

★ GUADALCANAL

★ NORTHERN SOLOMONS

★ LEYTE

★ SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES

★ VIETNAM



FOUNDED 1945

MAY - JUNE 1992

# AMERICAL NEWSLETTER

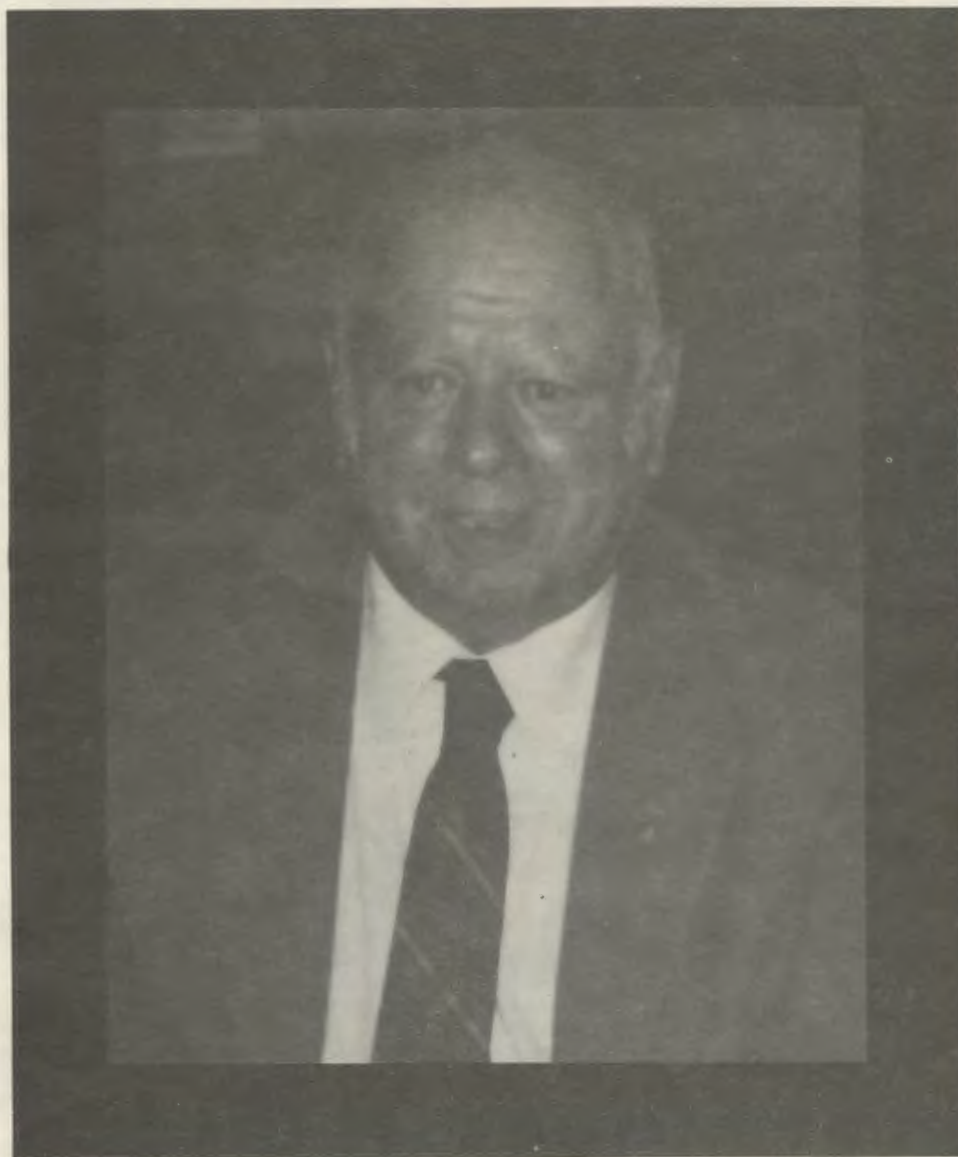
DEDICATED AS A LIVING MEMORIAL TO ALL VETERANS OF THE AMERICAL DIVISION

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: JAMES C. BUCKLE

VIETNAM EDITOR: RONALD L. WARD

Published Bi-Monthly

THE AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION - P.O. BOX 1381, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02104



**P.N.C. Francis L. "Guerry" Guerriero**

NATIONAL COMMANDER 1977-1978

1920 - 1992

MAY HE REST IN PEACE



1991

## NATIONAL OFFICERS

1992

## NATIONAL COMMANDER

Roland T. Castronova

Peabody, MA 01960

## SENIOR VICE COMMANDER

Peter J. Messina

Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

## JUNIOR VICE COMMANDER

John H. DeGroot

Mt. Prospect, IL 60056

## NATIONAL FINANCE OFFICER

Joseph Chin

Lincoln, MA 01773

## NATIONAL ADJUTANT

Bernard C. Chase

So. Yarmouth, MA 02664

## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

James C. Buckle Chairman

Bernard C. Chase

Bernard J. Carroll

Hugh J. Murnaghan

Alfred R. Doig

James J. Flynn

Robert N. Thornton

Joseph A. Anderson

John V. Nightingale

Kevin R. Barry

Lawrence G. Cotter

## CHAPTER COMMANDERS

Allen D. Cappella Cape Cod Chapter  
 Stephen Dennison Eastern Regional Chapter  
 Edwin A. Heartquist South-East Chapter  
 William K. Maddox South Mid-West Chapter  
 Rush J. Propper Great Lakes Chapter  
 Joe. W. Feeler Far West Chapter  
 Ronald L. Ward Central Mid-West Chapter  
 Lloyd J. Morrell North-West Chapter

Because of a by-law change that was approved by a National Ballot, the duly elected Chapter Commanders are now automatically members of the Executive Council.

\*\*\*\*\*

## AMERICAL NEWSLETTER

## EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

James C. Buckle

Wakefield, MA 01880

Telephone

## VIETNAM EDITOR

Ronald L. Ward

St. Louis, MO 63123

## COMMANDERS MESSAGE

This is the last issue of the Americal Newsletter in which I will be able to address you as your Commander.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term of office and I am looking forward to serving the Americal Division Veterans Association in an other elected office, appointed office, or just as an active member.

It has been a pleasure working with the other officers and members of our organization. I have learned that there is a very small group of men that do all the work and make this organization function. We need more members that will participate in the everyday work that needs to be done.

One thing that every member can do is RECRUIT!

We have had a net gain this past year of about one hundred members---and we have lost about the same number through drop-outs. Our membership should be at least double it's present figure. There are still thousands of eligible members out there that do not know we exist. Just this past few weeks Bill Maddox has signed up about ten World War II members and I also found a couple of the old guard that had never heard of us. They are out there--  
 GO GET THEM!

Another program for which I request your support is the one that Ron Ward is putting together on scholarships. His proposals will be out at Convention time and I ask the support of every member. A Scholarship can be set up that will be a lasting memorial honoring the Americal.

Thank you for allowing me to be your National Commander. Let us all support our incoming Commander and make this the biggest and best year yet for the Americal Division Veterans Association.

See you all in San Antonio!

Roland T. Castronova  
 National Commander

\*\*\*\*\*

## TAPS

PNC Francis Guerriero  
 101 Quartermaster  
 Quincy, MA  
 May 4, 1992

Roger S. DiBenedetto  
 Division Artillery  
 Fort Myers, FL  
 January 1992

Frederick L. Erminelli Sr.  
 121 Medical Bn.  
 St. Augustine, FL  
 March 5, 1992

Howard S. Bliem  
 164 Infantry  
 Stratham, NH  
 March 30, 1992

\*\*\*\*\*

## CONVALESCING

182 INFANTRY

Americo DeFeo  
 Revere, MA 02151

182 INFANTRY

Paul Donelan  
 Plymouth, MA 02360

221 FIELD ARTILLERY

PNC Robert Thornton  
 Melrose, MA 02176

## PNC FRANCIS L. "GUERRY" GUERRIERO

Francis L. "Guerry" Guerriero enlisted in the Massachusetts National Guard State Headquarters July 11, 1937, inducted into Federal Service October 10, 1940. Served overseas with Task Force 6814 as part of the 101 Quartermaster until detached to the South Pacific General Depot, Noumea, New Caledonia. After the war he served over 20 years with the 26th (Yankee) Division, Massachusetts National Guard with the 114th Medical Bn. and Division Headquarters as Inspector General, Provost Marshal, Personnel Officer G-1, retiring from military service January 24, 1974 with the rank of Colonel.

Born in Boston, Guerry formerly worked for the U.S. Postal Service in South Boston and became business manager for Massachusetts Mental Health Care. After retiring from the National Guard Guerry became one of the active members of the Americal Division Veterans Association serving and chairing many of the Committees plus moving through the various offices becoming National Commander 1977-1978. After Commander he served as a National Executive Officer utilizing his vast years of experience to build a strong organization.

Guerry is survived by his wife, Josephine (Sheehan), four sons and eleven grandchildren. Guerry will be missed by the Americal family for his widespread knowledge of organizational work, Parliamentary Law and his humorous stories, wit, and not to forget his singing.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 101 MEDICAL BATTALION

PNC Michael R. Lopardo, 70, passed away on February 28, 1992, in St. Vincent Hospital, after a brief illness.

He leaves his wife, Anita, two daughters, Susan L. Sears of New York City and Janet L. Rosetti of Newburyport, MA; two brothers, Louis L. Lopardo of Worcester, MA and Domenic Lopardo of West Boylston, MA and two sisters, Mary Paladino of Worcester and Rita Schelzi of Reading, MA. He was born in Worcester, son of Raphael and Carmela (Santora) Lopardo and lived in Worcester, MA most of his life.

He graduated from the former Commerce High School. Mr. Lopardo was a member of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church and its Holy Name Society. He was active in many Catholic organizations and was Past President of the National Council of Catholic men. He was also parish chairman of the Bishop's Fund for eleven years.

He was also active in many social organizations as well as veterans organizations, including the Americal Division Veterans Association, serving as National Commander 1974 to 1975.

Mr. Lopardo served with the Americal in the Pacific and was awarded two Bronze Stars.

The funeral was held from the Arthur S. Manzi & Sons Funeral Home with a Mass in the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church. Burial was in St. John's Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers it was asked that memorial contributions be made to; Kiwanis Pediatrics Trauma Institute of Worcester, Calvary Retreat Center, of Shrewsbury or the Italian-American Cultural Center of Worcester.

## 121 MEDICAL BATTALION

Frederick L. Erminelli Sr., 76, of St. Augustine, FL, passed away on March 5, 1992, in his home after a long illness.

He leaves his wife, Ruth, a son Frederick L. Erminelli Jr., three stepdaughters, Paulette T. Brooks of Linwood, Doreen L. Erminelli and Christine M. Gauthier, both of Grafton, MA; and three grandsons. Mr. and Mrs. Erminelli were married August 11, 1973. His first wife, Rose (Guittari) Erminelli, died many years ago. He was born in Pawtucket, RI, son of Celestino and Rosa (Valleria) Erminelli, and lived here many years before moving to Florida in 1979.

He graduated from Pawtucket High School and attended Northeastern University, the University of Maine at Orono, and the University of Rhode Island at Kingston.

He was an Army veteran of World War II, serving as a second lieutenant with the Medical Administration Corp of the Americal Division. He saw duty on New Caledonia, Guadalcanal and Fiji.

He was purchasing director, for many years, with Hunnewell Corp., retiring in 1979.

A memorial Mass was held in St. Augustine. After cremation, burial will be held at the convenience of the family.

In lieu of flowers it was asked that contributions be made to the;

## American Heart Association

Auburn, MA 01501

Funeral arrangements by Craig Funeral Home, St. Augustine, Florida.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 164 INFANTRY

I am sorry to inform you that Howard Bliem passed away on March 20, 1992.

He was proud of his service with the Americal Division in the Pacific and of his medals. He saved every one of your informative Americal Newsletters.

Sincerely,  
 Mrs. Howard Bliem

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If you hear of the death of a member would you please notify us immediately and include an obituary, from a local paper, if possible. If a newspaper obituary is not available please give us the pertinent facts.

Also, you know of a member who is sick or convalescing please send along the information.

Our membership is now spread throughout the fifty States and we depend on YOU for this information.

Send information to:

James C. Buckle  
 Wakefield, MA 01880  
 Tel. [redacted]

Bernard C. Chase  
 So. Yarmouth, MA 02264  
 Tel. [redacted]

\*\*\*\*\*



## ADJUTANT'S NOTES

## MONTHLY A.D.V.A. MEETINGS

June 20, 1992  
San Antonio, Texas  
General Meeting 9:00 A.M.

September 12, 1992  
Americal Museum, Fort Devens, MA  
Executive Council 10:00 A.M.

\*\*\*\*\*

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Leslie Hines Perry L. Hayes  
123rd Avn. Bn. 23 Adm 198 LIB  
Des Moines, IA St. Louis, MO

Kevin Brawley  
Co. C 1st Reg.  
1st Arm. Cav.  
Bronx, NY

\*\*\*\*\*

## GUADALCANAL MEMORIAL FUND

Mrs. Earnest L. Chase  
Irbe E. Hanson  
Manuel Santos

\*\*\*\*\*

## LIFE MEMBERSHIP IN ADVA

40 or under.....\$125 Payments -5\*  
41 to 60.....\$100 Payments -4\*  
61 to 70.....\$ 75 Payments -3\*  
71 or over.....\$ 50 Payments -2\*

\*Note: Payments of \$25 in 6 month intervals.  
Any member who has paid his dues in advance  
will receive credit toward LIFE MEMBERSHIP.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO  
Bernard C. Chase  
National Adjutant ADVA  
[REDACTED]  
South Yarmouth, MA 02664

\*\*\*\*\*

## NEW MEMBERS

Dwight C. Adams John Arsenault  
Americal Div Hdq 11 LIB D/3/1 Inf  
Kearney, NE Farmington, NM  
#William Maddox #Joe D. Feeler

Earl A. Bearden Edward J. Beauchamp  
182 Infantry L/3 196 LIB E/4/31 Inf  
Torrance, CA Bayside, WI  
#Bernie Chase #Self

Kevin Brawley Craig C. Carlson  
1 Arm Cav C/1/1 Friend  
Bronx, N Y Burr Ridge, IL  
#R. Lipschitz #Bill McLaughlin

Douglas J. Chiasson Morris D. Coberth  
11 LIB C/4/3 Inf 11 LIB HHC 23 Hdq  
Cut Off, LA Greenland, NH  
#Bernie Sojak #William Maddox

Tillman J. Cole  
182 Infantry B Co  
Tyler, TX  
#William Maddox

Robert H. Counsell  
Centerville, MA  
Bernie Chase

John W. Fithen  
132 Infantry B Co  
Shenandoah, IA  
#William Maddox

Joseph R. Hill  
198 LIB E/1/6 Inf  
Harrah, OK  
#R. Castronova

William R. Hunt  
321 Truck QM  
Waco, TX  
#Bill Maddox

Thad I. Lindquist  
11 Arty C/6 11 LIB  
Anacortes, WA  
#R. Castronova

Benjamin D. Morton III  
178 Aslt Hel Co 14  
Waynesboro, VA  
#Dwight Fanshaw

Leandro Navarro  
196 LIB 198 LIB  
Venus, TX  
#Tony Acosta

Jack D. Robbins  
182 Infantry I Co  
Beaverton, MI  
#Roy Poynter

Alton L. Shaw  
21 Infantry C/3/21  
Madisonville, TN  
#Ronald Christy

Odes W. Smith  
182 Infantry I Co  
Strafford, MO  
#Roy Poynter

Melvin E. Susalla  
1 Cav A Tr 1st Sq  
Utica, MI  
#R. Castronova

Morris J. Terrebone Jr.  
21 Inf Hq/4/21  
Hugo, OK  
#William Maddox

Joseph G. Combs  
132 Infantry Hq+E/2  
Smithville, TX,  
#Bill Maddox

Louis A. DesRochers  
182 Infantry I Co  
Hampton, NH  
#James P. Royle

Hugh S. Fitts  
16 Arty C/3/16  
Ringgold VA  
#Jim Buckle

Leslie Hines  
123 Avn Bn  
Des Moines, IA  
#Ron Ward

Paul F. Kelly  
198 LIB C/1/52 Inf  
Huntington Station, NY  
#R. Castronova

Thomas B. Lyons  
132 Infantry Co B  
Licking, MO  
#R. Castronova

Robert W. Nadolski  
198 LIB C/1/46 Inf  
Crown Point, IN  
#Tommy Acosta

Angel R. Rios  
196 LIB C/1/46 Inf  
Fajardo, PR  
#Ronald C. Davis

Robert R. Schaefer  
14 Com Avn Bn 176 He  
Flatonia, TX  
#Louis N. Guidry

Richard Smethurst  
26 Eng B Co  
Bryon, OH  
#R. Castronova

Irvin L. Sonstegard  
182 Infantry Co A  
Columbia Heights, MN  
#R. Castronova

David W. Taylor  
198 LIB C/5/46 Inf  
Medina, OH  
#R. Castronova

Vincent Ventorino  
26 Engrs B+C Co  
Brick, NJ  
#Jan F. Miles

## ADJUTANT'S NOTES

## NEW MEMBERS

Lee B. Whitten Jr.  
23 Adm Co.  
Austin, TX  
#William Maddox

Charles S. Wilke  
196 LIB D/2/1 Inf  
Cheves, OH  
#R. Castronova

## REINSTATED MEMBERS

Carl S. Doallas  
11 LIB  
Lake City, FL

Lawrence E. Donovan  
493 QM  
West Yarmouth, MA

David B. Frayne  
16 Arty B/3  
Wichita, KS  
#Kenneth 'Chief' Lewis

Linda J. Wilson  
Bel Air, MD

## #Sponsors

\*\*\*\*\*

## BTRY. A 245th F.A. BN.

Frank Vitale wishes to thank all the members who  
sent him get well cards.

He is sorry that he missed the Artillery Reunion  
in Orlando, Florida this year. He hopes to get  
over his back problems, and will be at the next  
Reunion, even if he has to crawl there.

## COMPANY A 182nd INFANTRY

I will of necessity make this letter brief since  
I am scheduled for prostate cancer surgery to-  
morrow, April 22nd and the hour is late. However,  
I do want to say that I have today made applica-  
tion for membership in the 182nd Infantry Assoc-  
iation and am interested in any information  
about the South Pacific Buddies Association, since  
I was a member of Company A, 1st Battalion, and I  
would surely like to renew acquaintanceship with  
any of my old friends who may wish to correspond  
with me.

I am also considering attendance at the 50th  
anniversary reunion of the Americal in San  
Antonio but that hinges on the extend of my re-  
covery from surgery.

I am truly looking forward to membership in the  
ADVA, and am grateful to Mr. Roland T. Castronova  
for his correspondence. I am pleased that he will  
be my sponsor for membership.

Thank you very much and I extend my best wishes  
for a very successful membership drive and 50th  
anniversary reunion in June.

Sincerely,  
Irvin L. Sonstegard  
[REDACTED]  
Columbia Heights, MN 55421

CHECK TO THE RIGHT OF YOU NAME  
ON THE ADDRESS LABEL  
FOR YOU DUES DUE DATE

## CHAPTERS

ARTHUR R. WOOD CHAPTER  
SOUTH-EAST CHAPTER  
AL, FL, GA, NC, SC, TN

Regional Commander  
Edwin A. Heartquist  
[REDACTED]  
Holiday, FL 34690  
Telephone [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

SOUTH MID WEST REGIONAL CHAPTER CHAPTER  
AK, LA, MS, OK, TX

Regional Commander  
William K. Maddox  
[REDACTED]  
Portland, TX 78374  
Telephone [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CHAPTER  
IL, IN, MI, MN, WI

Regional Commander  
Rush G. Propper  
[REDACTED]  
Swartz Creek, MI 48473

\*\*\*\*\*

FAR WEST REGIONAL CHAPTER  
AZ, CA, CO, HI, NV, UT, NM

## NOW FORMING CONTACT

JOE D. FEELER  
[REDACTED]  
ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110  
TELEPHONE [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

WILLIAM F. MCGOLDRICK-CAPE COD CHAPTER  
Plymouth & Wareham & South of the Canal

Cape Cod Chapter Commander  
Allen D. Cappella  
[REDACTED]  
Plymouth, MA 02360

\*\*\*\*\*

EASTERN REGIONAL CHAPTER  
DC, DE, KY, NY, OH, PA, VA, WV, MD, NJ

Eastern Regional Commander  
Stephen N. Dennison  
[REDACTED]  
Pittsburgh, PA 15227  
Telephone [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

CENTRAL MID WEST CHAPTER  
IA KS MO NE ND SD

David L. Recob  
[REDACTED]  
Topeka, KS 66611  
Tel: [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

ARE YOUR DUES PAID?



## CHAPTERS

NORTH WEST CHAPTER  
ALASKA, WASHINGTON, OREGON, IDAHO,  
MONTANA, WYOMING

NOW FORMING -- CONTACT

Lloyd J. Morrell  
1676 SW 33rd St.  
Redmond, OR 97756-9612

\*\*\*\*\*

## NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER

NOW FORMING -- CONTACT

ROLAND T. CASTRONOVA  
252 NEWBURY ST. LOT #118  
PEABODY, MA 01960

\*\*\*\*\*

## CHAPTER NEWS

SOUTH MID-WEST REGIONAL CHAPTER

AR LA MS OK TX

Our committee has been very busy getting everything together for the National Convention in June. Don't forget to send in your reservation.

I would like all Chapter members to start thinking about our first Chapter Reunion that will be held in 1993. I will welcome all ideas and suggestions.

For those flying to the Reunion in San Antonio here is important information!

CALL 1-800-321-2306 AND GIVE THEM YOUR ITINERARY. THIS MEANS YOUR TIME OF ARRIVAL. THEY WILL PICK YOU UP AT THE AIRPORT. THIS SERVICE IS BEING PROVIDED BY THE REUNION COMMITTEE.

SEE YOU IN SAN ANTONIO!

Bill Maddox  
Commander

\*\*\*\*\*

## NORTH WEST CHAPTER

ALASKA, WASHINGTON, OREGON, IDAHO,  
MONTANA, WYOMING

The status of this Chapter is not too encouraging. Response has been very poor, with only a half dozen letters having been received. In an effort to spark interest I am enlisting the assistance of other members throughout the area and hope members in their immediate area will contact them.

Dennis Bourcier has agreed to be the contact man on the Seattle area. You may contact him at;

Dennis R. Bourcier  
Kirkland, WA 98033  
Telephone [REDACTED]

You may contact me at;

Lloyd J. Morrell  
Redmond, OR 97756  
Telephone [REDACTED]

## CHAPTER NEWS

EASTERN REGIONAL CHAPTER

COMMANDER  
Stephen Dennison

[REDACTED]  
Pittsburgh, PA 15227  
Phone [REDACTED]

SEC/TREAS

Peter J. Messina Sec  
[REDACTED]  
Mechanicsburg, PA 1705  
Phone [REDACTED]

George Yates - Sergeant-at-Arms

DC DE MD KY NJ NY OH PA VA WV

Dear Chapter Members:

As you know I have said in the past that I am striving to have all members have their chapter dues paid up. If anyone has not yet paid their dues, please submit a check for \$3.00 and forward it to our Secretary/Treasurer, Peter J. Messina, 27 Fieldcrest Drive, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055.

To give you some update on our membership as of April 25, 1992, we have 189 Vietnam veterans and 102 World War II veterans and 2 associate members for a grand total of 293. As you can see we continue to grow. But, the only way our chapter can grow is if our national organization grows. So let's go and get that one new member. Let's show our national commander what the Eastern Chapter can do.

If you did not mark your calendars our chapter reunion this year is being held September 10-13, 1992 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Nobody want to miss this fun filled event. Details continue to be worked out for the reunion, but I will pass along a few things that I already know.

Room rates are \$60.00 per night plus Pennsylvania sales tax. This includes breakfast each morning but to have a free breakfast you must be registered at the hotel.

The tentative menu for the Saturday night business meeting is going to be a choice of orange roughy or sliced beef au jus. Check in time on September 10, 1992 will be 2 p.m.. All guests are required to pay for their room by credit card or a traveler's check. No personal checks will be accepted.

A hospitality room, which will be set up Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights, will have soft drinks and munchies. The hotel is furnishing transportation on Friday and Saturday to South Hills or the Galleria shopping mall to the or to the T Station (our subway system - Pittsburgh's best kept secret). We are also planning on Friday, September 11th, in the evening, an excursion to the Meadows Race Track which is horse racing. Transportation will be up to the individual and we need 50 participants to do this. that is going to be held this year in Pittsburgh,

This is just an update and a general idea of what is planned. We will be sending each chapter member the itinerary by the middle of June.

I would like to mention that this years incoming National Commander is going to be our own Secretary/Treasurer, Peter J. Messina. So if you would like to meet your new National Commander, plan to be in Pittsburgh September 10-13, 1992 for our chapter reunion.

Sincerely,

Steve Dennison  
Commander

## VIETNAM NEWS NETWORK

THE ROAD TO LZ KAREN

Time to start thinking about Washington DC for this coming Veterans Day, November 11. It's been a tradition for many thousands of Vietnam vets to gather at the "WALL" each year on that date. This year will probably draw even larger crowds as it's the 10th anniversary of our memorial. We can expect some special events this year. That's in addition to the DMZ TO DELTA DANCE hosted by the Women's Memorial Foundation. Our Americal HQ is as yet undecided but I'm leaning towards the Marriott in Arlington. Details will follow in the next issue. We'll have our usual hospitality suite and will put out a kitty to help with expenses.

I'd like to have a honor guard to present our colors at the Wall ceremonies. Does anyone know of two active duty GIs or reservist who would be willing to spend a few hours on November 11 as our color guard? We'd want a couple of sharp men, in uniform. The pay would be in the form of an invite to the Americal hospitality suite following the ceremony. These men need not be Vietnam vets. Only requirement is that they look and act like soldiers. I hope some of you members out there in the DC area can provide some volunteers. It would be a shame if a unit with our size and contributions to the Vietnam war was not represented. Call your editor at 314-631-4106.

kokomo. It's coming up on Sept 18-20. In a past issue of the newsletter, we reported the date as the weekend prior to that one. I regret the error. Americal will have our usual HQ tent fully stocked with cold drinks and hot dogs, all complementary. The Americal Division is well represented at this event and I can guarantee a swell time to all who attend. Bob Kasting...We're counting on you to bring those chairs/tables that you had last year. Also, we'll need all the ice you can carry in that tiny car you drive. Sgt Ron Davis...We'll need you again as NCOIC of the HQ tent operations. Bring all your usual gear.

San Antonio, June 18-20. See you all there.

Yours in comradeship,  
Ron Ward 198th LIB

Members;

The author of five previous books on the Vietnam war, Kieth Nolan, has requested the help of our membership in researching another proposed book. The subject is the 1/46th Infantry 196th LIB and their campaigns in the Hiep Duc Valley (MAY-June 70) around Fire Base Mary Ann and Fire Base Young (July 70 March 71), and their defense of Mary Ann during an NVA sapper attack (28 March 71). If you served with the 1/46th Infantry or supporting units anytime between May 70 and April 71, please contact him anytime to arrange an interview. I know a lot of you men have read his book titled "DEATH VALLEY", about the 196th LIB's actions near the Hiep Duc area of operations. It was a great piece of work and I'd like to see him get all the help we can provide on his latest efforts. Contact him anytime at:

Kieth William Nolan  
[REDACTED]  
Webster Groves, MO 63119 [REDACTED]

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WHY NOT PASS YOUR AMERICAL NEWSLETTER ALONG  
TO A FRIEND OR PLACE IT IN A V.A. HOSPITAL

It is dawn sometime early July, 1968. B52's are returning to Guam after dropping their huge bombs on the Ho Chi Minh trail. They are flying so high the men leaving LZ Ross thousands of feet below are not aware of the huge planes flying overhead. Members of F Troop 17th Cav fire up their PC's and elements of the Americal Divisions 196th Infantry, including the 3rd platoon of A Company 26th Engr Battalion saddle up and the cool of the morning is welcome for they know soon the suffocating heat will make them pull at their canteens and sweat-sweat.

A huge 8" gun mounted on tracks with "Birth Control" painted on the barrel joins the infantry PC's and engineers. A grinning cigar smoking E6 staff sergeant sets on the barrel. Dozers out in front going toward the Que Sahn Valley the column turns at the second vill toward the west.

On and On thru the heat with PC's and infantry on the flank, artillery trucks in the center and engineers some with mine detectors sweep the road ahead of the column. Pushing on they pass rice paddys with Vietnamese farmers bent over knee deep in the muddy water. Soon the small paddys give way to ever increasing small valleys and hills. Crossing small streams everyone except those in the PC's had to walk with wet feet that day.

Old Mama-San's with ancient faces watched us pass by their isolated hooches, no military age males were to be seen. One soldier got a cold drink of water from a well with a cup made from a palm or a banana leaf cup and marveled at its construction.

Soon the column passed a downed Huey riddled with bullet holes lying on its side rusting away. On the front of an old crumbling French plantation farm house written in crude English "There are 25,000 French corpses buried here, do not follow in their footsteps" We read the words and walked on with little or no comment.

Shortly afterward, the PC's with the infantry between them circled the base of the high steep hill later to be known as LZ Karen, made a rushing assault upwards until they occupied the top, they found nothing but thick sod like grass. After establishing all around security the dozers gouged out gun emplacements for the artillery and grinning skulls and white bones

and rusting GI steel pots popped out of the churning dirt. That night pulling guard, the sounds of Hanoi Hannah's alluring voice could be heard from different radios as the guys tried to pick up AFVN radio so they could listen to music from back in the world. The sounds of the big guns roared thru the night and the GI's who were unlucky enough to pull guard duty and sleep in their holes in front of them would be jolted by each out going round.

For a short while all would be quiet then the radio operator would yell out "FIRE MISSION" and the gunners would spring to life. First the round shoved in the breach, then the bags of gun powder behind, slamming the breach shut, the commander would make the right Azimuth adjustments and KA BOOM! Blow defiance at an unseen enemy.

To be continued.....

A Co. 26th Engr Btn. 3rd plt.  
Americal Division

ARE YOUR DUES PAID?



## VIETNAM NEWS NETWORK

MEMBERS (from Big Al)

I can get all codes for your SPN and re-inlistment codes for your DD214. Many of these codes stopped Bro's from getting good jobs because big companies got ahold of them. If any Americal Bro' wants to know, let them send me a note and a post card. I'll pass it on.

Wanted: Newspaper articles on Vietnam related interests from local papers, dailys, weeklys. Any veteran issue. Need article date, name, address of newspaper. Everyone can help. They will be photocopied and passed on to others throughout the country.

Russian Veterans seeking correspondence with Vietnam Veterans. Yuri Butsak reads and writes English. Anyone wishing to write Yuri can do so at:  
Yuri Butsak  
[redacted]  
Moscow Russia 113184

Letters take about three weeks to get there. Yuri is 41 years old and fought on the Russian/Chinese border in 1969.

P.S. Tell him "Big Al" in Atlanta says Hello!.

Joyce Flory of Las Cruces, New Mexico puts people in touch with incarcerated Vietnam Veterans all across the country. If you know of anyone currently in an institution who is a Vietnam Veteran OR would like to participate, contact:

Joyce Flory  
[redacted]  
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88001

Denise Weiser of the Sharon Lane Memorial Chapter 199 of the Vietnam Veterans of America in Canton, Ohio, has Agent Orange Bracelets to remember our Vietnam Veteran Brothers who have died of Agent Orange. The color is appropriately orange and designed after the POW/MIA bracelets. This chapter will on request print the name and date of any Vietnam Veteran who has died of Agent Orange. The cost is \$5.00 and will help the Chapter. Let us not forget our Brothers. For information contact:

Denise Weiser  
Sharon Lane Memorial Chapter 199  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
[redacted]  
Canton OH 44701-1205

Best regards,

Big Al Fuchs 198th LIB  
[redacted]  
Atlanta GA 30340-4164  
H [redacted]  
W [redacted]

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WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR NEWSLETTER

PASS IT ON TO A NON-MEMBER  
GIVE IT TO A V.A. HOSPITAL

PUT IT IN THE READING ROOM OF YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

Dear Commander Rolly Castronova,  
Hello, brother warrior! I hope you are well and that everything is looking up for you, especially with the big "50" reunion just around the corner. I just wanted to convey to you a special word of THANKS! for helping me out when I first became a member of the A.D.V.A.  
It's just an amazing thing that, after all these years after Nam, the only one I have gained any contact with is Rocky Alejandro. I don't know if the rest of these guys are sick, dead, alive or just too self-centered to give a flying rat's behind. I don't know if you are the right one to be asking, Rolly, but you must know how I am feeling about all of this, so, I am asking you for your help, my brother. Specifically, I am needing a list of all the guys who are still alive from my old unit, with any info on phone numbers and addresses if available. Is that something you are able to help with? If not, please aim me in the right direction where I might seek that assistance. My former unit with Americal in Nam was D4/21, 11th Brigade, Duc Pho, V.N. I Corps, 69-70. Rocky has given me a few names and addresses of former warriors, but I have written without any answers received. I don't know if these addresses are out of date or if indeed, any of these people exist. Much to my embarrassment, I found out last year that our field medic had been dead for some time. It was not my intention to stir up old hurts and wounds. I know, you, of all people, understand only too well. I would greatly appreciate any time and effort put forth in this endeavor to find my comrades so that I might at least contact them. Thank you for your help in this matter. Please send any information or contact me at:

Steven Leinfus, D4/21 11th LIB  
[redacted]  
Rancho Cordova CA 95670

Members:

I write this note in hopes that you will publish a "piece" in the Americal Newsletter. My fellow veterans your help is needed! Presently any military retiree with a service connected disability who receives a V.A. compensation and a military retirement has a pay offset. Basically, if you get \$200. per month from the V.A. you lose \$200. per month from your military retirement.

The current offset is a gross injustice to the memory of those courageous actions and the risks and deprivations which service connected military retirees they suffered on behalf of us all. Clearly, the Federal budget should not be balanced on the backs of honorable veterans who have sacrificed life and limb to rescue our very freedom!

May I state, this current offset only applies to military retirees. Why single out the military retirees? I respectfully request you take pen in hand now and write your Senator and Congressman informing them you expect them to support H.R.303! Let's make our disabled military retirees equal citizens!

Frank J. Paris, D/5-46 INF  
198th LIB  
Americal Division

ARE YOUR DUES PAID?

## VIETNAM NEWS NETWORK

A TRUE STORY BY "DUTCH" DE GROOT

In 1985, my old pal John Crowley who after many years of trying to get me involved in Vietnam stuff, finally convinced me to go to the Chicago parade. It was there that I found out about the Americal Division Association. Since then I have made numerous friends and acquaintances. Being at that time one of the only 23 MP's in the organization made me stand out from all of the grunts. I decided to go to Houston in 1986 or 87, to another parade. While there a few of my friends approached me to tell me they had brought another MP to keep me company. His name was Joe and although he didn't serve with the Americal, non the less, was a bona fide Vietnam MP. At this time I was enthusiastic to meet one of my own kind, and yet always on the alert for MP bashing from those fun-loving hard-living Grunts. I asked "where is he?" It was then that Jerry Feldman produced this box which indeed contained the mortal remains of Joe. I said "unbelievable." They explained "he's here for the parade as he would of loved it". His brother gave him to us with the instructions "have a good time but don't lose him." He would want to be there with you guys. The rest was history. We decorated the box with the proper materials including the Crossed Pistols of the MP corp. He was the hit of the reunion and went wherever we did. It was considered an honor to buy him a beer even at other Divisions that we visited. It probably brought a smile to Joe. As he saw that there were 20 or 30 beers lined up in front of his box at every watering hole that we stopped at. The best part is he never even had to buy a round back.

Members:

Russell Erickson who lost a son KIA while serving with the 59th Scout Dog Platoon of the 11th LIB in Duc Pho wishes to get in touch with one who was a member of this unit. Mr. Erickson has been able to find all patches related to the 23rd Div., etc., but needs the patch of the 59th. In lieu of an actual patch he will accept a clear and accurate drawing. Mr. Erickson knows that the patch is probably a special insignia produced in Vietnam. Anyone familiar with the patch or may have an extra one contact:

Russell Erickson  
[redacted]  
Bensenville IL 60106

Vietnam Editor:

I was a crewchief with the 123rd AVN BN Americal Division from February 1968 through April 1970. General Kroesen (196th Brigade) provided your name as a person that may be able to help me locate friends from the service. I have contacted over twenty already, but I am trying to get some type of reunion set up to mark our twenty-fifth anniversary. Many of our door gunners came from the 196th or 198th Infantry Brigades. I am also interested in locating our flight officers. I would be thankful any assistance you could provide.

P.S. I would be interested to talk to individuals that served around Hiep Duc in the 196th or 198th, or 1/1st Cav. Units.

Leslie Hines  
[redacted]  
Des Moines IA 50317  
[redacted]

Dear Ron,

It's time I sat down to write a few pages of personal greetings, thanks and appreciation, words of encouragement for the future, plus some info for the Americal Association Magazine.

Your presence was conspicuous by your absense last Veteran's Day in D.C. I for one missed seeing you again, as did the rest of the Americal guys. It goes without saying that your continued efforts over the past years has made the annual November 11th pilgrimage to the "Wall" more rewarding. Hope you'll return in 1992. Each year for the past several years a few of us Canadian Nam Vets have journeyed to D.C. for the Wall ceremonies, the nurses dance, and all the comaraderie that goes with the trip. Each year I anticipate reuniting with some of the old familiar faces from HHC, 198th LIB, October 67 - July 68. So far I've met many "Brave & Bolds" but not yet anyone I remember from way back when. Thanks to the Americal newsletter and the Veteran Locator. I've succeeded in finding Lynn Hart, 198th Medic, and Steve Monroe, HHC Commo Platoon, and our communications over the past two years have been very rewarding. I was SP/5 in charge of the HHC photo lab and would like to locate all my guys, Larry Herrmann, Chicago. Steve Marvin, LA, Calif. Dave Glass, Chicago. And even old lifer, Chuck Bragdon.

Steve Monroe and family did journey to Niagra Falls NY last Vet's Day weekend, and did call me, but we were again at D.C. for the weekend and regretfully missed his visit. Niagara Falls is only a one hour drive from our base camp in Hamilton. We're trying to convince both Steve and Lynn and families to visit us this coming August when our local group, CANADIAN VIETNAM VETERANS OF HAMILTON is hosting the "Moving Wall." Showing dates are Saturday, August 8th through Sunday, August 16, 1992, at Confederation Park, here in Hamilton. Our opening day activities include a memorial ceremony honoring the 83 known Canadians who names are forever inscribed upon "The Wall." We know there must be at least three hundred Canadians on the Wall, but we have no way to identify them as most Canadian home of records were listed as where each entered the service in the U.S. Americal Association members may be able to assist us in identifying more Canadians by letting us know about any Canadians they may have served with in Nam. Of the estimated 25,000-40,000 Canadians who served with the US Forces in Nam, less than 2,000 have joined one of the 14 groups across Canada. We'd appreciate hearing from any Americal Canucks and anyone who knew some of our guys way back then. To date, we've only found one Canadian lady who served in Nam- she was a nurse at the 95th Evac. in Danang. Although I'm the only Americal vet around here, all of us at CVVH appreciate whatever publicity you can give our "Moving Wall" showing this year. Each and every Americal Vet and all the rest will be given a true Canadian welcome.

And you, Ron, thanks for your contributions that have made all of us proud members of the Americal Association. I personally hope you have many more years of input in keeping the family together.

Hope to see you soon,  
Gary Befus  
Photo Lab HHC 198th LIB 67-68.  
[redacted]  
Dundas ON, Canada  
19H 6M1  
[redacted] (days)



## VIETNAM NEWS NETWORK

DEAR JOE,  
YOU MENTIONED WE COULD SEND OUR ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE REGIONAL NEWSLETTER. I HAVE A FAIRLY RECENT EXPERIENCE I'D LIKE TO SHARE. MY COMPANY HAS A PROGRAM WHEREBY THOSE WILLING TO DONATE CAN HAVE A DESIGNATED SUM WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR PAYCHECKS AS CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS. I SAW NO VETERANS GROUPS ON THE LIST. I THEN "DUG IN" AND LEARNED THERE WAS A WAY I MIGHT ADD NON-PROFIT VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS TO THE LIST OF RECIPIENTS.

CERTAIN UETS GROUPS WOULD JUMP AT THE CHANCE, I SPENT MY TIME CALLING VETERAN ORGANIZATIONS LIKE VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA, AMERICAN LEGION, AND AT LEAST FOUR CHAPTERS OF DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS. THE GUY WHO ANSWERED MY FIRST CALL WAS TOO BUSY PLAYING "GRAB-ASS" WITH THE SECRETARY TO BOTHER WITH ME. I POLITELY LEFT MY NUMBER, HE NEVER RETURNED THE CALL. OTHER REACTIONS RANGED FROM OUTRIGHT MISTRUST TO THANKS-BUT-NO-THANKS. NONE BOTHERED TO RETURN MY CALLS. DISCOURAGED, I HAD EXHAUSTED THE LOCAL PHONE DIRECTORY, EXCEPT FOR ONE DAV CHAPTER. THEY WERE VERY POLITE, VERY INTERESTED. WE MET, THEY REVIEWED MY COMPANIES REQUIREMENTS, AND WE SUBMITTED THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK.

I REALIZE MOST OF THE PEOPLE ANSWERING PHONES HAVE PROBABLY DONE MORE FOR UETS THAN I'LL EVER DO. MY POINT IS, IF YOU HAVE AN IDEA TO HELP UETS, KEEP TRYING. SOME IDEAS WILL NEVER BE USED, SOME ARE NOT USABLE, BUT IF WE KEEP APPLYING EVEN A FRACTION OF THE DETERMINATION WE HAD IN THE 'NAM, EVENTUALLY SOME GOOD WILL COME OF IT. AFTER MONTHS OF RE-SUBMITTING PAPERWORK, MY COMPANY WROTE THE DAV CHAPTER A CHECK FROM THE FUND FOR FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS AND THE DISABLE AMERICAN VETERAN CHAPTER IS NOW ON THE COMPANIES PERMANENT LIST.

THE SUCCESS, AFTER SO MANY ATTEMPTS WAS GREAT, BUT I ASK MYSELF "WHAT HAVE I DONE FOR ANOTHER UET LATELY?" GUESS IT'S TIME FOR ME TO GET OFF MY BUTT. ....DUSTER

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THE AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION MAKES A GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO THE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY AND THE AMERICAN HEART FUND, EACH YEAR, IN MEMORY OF OUR DEPARTED COMRADES.

ADVA Newsletter  
Ron Ward  
Vietnam Editor

Bill Clinton's youthful aspiration to the presidency rings hollow. Holding public office demands a strong sense of duty and service. Is the singular quest for the highest office in our country simply a personal goal, or is the presidency a position of trust and leadership to be earned? George Busch displayed courage as a young aviator in WWII. He drew on that experience to guide our country, the coalition forces and our military to a victory for democracy in the Persian Gulf War. A deep conviction marked his resolve to free Kuwait. His courage to lead a divided America transcended political motive and personal ambition. Men who have risked their lives to preserve Freedom and Democracy will not hesitate when confronted with tyranny. The politician turned warrior leader will confront the enemy with the mind and heart of a determined soldier. There will be no debate, the critics will silenced, Freedom will be defended. Bill Clinton forfeited his one best chance to learn first hand the sacrifices that Democracy demands. He missed the opportunity to experience the defining quality that separates politicians from leaders - courage. In his youth, American was asking its' young men to help a sovereign nation fight an aggressive enemy. Many men summoned the strength to push an idea called Democracy ahead of their own thoughts of self-preservation. Others lacked courage, and pursued a path of manipulation and debate and criticism. The Vietnam War was a just cause. But the leadership of our Country lacked the courage, conviction and will to secure democracy for the people of South Vietnam. Our politicians caved in to the critics. Boatloads of desperate refugees, the vilification of our fighting men, a dispirited nation are but a few of the legacies of ill-equipped politicians. The betrayal ripped the moral fabric of America. A once proud nation went into decline. What personal experience will Bill Clinton draw from when Democracy is next challenged. Will he have the courage to send young men and women into battle? Or will he waiver?

Greg Linscott D-1/52 198th  
Seattle WA 98103

## ATTENTION ATTENTION

IF YOU ARE PLANNING ON ATTENDING THE REUNION

IN SAN ANTONIO AND ARE FLYING THERE

CALL [REDACTED]

GIVE THEM YOUR FLIGHT NUMBER AND TIME OF ARRIVAL AND THEY WILL MEET YOU AND GIVE YOU FREE TRANSPORTATION TO THE HOTEL.

THIS SERVICE IS PROVIDED BY THE REUNION COMMITTEE

YOU MUST CALL!

## VIETNAM NEWS NETWORK

FILE YOUR V.A. CLAIM NOW!

To you WW II, Korea era, and Vietnam era Vets who are entitled to V.A. Claims for the injuries you received in action during the war, do it now!

Let me tell you my problems in that area. I was wounded in Korea in 1951 and lost my right lung, and 7th rib, was later again wounded and suffered head injuries. I was 19 years old at the time, and a career soldier. I listened to the professionals who told me it wasn't necessary to file a claim, Uncle Sam would always take care of me, if I believed in the system.

In 1971 I was injured in Vietnam, stepping on a punji spear that 20 years later turned out to be major medical problems, requiring foot surgery and discovery it was malignant and badly damaged. It caused me to seek medical relief at the Leavenworth, Kansas, V.A. Medical Center, long after I had retired from the Army and was on CHAMPUS COVERAGE with a Supplemental Policy to pick up the extras and the incidentals. I was always told that I was eligible for government care in any government facility or hospital, including V.A.!

"NOT SO!" To my disbelief I was "billed" \$678 by the V.A. as "my share" of my treatment!

According to their "Means" standards, I had to pay a share of costs because I was not on a poverty income level, and was not recognized for medical care under V.A. rules. A retired military retiree is not entitled treatment at a V.A. facility, according to an August 1991 Fact Sheet On V.A. Services to Veterans.

I was brutalized verbally by the V.A. for declaring I was entitled to care by the government for wounds received in action. I was threatened with garnishment of my retired pay at 8% interest of the unpaid balance with a service fee being charged monthly on the unpaid portion of the money. I was "up the creek without a paddle" as the saying goes!

I subsequently learned that the American Legion and the VFW have Service Officers at most V.A. facilities to assist veterans in filing claims for disability or compensation if due from the services for injuries received during wartime.

I visited my local American Legion Representative in Topeka V.A. Hospital this past October 1991, and He helped me fill out the necessary forms and paperwork to get my claim started through the Wichita, Kansas, V.A. Field Office of the Veterans Administration.

Let Me tell you guys who believe in the Red, White, and Blue of it, that your government will not automatically accept your word that you were injured in combat and are entitled to care.

If you cannot prove you were injured, if you have no witnesses who can verify your claims, you will be treated as a liar, a story teller, and dismissed outright by any V.A. facility if you cannot produce proof of the injury, regardless who you are, or what rank you are.

Don't listen to the marlarkey you were told while in the service about the military taking care of its own. It's not true, and the burden is on you to prove your claim.

In my case I was lucky. Documentation exists to support my Korean war injuries, and my Colonel from my Vietnam days, and my Company Commander, support my Vietnam foot

injury. Had I not had contact with both of them, having served in an elite military police unit that has kept tabs on each other, I may very well have lost the opportunity to set the record straight.

Thanks to our Junior Vice Commander who sets behind the keyboard of his computer in his Home, keeping track of all us military police guys in the Americal Division, and his Chief Advisor Brian Mulcrone, "Dutch" DeGroot saved the day for this old leathery first sergeant when he put the records of the unit together, so we could all "shoot, move, and communicate" as an old army saying goes.

I'm on my way to "recognition" by the V.A. for medical treatment of care I should have been getting 20 to 40 years ago!

Don't wait any longer guys. Get out to the American Legion or VFW and get those forms filled out, and start the paperwork now.

We are not getting any younger, and you can forget about the system taking care of you. "Out of Sight - Is Out of Mind"! Don't forget that!

David L. Recob  
Central Mid West Chapter  
Secretary-Treasurer

## DISTINGUISHED AMERICAL ALUMNI

COLONEL DAVID W. TAYLOR  
COMMANDER  
U.S. ARMY RESERVE  
AUGMENTATION  
U.S. ATLANTIC COMMAND

Upon commissioning as a officer in February 1968, Colonel Taylor remained in the OCS program as a tactical officer responsible for a platoon of officer candidates. After completing a OCS training cycle, he completed the airborne and ranger schools at Ft. Benning. Shortly thereafter he was assigned to the 23rd Infantry Division (Americal) in the Republic of Vietnam, first as a mortar platoon leader then rifle platoon leader and acting company commander, Company C, 5/46th Infantry, 198th Light Infantry Brigade.

After recovering from wounds received in Vietnam, Colonel Taylor was appointed Officer in Charge, Small Arms Training, Ft. Jackson, SC. In February 1971 he left active duty and after obtaining his Bachelors Degree, joined the B.F. Goodrich Co. in 1972. At the same time he entered the U.S. Army Reserve and served as S-1, S-3 and XO, Company C, 2d Battalion, 11th Special Forces Group (Airborne). From 1977 to early 1980, while working in Venezuela for B.F. Goodrich, Colonel Taylor performed annual training tours with special forces and other active component combat units. From 1980 to 1984 Colonel Taylor served in joint special operations (SPECOPS) assignments as a mobilization augmentee, 1st SOCOM, assigned as SPECOPS planner to the U.S. Southern Command, Panama. In 1984 he was assigned as SPECOPS Officer, U.S. Army Reserve augmentation, U.S. Forces Caribbean.

From 1988 to 1990 Colonel Taylor was appointed Chief, Unit Training Division and later Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff Training, HQ, 83d U.S. Army Reserve Command. He assumed command of the USAR Augmentation, USLANCOM, on 1 July 1990.

Colonel Taylor's awards include the Silver Star, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster and fifteen other individual decorations, awards and badges.



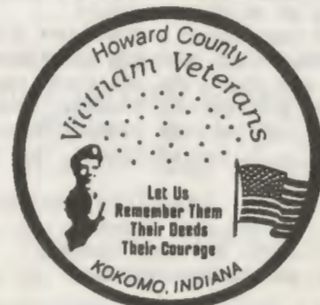
## REUNIONS

# 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL INDIANA VIETNAM VETERANS REUNION

KOKOMO, INDIANA  
SEPTEMBER 18-20, 1992

- ★ MUSIC OF THE '60s ★ GUEST SPEAKERS  
★ FOOD VENDORS ★ ART SHOW  
★ LOCATOR BOARD ★ STATIC DISPLAYS  
★ MILITARY SUPPLIES VENDORS  
★ UNIT REUNIONS—SET UP YOUR OWN  
★ POW/MIA CEREMONIES ★ FLYOVERS

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TO  
PUBLIC



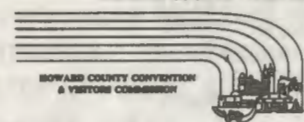
ALL  
VETS  
WELCOME

NAVY  
MARINES

COAST GUARD

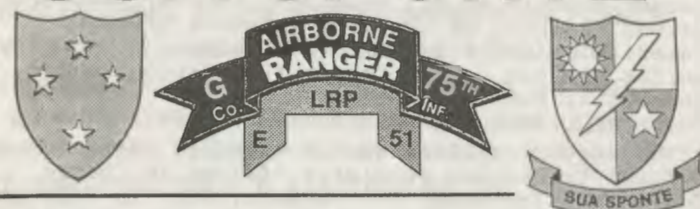
ARMY  
AIR FORCE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL THE  
HOWARD COUNTY VIETNAM VETERANS ORGANIZATION



PRODUCED IN COOPERATION WITH  
THE HOWARD COUNTY CONVENTION  
& VISITORS COMMISSION

## SUA SPONTE



July 5 - 6 1992

FOR MORE INFORMATION WRITE TO;

COMPANY G (RANGER) 75TH INFANTRY ASSOCIATION  
La Mesa, California 92041

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F COMPANY 182 INFANTRY

50th ANNIVERSARY

Saturday June 13, 1992

For more information contact;

William Vinci  
Medford, MA 02155

Telephone [REDACTED]

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## REUNIONS

USS ROPER DD147/APD20

September 21-23, 1992  
Portland, ME

CONTACT

Rhodes R. Chamberlin  
[REDACTED]  
El Paso, TX 79905  
Telephone [REDACTED]

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43<sup>D</sup> INFANTRY DIVISION  
VETERANS ASSOCIATION  
HARTFORD 15, CONNECTICUT

SEPTEMBER 11, 12, 13, 1992

CONTACT

Howard F. Brown  
[REDACTED]  
E. Greenwich, RI 02818

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## THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

THE NATIONAL GUARD AND NATIONAL DEFENSE  
THE MOBILIZATION OF THE GUARD IN WORLD WAR II

The battle for control over the National Guard began with passage of the National Defense Act of 1933. The National Guard Association's insistence on a federal role for the Guard prompted the creation of a dual status for Guardsmen. After 1933 they were not only soldiers of the state, but of the nation as well. The first test of the Guard's new status came as the world plunged into the second World War. The compromises, the conflicts, emotions, and legal precedents involved in the 1940-41 mobilization were to affect the National Guard and national defense strategy for many years to come. Yet, this important aspect of American history has been largely ignored. In most works on the Roosevelt era the federalization of the 18 Guard Divisions--which doubled the size of the Army--is given one or two lines. Guard historians have paid close attention to Guardsmen entering federal camps, but gloss over the politics of Army-Guard maneuvering prior to mobilization. This study demonstrates the importance of the political situation between the two defense establishments and their consequences for later defense policy and legislation.

Robert Bruce Sligh shows how mobilization in 1940-41 spurred increased federal control over the Guard. Although the Army was hesitant to take the guard into active service, once mobilized the Guard was rapidly co-opted. The Guard's dual goals of increased federal money while staying aloof from federal control were doomed to fail.

The above is a review of the book written by Robert Bruce Sligh and is available for \$46.00 from:

Brennon McCarthy  
Marketing Department  
Praeger Publishers  
[REDACTED]  
Westport, CT 06881

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HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES?  
CHECK THAT CARD NOW!

## LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD

Mass. Pre Pearl Harbor Vet.

By ELINOR MILLS  
Associated Press Writer

Yarmouth, Mass. (AP) Like many patriotic Americans Bernard Chase heeded his government's call and signed up to serve his country during World War 11. However, just when he was preparing to return to civilian life the bombing of Pearl Harbor delayed his exit and triggered a long history of bitter conflict and a reconciliation with the Japanese which continues to this day.

Chase, who turned 69 on Monday, December 2, 1991, joined the National Guard in 1940, and later became a Staff Sergeant in the 221st Field Artillery Battalion. After the National Guard was federalized, in December 1941 he had just over a month to serve.

His unit, in the 26th Division, had spent three months on training maneuvers in North Carolina and South Carolina and returned to its home base at Camp Edwards on Cape Cod on December 7, 1941. "We arrived at Edwards Sunday around 3:00 a.m. They fed us and we went to bed. Later that day a little after 1:00 p.m. we were told that the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor" Chase recounted during a telephone interview this week. "We'd never even heard of Pearl Harbor; Hawaii yes, but Pearl Harbor no."

His unit was given a 10 day furlough and 43 days after the surprise attack many units from the 26th Division and units from the Illinois National Guard were sent to the Pacific. They landed in Australia on March 6, 1942, the first American troops to land there after the bombing, Chase said.

The Task Force then went to an island off the coast of Australia, New Caledonia, from which the Division later derived its name Americal. In Oct. 1942, we became the first army troops to take offensive action against the Japanese. The Division reinforced the U.S. Marines in Guadalcanal and stayed there until the Japanese were defeated.

The Division then got a rest in the Fiji Islands before being sent back into combat with Japanese troops in Bougainville.

"The jungle is a hell of a place to be fighting," Chase said, adding that over three quarters of his division contracted malaria. He and many others were given the "blitzkrieg treatment" which entailed taking 16 anti-malarial capsules a day for four or five days, he said. Patients were not admitted to the crowded hospitals unless they had a temperature at least as high as 104 degrees. If you were 103 they'd tell you to come back in the afternoon when your temperature would be higher.

The Americal Division met a formidable enemy in the Japanese, as well they were told that if they surrendered the Americans would kill them, so they fought right to the last. We soon learned that they were very treacherous people to deal with. They would (pretend to) surrender and when you'd want to take them in, they'd have hand grenades hidden in their underwear and would suddenly throw them at our troops.

The Americal Division was not only the first Army troops to take the offensive, they were also the

last to stop fighting, he said. "The troops that the Division was fighting in the Philippines did not believe that the war was over and kept fighting." When the fighting eventually concluded, the division became the first Army troops to land in Japan by ship, in September 1945.

Chase was back in the United States on rotation when the war in Europe ended and he was officially discharged at Fort Devens in July 1945.

"When Japan surrendered I was playing baseball for a baseball team in Brighton, Mass. The bells in all of the churches started ringing to signal the end of the war, we quit the ball game right then and went out to celebrate the end of the fighting."

Chase, who is originally from Brighton, was a Boston Police Officer for 32 years before retiring in 1980 and moving to Yarmouth. He has been the national adjutant of the Americal Division Veterans Association for four years.

"Strange as it may seem, we have a few Japanese veterans as members of our Americal Division Veterans Association and they fought the same battles we fought except they were on the other side," he said. Some members of the Veterans Association had met the Japanese veterans in Japan and maintained contact. "Over the course of the years we corresponded with them and now they are dues-paying members."

Although the bombing of Pearl Harbor meant four more years of military service and heavy combat for Chase, he said he treasures the experience. "It's something I wouldn't want to live through again, but I'm glad I didn't miss it."



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WERE YOU A SNIPER?

I am an author compiling material for a book on the "Art of Sniping". I am contacting many sources to have a rounded view on the experiences of as many snipers as possible.

If you have a story to tell please contact me;

Keith Everett  
[REDACTED]  
Green Valley, AZ 85614

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## LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD

Co. I 182nd Inf.

Inclosed is my application and check to join the "Americal Division Veterans Association. I was a member of I Company im W.W. 11 in Bougainville, Philippines where I was wounded, and on to Japan for the final assault on the Japs homeland--that did not develope. I came home from Japan with elements of the Division and was at Ft. Lawton when it broke up in November 1945.

I would like to stay in contact but I see many problems with having an active roll in the Associations: I have been the Associate Director of my Vietnam Battalion with 225 members that meet each year in a location in the U.S. for a reunion. I have been the originator of this unit and we are a close group. We have a great gathering each year. Next reunion will be in Billings, Montana 5-9 Aug. 1992.

Enough about that now to get to the Americal story and my memories of that War. I joined the Division at Bougainville in May 1944 and immediately placed in a platoon with veteran combat experienced men that had come through the Guadalcanal battles. I was proud to be there and was anxious to get into the fight, since I had been fed many combat stories from the so called "Rear area commandos" that had been in replacement along the way.

My platoon sergeant Dick Hearn was a good man, and after a briefing he made it clear that to survive in combat you had to be alert at all times, and that he was assigning me to a bunker on the M.L.R. where there was a man that needed some attention and some help in staying alert, keeping clean, and maintaining his equipment. I was given advise that I was to straighten him up. This gave me the belief that the Platoon Sergeant had immediately thought I was capable and was a good soldier.

I was given a M-1 Garand rifle that had been in the mud, was dirty, and wasn't in the best operating condition. Since I had mastered the art of caring for and assembling the M-1 rifle, I immediately went to work on it and practically overhauled it finally replacing the whole trigger hausing. I took it to the rear practice area to fire it and make sure it would operate. After that I cleaned a basic load of ammunition, and cleaned up the bunker for the nights action. I let my buddy know that things would change if I was to survive and I wasn't going to take chances of being a failure to be burried in the Bougainville Cemetery like others had been. I wanted to go home and get back to living after the War.

It took me little time to know that I had much to learn, but I put all my thoughts on doing things right and placing emphasis on what I had learned in basic, advance and training that I had to date, as I was one of the lucky ones that had been trained for fourteen months in the states before entering combat. All the training wasn't enough to compare with the first minute learning in combat and under fire.

I went on many patrols in front of the Main Line Of Resistance and gained confidence of my platoon leader Lt. White. On one of the patrols he asked for a pacer-that could pace off the distance of the patrol. I volunteered like a fool and was pacing the distance like I had been taught in training, and after we had gone about a mile by my count I realized that someone before me had been cheating on a count. We had gone the limit of any other patrol and I was given a message by the men that I had counted wrong to that point. We still

had another 1000 yards to go to accomplish our mission. The platoon leader believed me and we continued on to locate an area where the Japs had been staying. It was there I saw my first dead Jap along the trail. After the patrol was over, and we returned to the perimeter, I wasn't so popular with others that accompanied us as they all said I counted wrong and we had gone out to far.

I was in the unit for four months before I was under fire and won my Combat Infantrymans Badge. We were about ten miles out on the Numa-Numa trail and were hit loosing three men killed. This was August 1944. We had to be fired at to receive the C.I.B. in those days. Not like Vietnam where every one that went over with a M.O.S. 11b status was awarded the C.I.B. whether they saw Vietnam enemy or not.

I can say at this time there was no comparison with the combat in W.W. 11 and Vietnam as to the enemy. The Viet Cong were more of an animal then the Japs, and in W.W. 11 we thought the Japanese were real mean. I know that we were fighting the Rapers of Nanking in Bougainville, but the Viet Cong were savages and would mutilate a body and try to do so where the friendlys could observe it. They were brutal, and perfectionist on evasion and sneaking in on you when you least expected it. They seem to always succeed in dragging the most of their wounded and killed away, which had a mental effect on us.

After W.W. 11 I was discharged and went back to school in Dallas, Texas. I met my wife after going back to school, as we had grown up together I had known her for years, we were married in 1946. We have four boys and two girls, twelve grandchildren and are very happily married after 46 years. All of the children are doing great and no problems.

I was in the reserves after W.W. 11 and reentered the Army after a nine year break in service. I went into the paratroopers and jumped 99 times before being discharged. I had two tours in Nam with the First Battalion (Airborne) Eight Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division, and later I was on the initial arrival of the 101st Airborne in 1967 and fought near units of the Marines and other Army units at Hue during the Tet offensive Vietnam. I had a close call on Operation Crazy Horse in 1966 where we hit an ambush and were surrounded. We had 28 wounded and eight dead and the V.C.'s were all over us. We managed to survive and one of the men that was with me won the Medal Of Honor and my C. O. was awarded the D.S.C. for that action. It was the worst battle of Vietnam. Well again let me say I would like to receive the news-letter of the Americal and hear from anyone who was in the Philippines after the landing at Talisay. And I would like to hear from anyone who went up Hill 21 in that famous bayonet attack on 12th of April at 11:30 p.m., where I was wounded along with over half of my platoon. Captain Murphy was the officer that ordered that attack after Col Dunn made the decision to Attack and "Take That Hill At All Cost". I remember that message to this day as I was the Radio operator and had to get rid of my radio and borrow a bayonet after the word came to "Fix Bayonets".

I have recently located some of the men who were wounded and made that attack with me. I am enclosing their addresses if you would like to send them a news-letter they may join up also. Some are orippled and can't go anywhere any more but they can write in their experiences.

CONCLUSION ON PAGE 14

## LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD

CO. I 182 INFANTRY (Conclusion)

The photograph here is a photo of our platoon in Bougainville in 1944. From left to right top I will name the ones that I still remember. Maybe some one will write in and give the names of others in the photo that I don't remember. Top row left to right: Huey Marsh, ?, ?, Lopez, Laguno Staheli, Vucobraudivich, Hauser, Laturza, ?, Steel Second row left to right ?, McCubbin, ?, Hayes, ?, Price, Doc Gellespie (Doc was killed on the 12th of April just before the Bayonet attack), Cerchia, Sanders, and ?. Third row left to right Sorensen, Hensley, Zindarsic, Swift, Ridehorse, Gordon Douglass, Dempsey, and Ray Poynter. I will request that anyone who is in this photo and sees these men or knows their where abouts, please drop me a line

Thank you,  
Honor and Courage

Ray E. Poynter  
[REDACTED]  
Berryville, AR 72616



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## FRIENDS AND BUDDIES

We invite all Americal veterans that live close enough to the Reno, NV area to attend a reunion that is being planned for the future.

This is not being organized by the ADVA but by individuals and it will not conflict with any other ADVA activities.

If you are interested please contact;

Lou Turner  
[REDACTED]  
Oroville, CA 95966

Ed note: Far be it from us to discourage any get-together of old buddies but it seems that you should work through your local Chapter Commander, Joe Feeler, and help him with his plans for a local reunion. You can contact him at:

Joe Feeler  
[REDACTED]  
Albuquerque, NM 87110

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ARE YOUR DUES PAID?

C BATTERY 247 FIELD ARTILLERY

I have contacted four former members of the Americal Division--two from World War II and two from the Vietnam era. They all sounded like they wanted to join the ADVA.

The two World War II men were twins, Dominic and Michael Puntini, and we were together from basic to the surrender in Japan. We were with C Battery, 247th Field Artillery. The Two Vietnam veterans were with the 11 LIB. I wish that you would send them a copy of our wonderful AMERICAL NEWSLETTER and I'm quite sure they will be anxious to join the ADVA. (Consider it done. ED)

The VFW magazine, April issue, has a great article about Vietnam and it mentions the Americal a great force in Vietnam.

Looking forward to our reunion in Texas this June. and also to seeing those great guys, Pete Messina, Barney Chase, Bernie Carroll, Al Doig, and hundreds of other buddies.

Your friend,  
Joe Riccardo

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## NOW HEAR THIS

VETERANS OF UNDERAGE MILITARY SERVICE

We are desperately seeking our comrades who served in the U.S. military at any time, under the age of 17. A reunion is being planned in Las Vegas in August. Please contact;

Allan C. Stover  
[REDACTED]  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

\*\*\*\*\*

## AMERICAL MEMBERS

Editor in chief;

Bernie Chase and I are members of the Hyannis, MA VFW and he was good enough to cause the Americal Newsletter to be mailed to me.

I have been publishing "The Communicator" for our local Post for over ten years and in the time frame involved I have received Newsletters from all over the nation.

I have to say, without equivocation, your bi-monthly publication is far and away the most outstanding, in all respects.

You and your staff deserve a great deal of credit for the splendid job you do. I'm sure each and every member appreciates and looks forward to receiving it.

Sincerely,  
Robert H. Counsell

Ed note: Thanks for the kind words. As you know our staff is unpaid, volunteers, and kind words like that make our efforts worthwhile.

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HAVE YOU CALLED THAT BUDDY YET?

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# GUADALCANAL

## GUADALCANAL-SOLOMON ISLANDS WAR MEMORIAL FOUNDATION Progress Report

I had the privilege of attending a symposium in San Antonio, Texas, covering a detailed review of the WWII events that took place in the Pacific during 1942. The panel included historians, authors, military and civilian personal actually involved in the major battles. The events covered Wake Island, Bataan Death March, Battle of the Java Sea, Doolittle Raid, Battle of the Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal, and New Guinea Campaign.

The Guadalcanal segment titled "Guadalcanal: A Name That Will Not Die," was extremely interesting. The panel was headed by Mr. Richard Frank who wrote the 800-page history book, "Guadalcanal: The Definite Account of the Landmark Battle." Our good friend, Martin Clemens (Coastwatcher) was part of the Canal panel.

During the symposium, attended by Joe Micek, Stanley Jersey and Dr. Robert C. Muehrcke, we learned that the dedication program to be held on the Canal on August 7, 1992 is proceeding at a good pace. A 74-person US Marine detachment, including a rifle platoon, modified band, color guard, engineer detachment, public affairs team, photo detachment and EOD team will be present. All will come in with the frigate Fresno. The US Navy will embark a 4-person medical and dental team to provide on-board medical support. A 16-person Seabee detachment will be present from August 3 - 8, 1992 to carry out various civic action projects, including improvement of access to the magnificent U.S. Memorial on Skyline Drive Ridge. Dr. Muehrcke, Chairman of the Guadalcanal-Solomon Islands War Memorial Foundation, with Joe Micek, Foundation treasured/Project Manager, are setting up the dedication programs. We are working with the Solomon Islands, Australian, New Zealand, Fiji Islands and Tonganese officials plus the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) 50th Anniversary of World War II Commemoration Committee.

Between the Foundation and the U.S. American Battle Monuments Commission \$600,000 has been raised. We still need about \$80,000. Your contributions would be appreciated.

Joseph G. Micek  
Treasurer

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### WORK ON AMERICAN MONUMENT STARTS

Solomon Star -- February, 21, 1992

Fletcher Kwaimani Joint Venture company has won a tender contract to construct the American monument at Skyline Ridge, Honiara. The Co-ordinator of the project, Charles Stevenson, told Solomon Star that the whole project plus labor will cost \$1.5 million.

Site preparation continues while awaiting the arrival of the granite from Melbourne, Australia.

Planners expect this project to be completed on time for the dedication and the 50th Anniversary of the Guadalcanal Campaign in World War II. This will take place on August 7, 1992.

Stevenson said that the Monument will consist of an obelisk 25 feet high with four sections of solid granite each weighing 10 tons. Each section will be 8 feet high 20 feet long, and five feet wide.

An improved road will have to be constructed before the granite can be transported to the Ridge, and it will be necessary for the thousand or so visitors that will be present for the dedication. Also, for the many tourists that are expected to follow in the years to come.

Parking on the Ridge is another problem that remains to be solved. The Committee is thinking that the American Seabees (Construction Battalion) might do the grading for the road and clearing a parking area.

Another monument has already been erected and dedicated. This monument honors a local hero, Sir Jacob Vouza. The base of this monument is of granite, and was installed at a cost of \$50,000. The statue of Sir Jacob is bronze and cost \$127,000.

The Committee on Monuments is also working on clearing a parking area near the American tower at Henderson Airport. Two Monuments will be erected here. One monument will be to commemorate the Battle of Bloody Ridge and the other will be dedicated to the 164th Infantry Regiment, Americal Division, which fought there under Colonel Edson.

The tower at Henderson airfield will be refurbished so that visitors can climb up to the top. From here, looking across the airfield, you can view Bloody Ridge.

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GUADALCANAL-SOLOMON ISLAND WAR MEMORIAL

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If you were planning to make the trip to Guadalcanal for the dedication and also New Caledonia for the Jubilee, and have not made your reservations--DO SO NOW!

If you have not made any plans as yet and would like to there is still limited space for the Guadalcanal tour and also for New Caledonia.

Contact:  
Jim Buckle  
Wakefield, MA 01880

Telephone [REDACTED]

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# LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD

## COMPANY D 182 INFANTRY

Our Native Land!

A salute to you, dear America,  
We love our native land;  
With freedom, justice and liberty,  
For which our country stands.

The good old stars and stripes,  
With it's red, white and blue;  
Waving high up in the air,  
As to say, we welcome you.

Then there is the great eagle,  
Soaring in the sky;  
Proving that there is liberty,  
With its' wings spread open wide.

Next, we have freedom in worship,  
With no one around to molest;  
For God is on our side,  
So, we should do our best.

Yes, we are proud of our America,  
And of our red, white and blue;  
May God bless our native land,  
In the way that He shall choose.

(Written by Neva Cook in Cupar, Saskatchewan on July 5, 1942)

The poem, above, was written by (Neva Cook) Neva Cook. She wrote the poem when traveling as a song evangelist for the Nazarene Church during World War II. This was written long before before she ever knew or thought of marrying her husband. While he served his country she was back here praying for the servicemen. By the poem you can see that she loved her country also.

Your friend and buddy,  
Herbert Holt

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## C BATTERY 247 FIELD ARTILLERY

I have contacted four former members of the Americal Division--two from World War II and two from the Vietnam era. They all sounded like they wanted to join the ADVA.

The two World War II men were twins, Dominic and Michael Puntini, and we were together from basic to the surrender in Japan. We were with C Battery, 247th Field Artillery. The Two Vietnam veterans were with the 11 LIB. I wish that you would send them a copy of our wonderful AMERICAL NEWSLETTER and I'm quite sure they will be anxious to join the ADVA. (Consider it done. ED)

The VFW magazine, April issue, has a great article about Vietnam and it mentions the Americal a great force in Vietnam.

Looking forward to our reunion in Texas this June. And also to seeing those great guys, Pete Messina, Barney Chase, Bernie Carroll, Al Doig, and hundreds of other buddies.

Your friend,  
Joe Riccardo

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## SOUTH PACIFIC BUDDIES ASSOCIATION

Attention all veterans of all branches of the service who took part in the first ground defeat of the Japanese in World War II on Guadalcanal.

An all afternoon affair banquet, music, dancing and prizes is being planned to take place in the Lowell area this coming September.

The event will be held in honor of all who were killed or wounded over there and give others a chance to get to meet each other. It is planned to be just a short event so that every one will have the opportunity to attend with no long trips.

If you are interested simply send a business sized self-addressed stamped enveloped. You must have served on Guadalcanal between August 7, 1942 and February 1943.

Write to: South Pacific Buddies  
[REDACTED]  
Lowell, MA 01854



Above is a picture of Point Cruz, Guadalcanal. It was in this area that the 1st Battalion, 182nd Infantry received its baptism of fire in November 1942. Point Cruz is now the principle port and the buildings seen in the picture are warehouses.

The arrow points to the Hotel Mendana--the only first class Hotel on the island. It was recently purchased by a Japanese company. This Hotel is located in Honiara, the only city (?) on the island.

The picture was sent in by Geoffrey Tierney, a Vietnam veteran from Australia and an associate member of the ADVA.

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## THE NATIONAL ORDER OF BATTLEFIELD COMMISSIONS

The National Order of Battlefield Commissions is looking for men commissioned on the field of battle while engaged with the enemy in WW I, WW II, Korea, and Vietnam. If you are such person, or know of such a person, Please contact;

John C. Angier III  
[REDACTED]

St. Augustine, FL 32084



## LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD

97 FIELD ARTILLERY (PACK MULE)

I took my basic training at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and joined about forty other replacements from Camp Pittsburgh and Camp Stoneman and we shipped overseas as replacements for the 97th Field Artillery in early 1942. The unit was on Guadalcanal at this time. The 97 F.A. was of Battalion strength and comprised A,B,C, Headquarters and Service Battery.

I was assigned to A Battery, which had been the first to arrive on Guadalcanal and had seen some action. Our officers were Captain Arthur M. Basion, and Lieutenant Buehl. I believe that the Battalion Commander was Major A. Parker.

Following the Guadalcanal campaign it was decided to convert the 97 F.A. (Pack Mule) to 155 Howitzers. This had been the gun I had trained for while in OCS. The unit was to return to New Caledonia but the mules were to be shipped to India. I was scheduled to go with the unit but after requesting permission from Captain Basion, I was allowed to go to India with the mules.

On Guadalcanal we loaded 300, or more mules, on board the S.S. Virginia and set sail for Sydney, Australia. We remained here for two days and then sailed around Australia to Perth, Fremantle, and then on to India.

We arrived in Calcutta, unloaded the mules and drove them through town to a holding pen. From here they were loaded on box cars, four on each side and a man in the middle. This was okay as long as the mule didn't paw out for extra hay.

Eventually we had to unload and reload into box cars with a different gauge track and then we were ferried across a river, six box cars at a time. Up at the border we turned the mules over to the Chinese. It had taken us seven days to cover the 2000 miles from Calcutta.

We then returned to Calcutta and sailed for Port Moresby, New Guinea via Melbourne, Australia. In Melbourne we had thirty days leave. We had the run of the town but slept on the ship at night.

My crew consisted of Corp. Green, Snodgrass, and Stockman. Pfc. Autry, Fox, Hale, Phillips, Turgeon, Hewitt, Almedio, Boryca, Buchanan, Garrison and Santavenira.

I never knew what happened to my crew after our mission was completed because we were broken up and sent to different outfits. I returned home with a Transportation outfit and was discharged November 11, 1945.

The 97th Field Artillery originally came from Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Many of the enlisted men were former members of the CCC. I was one of very few Northerners in the outfit.

One short story before closing--on the train ride in India we had a dead mule to get out of the box car one morning. I asked the soldier that was in the box car if he had hit the mule. "No sir" was his reply. I figured the mule must have pawed him during the night. (The stock of his rifle was broken also).

Leslie H. Braun

Mount Pulaski, IL 62548

E COMPANY 101 QUARTERMASTER

Just received the latest issue of the Americal newsletter and before writing to you again I reviewed old Newsletters that had carried pictures and articles that I had contributed.

This past March 15, 1992, members of Company E that live in the general area, held our 6th reunion. We seem to be growing as this time we had fifteen members present. Just great! We have no special order of business, just a good old gabfest. We gather at 11:00 A.M. and break up around 4:00 P.M.. We meet at the Holiday Inn off I-4 in Plant City, Florida as it seems most central for

most. How the word got out as far as it did, I do not know, but we had two new members that came from Virginia and Alabama. They also said they would plan to come to our next meeting. The following members attended;

Mr. and Mrs. Leo A. Bartlett  
Mr. Charles A. Warder  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Little  
Mr. Joe Testa  
Mr. A.F. Gronvald  
Mr. Harry Houghton  
Mr. and Mrs. Lennie Whitson  
Mr. and Mrs. Matty Lindon  
Mr. and Mrs. Gabriel E. Mongeau

As a pleasant memory of 1990, two of us went to the Chicago Reunion, with our wives and we left full of desire to get to the June 1991 Reunion on Cape Cod. However, our plans fell flat on its face. Ruth and I had serious health problems and had to cancel. One member had by-pass surgery and another had eye surgery. Somehow 1992 seems to be looking better.

Two notes before I close:

In looking over those old issues of the Newsletter I re-read the article about our "Cruise Ship" the Santa Elena. I remember that our group was bunked on the promenade deck.

One member of Company E, 101 QM, had an R & R in Australia and met a girl there. He took his discharge in Sydney and never came home. His name was Fred O. Stickney.

Gabriel E. Mongeau

Ed Note: I will have the Museum Curator, Ken Turner, contact you about the hours at the Museum.

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## NOW HEAR THIS

For a book entitled "Love Letters From The Front," we are seeking love letters written by servicemen and women to the spouses and loved ones during twentieth century wars. Please send copies of all material to:

Margery Mandell

Eastchester, NY 10709

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THE AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION  
MAKES A GENEROUS CONTRIBUTION TO THE  
AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY AND THE  
AMERICAN HEART FUND, EACH YEAR,  
IN MEMORY OF OUR DEPARTED COMRADES

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LETTERS FROM THE OLD GUARD  
NEW CALEDONIA

IF YOU ARE FLYING TO SAN ANTONIO FOR THE NATIONAL CONVENTION PLEASE CALL THE NUMBER BELOW AS SOON AS YOU HAVE YOUR FLIGHT NUMBER AND TIME OF ARRIVAL.

THIS NUMBER IS FOR SHUTTLE SERVICE BETWEEN THE AIRPORT AND THE HOTEL. IT IS BEING PROVIDED BY THE CONVENTION COMMITTEE AT NO COST TO YOU.

BUT---YOU HAVE TO CALL AHEAD---DO IT NOW!

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## NEW CALEDONIA



The above picture is of a display in a store window in Noumea. The articles were supplied by Paul Paturel, Curator of the Americal Museum on New Caledonia. In the letter accompanying this picture he extends an invitation to all members of the Americal to visit his Museum.

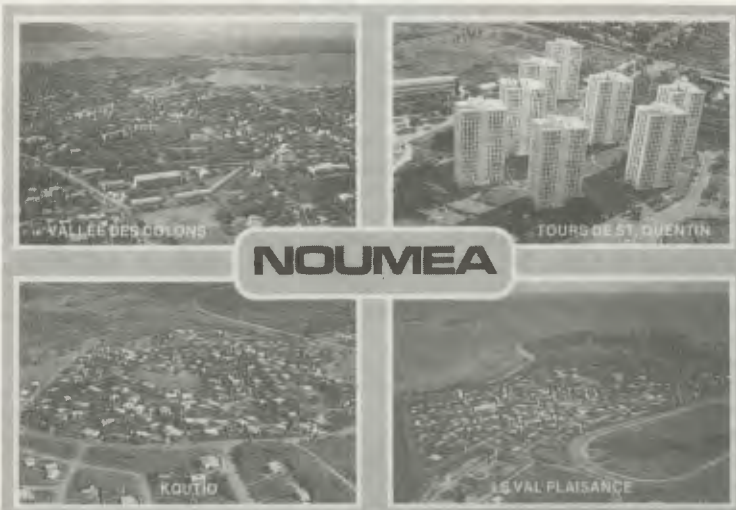
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In New Orleans last fall we met a delightful couple, Jim and Jan Mahieux, from all places--Noumea. After trading Christmas cards, they recently sent us a beautiful color brochure in French and English of that city. Well it certainly has changed--Club Med, yacht basin, hotels galore. Anse Vata Beach, where our MP platoon used to hike for a swim was lined with blacktop parking spaces between the hotels. The cover letter I shall quote:

"We are this year commemorating the 50th anniversary of the American presence on our island. Noumea is hoping by and through the local council to erect a monument at 'Baie de la Moselle' in memory of the many American soldiers who lost their lives for all the Pacific Islands. The festivities should be held around August-September 1992, (August 13, 1992 is correct). The committee of which it's president is Monsieur Henri Daly are hoping that a few or some Americans who came here will be able to make the trip for the festivities, as announced over our television channels.

Bob Lenk 39th M.P.'s

Ed note: We are in touch with Mr. Henri Daley and about twenty (20) members of the ADVA will be present for the dedication of the monument. The name of Emery LaValle III should be mentioned as serving on the Committee. Without his assistance as translator we would really be in trouble.



Chuck and Carol Fennig work for Wycliffe Bible Translators and have been working to put into print a Bible in the tongue of some of the natives on New Caledonia. I quote from their letter:

"New Caledonia has really changed a lot since the war. As you can see from the post card we sent you. It is now a modern, bustling city. There is a lot of road construction and houses and buildings going up these days. Roads are paved around the Island and another major road project will cross the Island in the Northern Province. (There are three Provinces, Southern, Northern and Island)".

"Living in a Melanesian village near Bourail is quite different from living in Noumea. But things are changing in the village as they talk about modernizing things here. Right now many people in our village are talking about putting in septic tanks and indoor toilets. Many people are interested in hooking up to the mainline electricity. Some have generators or solar panels already. Orowe is the language that we are putting into Bible translation".

"Thank you for your last letter and the page from the Americal Newsletter. It was very interesting, especially the letter from 'Smitty' who had visited here and received such a grand welcome".

"We are aware of the 'Friends of America' club that is mentioned. You would probably be amazed to see all the American flags, decals on T shirts and bumper stickers, proclaiming their friendship with the Americans.

Jim Standish L Co. 182 Infantry

P.S. Five of us from L Company did get together for a dinner last September. Two of these men I had not seen since 1943.

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FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR

Would you please include your telephone number with any letters you write. The number WILL NOT be published. I would like to call you if I have a question on your letter. It costs \$.65 to get an out-of-state number from directory service.

Jim



## FEATURE STORY

## MAKING PEACE WITH THE WAR

BY

VERNON LOEB

Philadelphia Inquirer

Two weeks before he went back to Vietnam, Ed Thacker had a dream:

He was walking through the streets of Saigon with a group of American veterans when a Vietnamese man pulls a revolver and starts firing at him. He wrestles the man to the ground and tears the revolver away. But the other vets just keep walking and he can't get their attention. A crowd of Vietnamese begins closing in on him. He takes the revolver and backs them away....

"That's the dream:", Thacker says. "That's the feeling I had in Vietnam all the time - When's it going to happen? It's a feeling I had for 17 months, a sense of impending doom. I'm hoping my being there and feeling safe will make that go away".

THEY DRINK A TOAST, CLINKING COLD BOTTLES OF SAN MIGUEL BEER IN THE passengers lounge at the airport in Manila. "Welcome home", Thacker says to the others. It is the way Vietnam veterans toast each other, since no one else welcomed them home. But now they are just a short flight across the South China Sea from being back in Vietnam, that haunting place where the four of them went as very young men.

Thacker, 43, is a psychologist today who specializes in treating vets from post-traumatic stress disorder. He was assigned to military intelligence in Saigon from 1969 to 1971.

Ed Neiderberger, 40, is a police officer in Shasta County, Calif. He is also Thacker's patient. He fought with the Third Marine Division along the Demilitarized Zone in 1967 and 1968.

John Pacheco, 43, owns a corner grocery store in Menlo Park, Calif.

Russ Miles, 47 is a machinist from suburban Detroit.

Pacheco and he were grunts together in the Americal Division in 1968 and 1969.

Pacheco and Miles hadn't seen each other in 14 years when Pacheco decided last fall to go back to Vietnam. But he knew when he picked up the phone that Miles was going to go, and he was right.

So here they are - Thacker and Niederberger, Miles and Pacheco - waiting to go back, a little scared of what they might find. The two sets of friends were strangers to each other when they climbed aboard a plane in California for this special trip for Vietnam vets. They are united now in their mission - to discover and understand their own private Vietnams, to try to make sense of it all. "It's two pairs of guys doing the same thing", Pacheco explains. "Time goes on, but something is just unfinished until we go back".

"I'm going back to satisfy my mind - how the hell am I going to say this? - that the country isn't worse off than when we left it", says Miles. "It's got to be better".

"It's got to have healed", Pacheco says.

"I think I needed to do this", Thacker says, "to end the war".

Thacker, a cautious, deliberate man, played with his father's World War II medals as a kid and found himself drawn to Vietnam by a perverse fascination with war. But this war left him scared, confused, cynical, angry - and feeling guilty about having never seen combat.

Niederberger, always the Marine, is on a mission back to a flat dusty plain south of the DMZ where his best friend, pinned down by enemy fire, called out to him in agony for six hours before bleeding to death. His Vietnam War is framed by that one day - Jan 19, 1968 - a day that has festered in his memory like an infected wound because of his belief that he didn't do enough to save his friend. He will try to get back there on exactly the same day 22 years later.

Pacheco and Miles, fire and ice, are going back to feel a little bit of the passion they felt together 21 years ago as bit players in a drama that was truly larger than life. It ended for Pacheco three weeks early; he got special orders to take his best friend from basic training, Vic Navone, home in a box.

The same thing happened to Miles; his best friend from basic, Don McLean, got killed at just about the same time. Instead of going home early, Miles signed up for an extra four months as a helicopter doorgunner to exact a little revenge.

"I guess it got the best of me", he says.

McLean's name is now 15 rows from the top of Section W32 on that lustrous black stone wall in Washington. Navone's is 15 rows from the bottom. Miles goes to see the memorial every Veterans Day.

Just before he left on this trip, Pacheco visited Navone's mother in Los Altos. She gave him a little canister of earth from her back yard. She asked him to sprinkle it where Vic died and to bring back a little earth from Vietnam back to her.

Finally, Air Vietnam Flight 934 for Ho Chi Minh City is ready for boarding. Miles and Niederberger are carrying videocameras with them. Thacker is talking into a small tape recorder. Pacheco has the little canister of earth from Mrs. Navone in his breast pocket.

It is nightfall when the aging Soviet-made jet begins its descent into Tan Son Nhut airport. The Mekong Delta, off to the left, is lit by the sun's last rays as the plane banks to the right. Tan Son Nhut, one of the world's busiest airports during the war, is now like a backwater bus station, deserted until visited by one of the few planes that lands there each day.

Then it becomes a madhouse. Hundreds crowd around the exit. The throng is visible from customs, where young Vietnamese men and women in military uniforms scrutinize the fancy cameras and tape players foreigners bring with them.

"What are they there for?" Thacker asks with a hint of apprehension, looking out at all those Vietnamese people packed in around the door.

They are there to greet their relatives, of course, many of whom are overseas Vietnamese coming back for the first time since fleeing when the war ended. But to Thacker they are frightening.

"I'm not going outside the door", he says, "until you guys come with me".

ED THACKER FLEW UNITED AIR LINES ON HIS first trip across the Pacific. He was a 21 year old corporal assigned to the 525th Military Intelligence Battalion in Saigon. He landed at Bien Hoa, about a dozen miles north of the capital on Oct 22, 1969.

American troop strength had peaked that April at 543,500, but President Nixon was already pursuing his plan to gradually disengage the United States by the time Thacker arrived. It took more than four years to complete the job. During that time, 21,000 Americans would die and 53,000 would be wounded - more than a third of all U.S. casualties suffered during the war.

Thacker was born in Tennessee, the son of a Methodist minister. He found Saigon a profoundly frightening place rife with corruption, greed, prostitution and violence. American cars and military vehicles filled the streets, GI's filled the bars and brothels, and stolen U.S. goods stocked the markets.

"Everything I knew then and everything I've read since has convinced me that a huge percentage of the population sympathized with the North", Thacker said. "That's what made Saigon so scary. There were Vietnamese people everywhere, and you knew half of them, maybe more, had to be Viet Cong".

He lived in a French villa down an alleyway near Tan Son Nhut with about 40 others in his unit, one of many military intelligence operations throughout the city. He would go down to the offices in the villa every morning and plot the previous night's intelligence reports from the Mekong Delta on a big map.

At night, when it was his turn for sentry duty, he would sit in a guard tower at the villa and listen to small arms fire crackling all over Saigon.

Thacker's main problem doing intelligence work - his main problem with the whole war - was that he could never understand what was happening. Six months into his tour, he had something close to a religious experience. He sat down one day and asked himself, "How did I get here? Why did I come? What the hell is going on here? Why are people doing this?"

"It was insane, he said. "It was crazy stupid. There was

no clear plan, no goal or anything else. It was like a game - guys were getting killed and we were playing this game. That was the first sign that something was wrong here - the chaos in the military, the lack of any clear indication of what we were doing".

Thacker spent many nights roaming the halls of Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Headquarters at Tan Son Nhut. It was the seat of all military power in Vietnam. The "Pentagon East". Thacker's job was to make sure Generals weren't inadvertently leaking secrets to the enemy.

Once, he and his partner raided the office of the general in charge of military intelligence - their ultimate boss. They barged through the door and blew by a colonel in the outer office who tried to stop them. Inside the general's office, they found a classified document sitting out on his desk, a clear violation of regulations. They went back to write up their report. The colonel in charge of their unit tried to talk them out of it. They refused to back down.

Later, before they even finished writing, an order came down classifying the report they were writing about the security breach. It was the military's way of making sure, Thacker said, that no one ever saw it. It seemed to sum up the futility of all they were doing.

Thacker's defiance grew after that. "I never knew what happened to the information we filed", he said. "I never knew what use it was put to". To relieve the boredom, he and his buddies would sit at the end of the runway at Tan Son Nhut and watch F-4 Phantoms scream over their heads. Sometimes, they commandeered jeeps for joy rides through the communist infested countryside. One night, he and a friend went to see "The Wild Bunch". When it was over, they stormed a bar and held it hostage for a while. "Then we walked down the middle of a deserted street screaming", Thacker recalled.

Saigon was, to Thacker, "global insanity". The metaphor held up until the very day he left Vietnam. It was March 1971. American troop strength had by then been cut in half. Thacker was standing in line at Bien Hoa airport for a plane back to the states. A sergeant bumped him out of line; Thacker's mustache was too long.

He went to the bathroom and trimmed it. And the sergeant bumped him out of line again. It was still too long. He trimmed it some more - and the sergeant bumped him again. The game went on for hours.

"I couldn't believe this was happening", Thacker said. "I'd done my duty for my country, and I get bumped out of line because my mustache was too long".

THE STREETS AND BACK ALLEY'S AROUND TAN SON NHUT ARE A MAZE. Thacker can't find the French villa where he lived. Either that, or it was torn down, which was a distinct possibility. Even MACV headquarters, a vast complex of offices large enough for 4,000 officers and enlisted staff, is gone.

Thacker's mustache is longer now that it was when he got on that plane in 1971. His hair is thinning on top and long in the back. There is, at this moment, confusion in his eyes and frustration in his face. A solidly built man, he is sitting in a cyclo - the bicycle-powered pedicabs are ubiquitous in Saigon - looking back 20 years in time, trying to put the streets back together in his mind. He remembers three street names. He remembers the villa was near a hospital and the USO building. He remembers an alleyway, a small cemetery. But is no use.

He and Niederberger, who is with him, finally give up. Thacker tells one of the cyclo drivers, an old "black tiger" from the South Vietnamese army who knows the area well, to head back downtown.

Night is falling on this neighborhood that Thacker roamed so many years ago. Despite his frustration, he feels a wave of liberation wash over him. He trusts the Vietnamese man peddling the cyclo. There is nothing to fear from the people on the streets. The breeze blows in his face. He notices the city has the same sissy smell it always did.

"I feel like the Vietnamese people must hate our guts", he says. "But apparently they don't".

THE AIRPORT AT DANANG, 350 MILES NORTH on the coast, is as vast as Tan Son Nhut, maybe even bigger. It used to be one of the busiest in the world as well, back when America was spending \$33 billion a year fighting the war. It is the following day, and Niederberger looks out across the endless, deserted tarmac and its rows of empty hangers once filled with fighter jets.

"I left from that building over there", Niederberger says,

walking from the plane to the terminal. He is bow legged, tall and rangy, with a mustache and sandy colored hair, covered most of the time by a red U.S. Marine baseball cap. His Vietnam is 100 miles north of DaNang up Highway 1, past Hue and Dong Ha, all the way to the Ben Hai River at the 17th parallel, the old dividing line between North and South Vietnam.

Niederberger joined the Marines at 17, which meant one of his parents had to sign a special consent form. His mother refused. His father, a career serviceman in the Airforce, signed. "That was the first time I saw my dad tear up", Niederberger remembers. He boarded a train in Nebraska in January 1967 for the trip to the Marine Corps recruit depot in San Diego. He met four other guys on the train bound for the Marines as well, and they became fast friends. One of them, Bill Burgood, ended up in Niederberger's squad.

Niederberger landed at DaNang in July 1967. He was then flown north to the DMZ. His unit, the Third Marine Division was moved from DaNang in late 1966 to a series of fortified base camps along the DMZ. These points were designed to force the enemy into zones where they'd be vulnerable to shelling and ground attacks. By the time Niederberger arrived, America's war of attrition was approaching full tilt. The strategy was simple: The United States would kill so many communists with its well trained troops and vast firepower advantage that the enemy would soon surrender from sheer exhaustion.

"They used to nail us with rockets here", Niederberger says at one base camp just off Highway 1, 10 miles south of the 17th parallel. He knows the place only as A-3. "It's amazing what I feel", he says: "I feel - just sad. I left a lot here".

From A-3, their van heads north to the bridge over the Ben Hai River. Miles drops a Doors tape into the cassette player. Jim Morrison is singing "Light My Fire". The van stops on the southern side of the bridge. Niederberger and Thacker walk across together into what used to be North Vietnam, followed by Pacheco and Miles.

"This was a real badland", Niederberger says, "Anytime you got near here, you'd get real scared. The North Vietnamese army used to bring their troops down in trucks and drop them off right here. They'd go across the river, and the first ones they'd come in contact with would be us".

From the bridge, they'd drive back down Highway 1. Miles puts on the Doors tape again, music from the war. They turn off Highway 1 at Dong Ha and go down a dirt road to another base camp at Con Thien. Wet rice paddies glisten in the sun on either side of the dusty trail.

After the bloody hill fights far to the west at Khe Sanh in April 1967, the North Vietnamese army attacked Con Thien in May with two battalions. It was a desolate place then. It was a desolate place when Niederberger arrived in early 1968. "We'd hear the rounds coming in and we'd all scatter", Niederberger says. "When it was over, we'd get up - those who made it".

Con Thien is silent now, except for the birds and the scraping of hoes in the distance where scavengers hunt for scrap metal.

"It's so quiet", Niederberger says.

"Strangely quiet, agrees Thacker".

"I can't help feeling, Niederberger says, "there are a lot of souls up here".

ON JAN 18, 1968, NIEDERBERGER'S 35-MAN PLATOON pulled out of base camp C-4 at dusk. Like Con Thien and A-3, base camp, C-4 was another of the fortified Marine outposts along the DMZ, but it was far to the east, almost on the coast. Every third night, Niederbergers platoon - the third platoon of Charlie company, First Marine Battalion, Third Marine Division - went out to ambush North Vietnamese troops infiltrating across the DMZ.

At 4 a.m., on Jan 19, Niederbergers squad of 12 men walked into an area shaped like an inverted U, with high ground facing them on both sides. They were about a half mile from C-4, two thirds of a mile north of Cua Viet, the mouth of the Viet Estuary, and about 500 yards from the coast. North Vietnamese troops were dug in on all sides. "We walked right into it", says Niederberger.

The point man that night was a GI named Bill Taylor. He almost bumped into an NVA soldier, who actually started talking to Taylor, thinking he must be NVA as well. Taylor blasted him with three or four shots, then quickly ran back 10 or 15 feet to tell the squad leader what had happened. It was a moonless night, pitch black. "They were all over the place", Taylor said.



Just then, NVA machine guns opened up from the high ground in front of them, driving the squad back an additional 50 feet to take cover and regroup at the low point of the plain. If everybody had been there, they would have just pulled out and called in artillery. But two men were missing. One of them had just kept on running to the rear, not realizing the rest of them had stopped. The other was 19 year old Bill Burgoon, one of the guys Niederberger had met on the train back in Nebraska. Burgoon had been hit by that first burst of machine gun fire and was still lying exposed on the plain.

Thinking they had two men down on the plain, the squad started to move forward again. As soon as they did, a wall of fire rained down on them, pinning them on the ground. It was then that they heard Burgoon screaming. "I hit, he yelled, I'm hit".

"Where?" Niederberger called back.

"In the legs", Burgoon screamed.

"Hang in there", Niederberger shouted back. "We'll get to you".

Niederberger, 18 at the time, radioed Lt. Rich Higgins, who was further back with two other squads, telling him they were trapped. Higgins radioed back to C-4 and requested that tanks be sent out immediately. But before the tanks could leave the base camp, they had to be replaced by two amphibious armored vehicles that were all the way on the other side of Cua Viet. Burgoon lay 50 feet away from the rest of the squad. He kept calling out to his friend "Ed...Ed...Ed...Ed..."

The North Vietnamese were using him as bait. Niederberger tried to run to him several times, but the soldier next to him, Joseph Benedict, kept holding him down.

"Ed...Ed...Ed..."

Niederberger remembered looking at his watch at 10:30 in the morning. They had been pinned down now for 6 1/2 hours. A few minutes later, Benedict took a bullet. It shattered his collarbone and tore deep into his chest. The Vietnamese wanted to end the standoff.

An NVA soldier charged toward Niederberger carrying a satchel charge - a kind of running kamikaze. He was "tied off", with tourniquets all over his body so that he could take a rifle shot in the arm or leg and keep running without losing too much blood.

Niederberger shot him once. He kept running. Niederberger shot him again. He kept running. "It wasn't until the third shot that I dropped him", Niederberger said.

A second kamikaze came running, tied off, carrying a satchel charge. It took another three shots before he went down.

Finally, the tanks arrived. Niederberger directed them by the radio right up to where the squad was dug in. They jumped to their feet, crouched behind one of the tanks for protection and put Benedict - barely alive - on the back, right behind the gun turret. They followed the tank to where Burgoon was laying. He was dead. "I could see that he bled out". Niederberger said.

They put Burgoon's body on the tank and headed back. All was quiet now. The NVA were gone. Utterly exhausted, Niederberger walked over to where one of the two kamikazes lay dead on the ground. He looked in his pack and found a baby-blue tin the size of a Band-Aid box with a red cross on the side. There was a piece of paper inside that said: "Donated by UC Berkeley". There was a picture of the soldier and his wife. "I felt bad, but I was glad I was the guy going through his pack, instead of him going through mine", Niederberger said. "I can't say I'm remorseful about it now. I don't fall back on the old cliché that I was there to do a job. But it comes down to, it's you or him".

Niederberger kept walking, all the way to the beach. Everybody was waiting for the choppers to come and pick up Burgoon's body and take Benedict to the hospital.

With surf crashing on the shore, Niederberger looked north to the point at Thu Luat, up the coast on the South China Sea. He was so numb he didn't even move when a mortar shell exploded near the battle scene. "I just remember looking up at that point and thinking, what a beautiful country", Niederberger said. "I can remember thinking how peaceful and serene this country was".

Benedict died later that day. His name is now next to Burgoon's on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

THE MOTORIZED OUTRIGGER CANOE HEADS down the Cua Viet. Niederberger sits in the bow, looking back in time. His plan is

to find the place where Bill Burgoon died. He has begun his mission a day early; if something goes wrong, today and he can't find the spot, he can always try tomorrow. Or so he thinks.

It is Jan 18, 1990, 22 years to the day since Niederberger's platoon left base camp C-4 that fateful night. An old Vietnamese woman smokes a fat hand-rolled cigarette and bails out the canoe with an old American helmet liner. Niederberger, Thacker, Pacheco and Miles glide past pagodas on the shoreline and large fish nets hung from bamboo poles.

As they near the mouth of the estuary, the canoe's skipper veers to the opposite shore to a military post where they must obtain permission to go any farther. There is a problem. The authorities are hesitant. One official seeks out another. They confer. A long discussion ensues. Finally it is agreed: Only Niederberger will be allowed off the boat, with a military escort.

That finally decided, the canoe heads back across the estuary, landing on a sandy stretch on the opposite shore a few hundred yards from the South China Sea. Niederberger has come 10,000 miles from his home in northern California. He is less than a mile from the place Burgoon died.

He and the military escort walk down the beach. They turn and head north toward the plain and the inverted U. Thacker, Pacheco and Miles settle in for what they think will be a long wait. But in a few minutes, they see Niederberger walking briskly toward them.

The military escort had stopped dead in his tracks as they headed for the plain. He said he could go no further. Niederberger demanded to know why. The escort refused to say, then finally admitted the real reason for all the hesitation: Vietnamese troops were staging exercises in the area and no one was allowed in.

"I just wanted to go back to the area and think, maybe cry a little, and bring a little of him back home", Niederberger says that night in his hotel room back in Hue. "And I couldn't get to him again". Niederberger's voice cracks for just a second and tears well up in his eyes. "But I got close", he says.

Niederberger has been diagnosed suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Thacker can explain the complex set of symptoms that must be present for such a diagnosis, but Niederberger's primary symptom is survivor's guilt.

"There were five of us on that train, and I'm the only one who came back without a Purple Heart, Niederberger says. "I tried to help Bill, and Benedict, before he died, held me down. If I had been hit that day, I could have said that was the justification for not doing more. But because I didn't get a Heart, I was still physically able to get up and go - it's survivors' guilt".

He's always been able to talk about what happened that day, but only in the past six or seven months has it hurt as much as it does now. "I guess I was tired of trying to not make it hurt when it does hurt", Niederberger says. "I'm tired of carrying it".

THE FOLLOWING NIGHT, BACK IN DANANG, Niederberger's disappointment weighs heavily on Pacheco and Miles. Their turn comes tomorrow. Will they be able to find the bridge they guarded on Highway 1, about 90 miles south of DaNang? Will they be able to find their base camp in Duc Pho, Landing Zone Bronco? They were choppered into combat for the first time from LZ Bronco. Vic Navone died at LZ Bronco.

Pacheco remembers escorting Vic Navone's body back home. They gave him a little pamphlet with instructions for the funeral. He was supposed to take the flag from the casket, fold it, and then hand it to Mrs. Navone. But at the last minute, a lieutenant ordered Pacheco to give the flag to him so he could give it to Mrs. Navone.

"My buddy is dead, and he's pulling rank on me", Pacheco says, four or five beers into the conversation. "Tomorrow, I'm handling that flag. It's going to be my little flag on lapel that I'm burying, and I'll bury my little dirt from Vics back yard, and I'll take a little dirt back to Vic's mother...."

"Vic thought he was doing something right and I didn't. But he was a good man. A part of Vic is up there, and I'm going to visit him. And I know he knows I'm going to return. He's going to say, 'Pacheco, you're back' And I'm going to say 'I always knew I was going to come back'...And I'm going to do what was asked of me by his mother, and that's a higher command than Gen. Westmoreland ever gave me.

They called Pacheco "Banty" during the war because he strutted like a banty rooster, forever challenging authority. "I always had questions", he says, "and I never got answers". He is 5 foot 6, with lively brown eyes, a mustache and dark wavy hair combed straight back from his face. He holds his chin high and his head back.

Miles is tall and thin, with pale skin, a long angular face and sandy hair, the opposite of Pacheco. He is laconic, Pacheco is outspoken. He thinks the war is right, Pacheco thinks it was wrong. But they both sympathize with the villagers they saw constantly abused, raped, sometimes even murdered by American soldiers. And they both feel an abiding contempt for many of the officers they served under. The officers spent only six months in combat, the grunts spent 12. They put in for phony medals to get promotions. They sent many, many soldiers to utterly useless deaths.

"I just don't like People telling me to do something without telling me why - I just don't like that", Pacheco says.

"If you tell me you got to take this village because America is going to collapse, I'll do it. But you bring me halfway around the world and tell me you have to kill these little people who only want to grow their rice - that ain't enough for me. All this destruction, people dying, being raped, pillaged, devastated. I never accepted the justification for being there and I still haven't."

THE ARMY DRAFTED RUSS MILES when he was almost 24, right after he had quit an apprentice's job that entitled him to a deferment. He'll never forget the date, Oct. 28, 1967.

He was so bitter he just randomly marked the boxes on the Army's aptitude test.

"I cut off my nose to spite my face", says Miles, whose father worked as a suburban circulation manager for the Detroit Free Press. "They looked at the results and said, 'this guy's a dummy, put him in the infantry'. But I don't regret it. Vietnam is the biggest thing that's ever happened in my life".

He met Don McLean, a draftee from East Detroit, on the bus to the induction center. They went through basic training together. McLean's new wife, Linda, drove down to Fort Knox and picked them up for Christmas leave that year. Miles landed in Vietnam, at Cam Ranh Bay on April 6, 1968.

The Army got John Pacheco when he ran out of money after two years at the College of San Mateo. The son of a shipyard worker in San Francisco and the oldest of eight children, he just couldn't afford anymore college. Pacheco scored 99 out of 100 on his aptitude test. In basic training, he met Vic Navone, they called him out of formation and offered to send him to officer candidate school. He turned them down because being an officer meant you had to sign up for a longer hitch. But because he kept getting such offers, he thought he was someone special - and wouldn't be put in the infantry.

Pacheco landed at Cam Ranh Bay in April 1968 also. He and Navone and Miles all ended up in the same company. Not only were they in the infantry, but they were also going to the northernmost region in Vietnam, known as I Corps. It was the hottest region in the country, it was the hottest year of the war. More Americans died in 1968 - 14,589 than any other year of the conflict. "The first thing I saw were forklifts loading bodies onto those large planes, says Pacheco. "When I saw that, it really hit me. Your first thought: Will I be going back that way?"

The first thing he and Miles and Navone heard when they were choppered down to their base camp, Landing Zone Bronco at Duc Pho, was talk about a lot of civilians getting killed the previous month at a village called My Lai. The unit to which Pacheco, Miles and Navone had just been assigned, Charlie Company, 11th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division, had done the shooting.

Pacheco remembered listening to a group of Chicano soldiers sitting around talking about My Lai.

"How can you wear those crucifixes and sit around there and talk about what you're talking about?" Pacheco asked them.

"Wait until you get out in the field, you'll do the same thing", one of them responded.

"I ain't killing no babies", Pacheco said.

He and Miles would see more than a few atrocities during the ensuing year. "The officers just wanted to get their six months in the field and get their promotion", Miles said.

"You can't really blame them". There was no discipline. You'd see GI's, they would shoot some old mama-san or papa-san

carrying a hoe; and they would say, "That guy's VC". And the officers would ignore it. - Lets keep moving" It made you wonder what you were doing.

Rape was more common than murder. "I never saw one guy prosecuted for rape - not once", Miles said. "We made more enemies than friends over there".

Their base camps were located along Highway 1 from Quang Ngai south to Duc Pho and officially designated "landing zones". This was a helicopter war, a war in which soldiers were airlifted into battle and then airlifted out.

The choppers, sometimes 10 to 12 abreast, would take them west into the forboding, misty mountains. There was terror, as they struggled for days in triple-canopy jungles filled with leeches, mud, blinding rain, bobby traps and sniper fire. There was incredible beauty, as they hacked their way out of the jungle and walked into Montagnard villages with flocks of parrots swarming overhead. There was awesome destruction, as they sat in the mountains while fighter bombers roared in and dropped 500 pound bombs. "And when they'd gone, Charlie was still there". Pacheco said.

The war for them became a string of unforgettable episodes. There was their first big fire fight. It happened during a large-scale operation involving two or three companies. It lasted all night and part of the next day. "It was like it wasn't real", Pacheco said. "I don't remember what the scope of it was. Tracers were coming in, going out. People were screaming and getting hit".

"Combat is an exhilarating experience", he said. "It's a high. The adrenaline starts pumping and I don't think it can pump any higher. You have this fearsome concept that you're invincible, at least that's the way I felt. I never got to love it, but I noticed an attitude that this is kind of glorious".

There was the time they worked all day lining a couple of rice paddies and some banana trees with 55 gallon drums full of explosives, Miles said, "because somebody had the bright idea of denying the VC rice". Watching the paddies go up in flames was an awe-inspiring sight. It was also utterly pointless. "So we blew up a couple of rice paddies", Miles said. "Big deal".

There was the time a new guy came in and started pushing an old man around. Their platoon had just made a big sweep through an area, ending in a small village. The new guy was abusing the old man, shoving him with his gun butt, forcing to serve as a human minesweeper by walking out front on the path.

"You watch John", Miles told Pacheco, "Hes going to get it". And, sure enough he did. The new guy and the old man hit a mine. The old man was blown to bits. The new guy was blinded and lost his testicles.

As soon as the new guy went down, Miles recalled, the Captain said, Burn the village. His thinking was simple: A mine went off, so the village must be VC controlled, right? Miles and Pacheco refused.

That fall, in November, Pacheco got his first and only confirmed kill of an enemy soldier. It was a typical Vietnam experience - he didn't even see the guy. Pacheco was laying on his stomach firing a machine gun, unable to see where he was firing. Another soldier was feeding ammunition into the gun and directing fire, "Left, right, up, down". "You got one", the ammunition man said.

After the firefight, Pacheco went up and looked at the body. "I felt bad because I didn't feel bad", Pacheco said. He started to take a picture, and one of his friends grabbed him by the arm. "You don't want a picture of that", his friend said.

"That was the first time I realized I was starting to change", Pacheco said. "I didn't like it, but at that particular time, it really didn't seem to matter".

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CONCLUSION WILL BE IN THE NEXT ISSUE

This story appeared in the Philadelphia Enquirer and a clipping was sent to me by Jack Warkow. I wrote to Russ Miles and he sent me the complete story with permission to print it. Many thanks to Dave Recob for re-typing the story for the Newsletter.





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