vividly depicts an operating room scene. The painting effectively captures the spirit of the 12th Evac and pays homage to its staff and 37,000⁺ patients treated during the hospital's four-year service at Cu Chi.

You can also obtain 11" x 17" color prints of Jim Nelson's painting for \$20 each from Dick Harder (see enclosed form). A portion of the proceeds will help support the ongoing work of the reunion committee. The committee also welcomes any and all cash donations, as well as volunteers, to help support its operations.

If you want to do something special to honor the 12th Evac, then follow the lead of those who have begun donating prints of the Nelson painting to various groups and organizations. Congratulations go to Helen Vartigian, who donated signed prints to the New York State Veterans Association and the New York State Nurses Association Foundation, and to Mel Worden, who donated a matted and framed print to the Kansas Veterans Association. Be sure to let Dick Harder know when you make such a contribution so you can join the 12th Evac honor roll. Jim Nelson has arranged for the original to be displayed at the New York State Museum at Saratoga Springs from April 2005- fall 2006.

Onward

Meanwhile, anticipation is beginning to build for the 12th Evac get-together in Hawaii in 2006 and the full reunion in San Antonio in 2008. We won't be a bunch of maudlin old poops rehashing the war. We'll be there reveling in our friendships, both old and new.

Submitted by Beth Parks, Ed.D.
(ILT, ANC, Operating Room, 1966-67)

The following is written from memory. It is, hopefully, very close to the words I delivered at the reunion of the 12th Evacuation Hospital in San Antonio on Veterans Day, 2004 in San Antonio, TX.

I first became "acquainted" with the 12th Evac Hospital on the late afternoon of March 14, 1968. Until that day, I had a little career going as a recon scout for B Troop, Third Squadron, Fourth Cavalry, 25th Infantry Division, affectionately known as the $\frac{1}{4}$ Cav. For weeks, since the '68 Tet Offensive, we'd been working our way around the areas north of Saigon, and on that day, we found ourselves in a little hamlet called Hoc Mon, a name that might be familiar to you. That afternoon, I tried to be a little too heroic and tried to cover for some buddies from the Wolf Hounds who were pinned down in a cemetery. I was shot by an AK-47 through the left side of my chest. Suddenly I said: "Wow, this is serious" to myself and knew I needed some help, a lot of help, and right away.

Luckily, they got a chopper in for me – thank God for all those guys and their helicopters – and they delivered me to the 12th Evac, where you folks took me into your care and saved my life. The reason I am alive today is because of the people at the 12th Evac, and the reason I have come here tonight is to thank you. It is such an honor to be with all of you.

There are many memories still strongly in my mind from those days at the 12th Evac. My mind must have been on red alert, because I seem to remember it all so clearly after 36 years. There are many little stories I could share with you, but I just wanted to recount one right now.

When I became aware of my surroundings, I realized you folks had operated on me and done an assortment of things to save me, some of which I still don't know. I know you removed my spleen and did something to patch up my left lung. And I recall having all sorts of tubes stuck in me, including embarrassing places. You folks sure had a thing for tubes.

And very soon, you began talking to me about your concern for me having a very high body temperature. I had never before given any thought to my body temperature. I still get confused if it's supposed to be 98.6 or 96.8 or whatever. But I remember a growing alarm and comments from the staff about how high my temperature was and someone said I was like a car engine burning up, so I understood that part. Now, this is the way I remember what happened, and I swear it's the real way, but if it's not, it's because you guys had me all drugged up, so if it sounds off base, it's your fault.

You guys got so concerned that my body temperature was way up there, like 106 or 108 or something, that you actually packed me in ice. You brought bags of ice over to my bed and packed me under them from my neck to my knees. And then there was a commotion at the bed to my left and you guys went running over and began frantically working on the guy in the next bed and I can still hear you calling out his name. And I watched as you worked on him and as his skin turned gray and he died. And out of frustration, a

doctor turned away from him to me and told me I was wounded almost the same way and I had to get my temperature down and I had to cough up all the impurities inside my chest.

Well, I tried to cough, but you should try to cough when someone has just sliced your belly open and cut your stomach in half. I could not cough. It just hurt too much. I decided the ice better work or I was checking out. And then an angel appeared. She was dressed like a nurse, but I know it was an angel. And she told me she was going to help me cough. She said she was going to place her upper body over the side of the bed and place her weight on my stomach and stop the stomach from bouncing when I coughed and it would not hurt so much and so I would be able to cough up all that stuff that was inside me. Now, for months, I had been wanting to get close to a woman....but that was not what I had had in mind. This was not a romantic moment.

So I tried to cough. And to be honest it hurt just as much, but what could I do? She was trying so hard to save me. So I began coughing. And, you know how you can just get used to pain? So I did, and I kept coughing for what seemed like hours, like all night. And she kept a little stainless steel bowl under my chin and I kept coughing up clots of blood and all sorts of stuff. And the way I remember it was that she was scooping them up with a Kleenex and she told me that I coughed up 200 because she went through a whole box with 200 in it. She opened another box and I coughed up two more, 202 in all. That's the way I remember it.

And after that, my temperature went down and I started to improve.

There are just a few things I feel it is necessary to tell you tonight. Here they are.

First, I want you to know that one of the things I remember most about the staff at the 12th Evac is that you were not just kind, patient, caring and generous, but you were MORE kind, MORE patient, MORE caring and MORE generous than anyone would ever have had the right to ask. And I feel that besides the medical miracles you performed, this way you had of treating us had a great deal to do with helping us heal. I was just 20 years old and so very far from home.

Second, I want you to know how I have always admired all of you, and I'll tell you why. You see, when I went to Vietnam, I was just a kid off the street. I came from an old mill city in New England where if you graduated from high school it was like getting a Ph.D. I had no plan for my life. I had just a high school education, and I had no future, so I just got sucked up into the draft and ended up in Vietnam. But I know that you people went to Vietnam with a focus already in your lives, with education, with training, with abilities, and all of that combined to help save guys like me. And later, because you saved me, I was able to live on, get my college, get a solid career, become successful in my own right and become more like you.

Finally, I want you to know that I like to think that you did not waste your time saving me. I've been not perfect. I have made mistakes. I have, at times, I think, hurt people

without even ever meaning to. But overall, I think I've been a pretty good guy, and tried to teach my children the good ways of living. From time to time, I have stopped along the way to help others, just like you helped me. So, when it's all added up, it was OK that you saved me, and I have often tried to live my life remembering that I owe it to you to be as good as I can be.

Well, that's all, except, of course, to say thank you. Thank you.....you know, you say it when someone holds a door open for you. And you still say the same two words when someone saves your life. It's the same words, and often doesn't sound like enough. But you know how I mean it tonight.....so thank you.

At this point, I think it is traditional that the audience applauds the speaker. But I just feel if anything I should applaud you. So instead of figuring out who should applaud who, I thought that, perhaps, we could take a moment and remember one of the reasons we hold reunions. It's to remember the people who are not here. So please join with me and remember all the people from the 25th Infantry and the 3rd Cav, all the guys who died in the 12th Evac in spite of all your efforts, all the men and women who served at the 12th Evac and who gave so generously to their country and to each other. And also I ask we remember the 58,000 names on that wall in Washington, DC.

Finally, I ask we remember tonight all those young American men and women serving right now in Afghanistan and Iraq, who are living their own nightmares. May they one day be blessed to be reunited as we are tonight.

Thank you once again.

Thomas P. "Tim" Manigan, Nov. 11, 2004