

\* GUADALCANAL \* NORTHERN SOLOMONS \* LEYTE \* SOUTHERN PHILLIPINES \* KOREA \* VIETNAM



FOUNDED 1945

# AMERICAL NEWSLETTER

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

JULY-AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2003

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Vietnam Editor: Gary L. Noller  
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THE AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION - 82 PHYLLIS DRIVE - SOUTH YARMOUTH, MA 02664



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[REDACTED]  
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Robert Kapp  
[REDACTED]

**Chapter Commander**  
New England Region  
Roland T. Castranova  
[REDACTED]  
Peabody, MA 01960

**Chapter Commander**  
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Cameron F. Baird  
[REDACTED]  
Stonewall, TX 78671

**Chapter Commander**  
Great Lakes Region  
John L. Mathews  
[REDACTED]  
Verona, WI 53593

**Chapter Commander**  
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Richard A. Merlin  
[REDACTED]  
Riverside, CA 92516

**Chapter Commander**  
East Region  
David D. Eichhorn  
[REDACTED]

**Chapter Commander**  
Central Midwest Region  
David A. Chrystal  
[REDACTED]  
Centralia, MO 65240

01/03

**TAPS   TAPS   TAPS**

164 Infantry   164 Infantry Hq/2

Harold P. Aarhus  
Crockett, CA  
Date Unknown

523 Signal Bn   101 QM Co E & Ord

James V. Bailey  
Augusta, GA  
Date Unknown

20 Infantry C/1/20

Jimie W. Batcheler  
Nashville, NC  
Date Unknown

182 Infantry E Co.

James A. Bradstreet  
Santa ana, CA  
August 19, 2002

21 Recon

John J. Davitt  
Navarre, FL  
January 28, 2003

23 Administration

Edward G. Dewald  
Ocala, FL  
June 5, 2002

Americal Div Hdq

John J. Fleming  
Melrose, MA  
May 27, 2003

164 Infantry H Co.

Paul F. Kercher  
Modesto, CA  
November 12, 2001

198 LIB C/1/6 Inf

Clifford L. Knight  
Enterprise, AL  
May 17, 2003

182 Infantry G Co.

Thomas 'Frank' Marion  
Charleston, WV  
March 30, 2003

196 LIB 2/1 Inf

Sinclair Melner (Ret)  
Phoenix, AZ  
June 8, 2002

132 Infantry A/C/D

Dan Minicucci  
Scottsdale, AZ  
Date Unknown

182 Infantry H Co

William J. Murphy Jr.  
Newtonville, MA  
July 26, 2003

164 Infantry Hq/2

Jesus E. Avila  
Long Beach, CA  
Date Unknown

101 QM Co E & Ord

Leo A. Bartlett  
Milford, NH  
June 24, 2003

132 Infantry Hq Co.

John R. Soloy  
Brighton, MI  
May 29, 2003

132 Infantry

Mitchell A. Ulman  
Valparaiso, IN  
May 2003

182 Infantry A Co.

Charles D. Rhinehart  
Shelby, NC  
February 17, 2003

23 Military Police

Danny E. Robinson  
Valparaiso, IN  
May 5, 2003

132 Infantry Hq Co.

John R. Soloy  
Brighton, MI  
May 29, 2003

132 Infantry

Michael J. Zammitti  
Lowell, MA  
August 13, 2003

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

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THE LAST ROLL CALL  
164 Infantry

Allen 'Bud' Brown	-	Porterville, CA
Rudson B. Bellinger	-	Chicago, IL
John Clary	-	Menoken, ND
Knute A. Fossen Sr.	-	Jacksonville, FL
Jerome D. Gazler	-	Chicago, IL
Orville Holtan	-	Bismarck, ND
Charles Kretschun	-	West Newport, PA
Robert J. Olson	-	Nixa, MO
William Pautzke	-	Minot, ND
Ted Peterson	-	Unknown
William Reem	-	Atkin, MN
LeRoy E. Smith	-	Evansdale, IA
Clifford J. Weber	-	Duluth, GA
John B. Van Endenburg	-	Monument, CO

\*\*\*\*\*  
REINSTATED MEMBERS

Mr. George H. Eckhardt	Col. Vern Fetch (Ret)
198 LIB B/5/46 Inf	Associate
Philadelphia, PA	Bismarck, ND
#VFW Mem Com	#Jim Buckle

Mr. Phil Horsch	Mr. James S. Key
198 LIB D/1/52 Inf	247 Field Artillery
Plano, TX	Pilot Mountain, NC
#Roger Gilmore	#Self

Mr. Gerald E. Martel Jr.	Mr. Thomas McGrath
Associate	198 LIB B/1/52 Inf
Pittsford, NY	North Scituate, RI
#Self	#Conrad C. Geibel

Mr. James J. McQueen	Mr. Roland L. Miller
196 LIB 523 Sig Bn B	23 Med Bn. A/S-4
Manchester, NH	APO AA
#Bernard C. Chase	#Art Cole

Mr. Spyder Wecal	*****
198 LIB A/5/46 Inf	HAVE YOU CALLED THAT BUDDY YET?
Titusville, FL	TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE!!
#Don Ballou	

George J. Moravec	
Portland, OR	
Date Unknown	

Charles E. Piekos	
Honeoye Falls, NY	
January 20, 2003	

## ADJUTANT'S NOTES

## NEW LIFE MEMBERS

SGM Joseph Bagwell (Ret) 196 LIB B/D/4/31 Inf  
Jack, AL  
#Vance A. Van Wieren

Mrs. Peter J. Bukihi Associate Chicago, IL  
#Jim Buckle

Mrs. (Patch) Diehl Associate San Antonio, TX  
#Bill Maddox

Mrs. Esther Feeler Associate Albuquerque, NM  
#Joe Feeler

Mr. John J. Hill Jr. 198 LIB C/1/6 Inf Brooksville, FL  
#Art Cole

Mr. Tom R. Mead 198 LIB D/1/52 Inf Albany, OR  
#Lloyd Morrell

## NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Rick . Andel 198 LIB B/5/46 Inf Endicott, NY  
#Bob Kapp

Mr. Larry Andrzejewski 198 LIB B/1/52 Inf Bellville, OH  
#Conrad C. Geibel

Mr. Bill Bowman 198 LIB B/5/46 Inf Louisville, KY  
#Pete Davenport

Mr. J. Michael Cantrell 335 Trans - 14 Trans Saint Peter, MO  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Richard A. Coombe Jr 198 LIB Hq/123 Avn Bn Winthrop Harbor, IL  
#Rich Scales

Mr. Slater Davis 11 LIB B/4/21 Inf Mableton, GA  
#Don Ballou

Mr. Clyde E. Dunnagan Unknown Middleburg, FL  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Gary E. Fuchs 546 Army D Co. Adams WI  
#Jim Buckle

Mr. Hank L. Gottz 196 LIB A/2/1 Inf Bristol, TN  
#Les Hines

Mr. Francis X. Bradley Associate Medford, MA  
#Jim Buckle

Maj. Edwin Denney (Ret) 721 Ord Nashville, TN  
#Bernie Chase

Mrs. Jesse R. Drowley Associate Spokane, WA  
#Jim Buckle

Mr. Robert E. Galpin 221 FA B Btry + Hdq Chandler, AZ  
#Joe Feeler

Mr. Paul Hrynkiewich 11 LIB A/3/1 Inf Fairfax, VA  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Darryl T. Smith 11 LIB B/1/20 Inf Gettysburg, PA  
#John Anderson

Mr. Robert M. Anderson 23 Med Centerton, AR  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Robert J. Behnke 11 LIB B/1/20 Inf San Leandro, CA  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. William B. Broyard 198 LIB D/5/46 Inf New Orleans, LA  
#Self

Mr. David Capshaw 56 Arty 6/A Btry Calera, OK  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Hector L. Cuecuecha 11 Arty C/6 Los Angeles, CA  
#Don Ballou

Mr. Wilson Domenech 198 LIB B/1/52 Inf Farmingdale, NY  
#Conrad C. Geibel

Mr. William H. Falke 198 LIB D/5/46 Inf Putnam, CT  
#Robert Holt

Mr. Roger Gilmore 21 Inf 4/21 Rowlett, NY  
#Reunion

Mr. Charles M. Heidbrin Americal Hdq. G-4 St. Charles, MO  
#PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Jack Hosbach 11 LIB A/1/20 Inf Rochester Hills, MI  
#John McKnow Jr.

Mr. Michael Leeper Unknown Gastonia, NC  
#Art Cole

Mr. Robert L. Linville 196 LIB 2/1 Recon Clearmont, MO  
#Doss Kornegay

Mr. David Lucas 196 LIB Hdq Co. Winter Park, FL  
#Bob Kapp

Mr. David Martin 23 S & T Englewood, FL  
#Bob Kapp

Mr. Charles E. McCrary 132 Infantry M Co. Raleigh, NC  
#Bill Bacon

Mrs. Hugh J. Murnaghan Associate West Yarmouth, MA  
#Self

Mr. Raymond J. Ostrowski 11 LIB A/1/20 Inf Taftville, CT  
#Les Hines

Mr. Robert A. Reed 198 LIB C/5/46 Inf Hartsville, TN  
#Dave W. Taylor

Mr. Richard D. Stephens 11 LIB D/1/20 Inf Griffin, GA  
#John Furgess

Mr. Thomas Verner 82 Arty Btry A-B-C Pascagoula, MS  
#Bill Bacon

Mr. Edward E. Walters 11 LIB E Troop 1 Cav Broomfield, CO  
#Jimmie D. Simmons

Mr. Carl J. Zarzyski 11 LIB B/4/21 Inf Ovid, MI  
#PNC Gary Noller

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## ATTENTION - ATTENTION - ATTENTION

This is to announce a change in the dues policy for Americal Division Veterans Association members.

As of January 1, 2004, the dues for Vietnam veterans will be increased from \$12.00 per year to \$15.00 per year. For World War II veterans the dues will remain at \$12.00.

The paid up life dues will remain the same. However, the three year dues will be discontinued.

## CHAPTER NEWS

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

COMMANDER  
Richard Merlin  
[REDACTED]  
Riverside, CA 92505

SEC/TREAS  
Gene McGrath  
[REDACTED]  
Pahrump, NV 89048

Vice Commander - Kirk McFadden  
Sergeant-at-Arms - Kurt Rothacker  
Chaplain - John Bowley

## 2004 NATIONAL REUNION

the Far West Chapter will be hosting the National Reunion scheduled for June 2004 in Reno-Sparks, Nevada at John's Ascuaga's Nugget Resort Hotel Casino (www.janugget.com). Room rates will be \$85.00 per night. Reservations can be made by calling 1-800-648-1177 and identifying yourself as being with the Americal Division Veterans Association. The Nugget is located on Interstate 80 and is just 10 minutes from the Reno-Tahoe International Airport. The Nugget offers free shuttle service to and from the hotel every thirty minutes.

Activity highlights include a Rodeo, dinner dance, optional sight-seeing bus trips, guest speakers, and several hospitality rooms.

**Mark Your Calendars**-This promises to be one of the best Reunions ever. The Reno-Tahoe area is a great vacation destination for the whole family. It has sunny weather, lots of tourist attractions, and of course gambling and the chance to strike it rich.

## NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

All ADVA members living in our Chapter area are cordially invited to join the Far West Chapter. It's a great way to connect with fellow veterans and share camaraderie. We have annual Reunions, and publish a quarterly color Newsletter to keep in touch. Yearly dues are only \$10.00. for a membership application form. Contact:

Kurt McFadden-Membership Chairman  
[REDACTED]  
Minden, NV 89423

## NEW MEMBERS

We are happy to welcome the following new members to our Chapter:

James Lance - 132nd Inf - Hemet, CA  
Daniel Viegutz - 1st Cav - Las Vegas, NV  
John O'Brien - 1/14th Arty - Lahaina, HI  
L.Christie - 1st Cav - Moreno Valley, CA  
William F. Kidd - 23rd M.P. - Cotati, CA  
Leo Pillow - 198 LIB - Apple Valley, CA  
John Mathews - 1/14th Arty - Verona, WI  
Terry Babler - 1st. Cav - New Glarus, WI  
Teddy Edwards - 198th LIB - Chino Valley, CA

Chapter membership now totals 115

## DON SHEBESTA NAMED "ELK OF THE YEAR"

Stockton Lodge #218 has named Far West Chapter Past Commander as "Elk of the Year". as National Veterans Service Committee Chairman, Don established an "Adopt a Vet" program. Veterans from the Veterans Affairs Livermore Facility Nursing Unit were transported to the Lodge by VA bus for dinners and an "Aid-A-Vet" barrel was

placed in the Lodge for donations of goods such as clean clothing, toiletries, and books and magazines which were distributed to veterans. CONGRATULATIONS, DON!!

## CHAPTER DUES

Our annual Chapter dues of \$10.00 are based on the calendar year, not a specific month. We do not send out individual statements. Payments for 2003 are now past due. Regrettably, we have had to drop several members this year for non-payment of dues. If you are not current, please help us save the expense of mailing another reminder notice, and send your \$10 check payable to ADVA Far West Chapter to:

Gene McGrath, Secty/Treas

[REDACTED] Pahrump, NV 89048

If in doubt of your status, call Gene at [REDACTED]. Thanks for your support.

Also, please send address and telephone number changes to your Chapter Sec/Treas Gene McGrath in addition to the National Headquarters. This will allow us to keep our Chapter roster current and insure that you receive the Canon and other mailings. We are now compiling an e-mail address list. If you would like to be included and receive a copy of this list send your request to: me2some@usintouch.com. Thanks you.

## TAPS

Larry O'Boyle - Past Far West Commander, 182 Inf  
Alan Brown - 164th Infantry WW II  
Harold Aarhus - 164th Infantry WW II  
Chadwick Wendt - 23rd SIT WW II

We send our heartfelt condolences and prayers to all these families.

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

COMMANDER  
John Mathews  
[REDACTED]  
Verona, WI 53593

ADJ/FIN OFF  
Terry Babler  
[REDACTED]  
New Glarus, WI 53574

The Great Lakes Chapter will be sponsoring the September 18-21, 2003 - Kokomo, IN - 21st Annual Veterans Reunion. Locator/signs in at big tent on Friday and Saturday. We will be setting up in the big tent. We had 135 Americal veterans sign in last year and we will have many hospitality campsites planned throughout the Reunion. Group picture at 3:00 P.M. on Saturday by the big flag. Overall attendance for this Reunion last year was around 30,000 veterans.

If you are not a member of the Great Lakes Chapter yet, the dues are: \$5.00 a year which covers 2 newsletters a year. One in May and one in November. Also, current members please check your mailing label. If your dues expire by 2003 November, your dues are now due.

We would like to thank Mike and Val Iverson for having everyone over along the Fox river for the fireworks, boat trip and 4th of July parade event. Everyone had a great time. Mike is with the 1/20 Infantry.

Bill Allen and others attended the Canadian

Vietnam Veteran Northern Wall Ceremony in Windsor, Canada on July 4, 2003. One more name was added to the Wall and he served with the Americal. For more information contact Bill Allen.

The Great Lakes Chapter will be attending the functions of the 18th Annual R&R Winterfest All Veterans Reunion and Festival on January 15-18, 2004. Everyone is invited to join us. More information in the next Great Lakes Newsletter.

The Great Lakes Chapter will be sponsoring "OPERATION LZ-OCEANSIDE II ALL VETERANS EVENT" in Melbourne, Florida on April 21-22-23-24-25, 2004. We will have 2 Pool Deck parties planned on April 21st and 22nd and hospitality rooms on Friday and Saturday nights and also everyone can attend the Florida 17th Annual Vietnam Veterans Reunion in nearby Wickham Park, being held all weekend. Bob Kapp, Southeast Chapter Commander has a camp site for hospitality at the Reunion. Group pictures at 2:00 P.M. there.

For more information on these events and other events, there will be more information in our next Great Lakes Chapter Newsletter or contact Terry Babler at his E-MAIL address--pointman@tds.net.

We hope to see you at some of our scheduled events.

\*\*\*\*\*

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

COMMANDER David Eichhorn [REDACTED]	VICE COMMANDER Jay Flanagan [REDACTED]
Fleming, OH 45729 Tel: [REDACTED]	Cranford, NJ 07017 Tel: [REDACTED]
SECRETARY Joe Tunis [REDACTED]	TREASURER Mark Deam [REDACTED]
Lake Ariel, PA 18436 [REDACTED]	Sidney, OH 45365 [REDACTED]
Leo Orfe - Sergeant-At-Arms Everitt Williams - Chaplain Visit our web site at: <a href="http://home.who.rr.com/sidneyalum/advaerc/">http://home.who.rr.com/sidneyalum/advaerc/</a>	

**CHAPTER REUNION**

Rehoboth Beach, Delaware  
October 7-10, 2003

What promises to be a great Reunion of our Chapter has been arranged by Commander David Eichhorn and member Robert Kelly. The dates are October 7-10, 2003 at Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

Included in the package are three (3) nights at The Breakers Hotel and Suites at 105 Second Street, three (3) breakfasts at the Breakers, a trip to Dover Air Force Base and Museum with lunch, trip to the Casino with lunch, and Tuesday night dinner plus our banquet.

The all inclusive price is \$255.00 single occupancy, \$350.00 double occupancy, plus \$10.00 registration fee per person.

The Reunion and registration forms have been sent out to all members of the Eastern Regional Chapter.

We will welcome anyone interested in joining us for a few great days at the Beach. YOU CAN GET IN TOUCH WITH Mark Deam, [REDACTED]

Sidney, Ohio 45365-1623. Phone 937-492-1908 E-mail mdeam@woh.rr.com.

**COME ONE --- COME ALL**

This Chapter was represented at the National Reunion in Little Rock, Arkansas by Commander David Eichhorn, Spencer Baba, Roger Barney, Dale Meisel, Dave Taylor, Conrad Steers, and Larry Watson. They were particularly pleased with the gracious hospitality displayed by the hotel and staff. The activities and tours planned by the Reunion chairpersons made for a memorable event.

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**CHAPTER REUNIONS COMING UP**

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

REHOBOTH BEACH - DELAWARE  
October 7 - 10, 2003

Package includes three (3) nights at The Breakers Hotel. Three (3) breakfasts, trip to Dover Air Force Base and Museum, and lunch. Trip to Casino with lunch. Tuesday night dinner plus banquet.

ALL FOR \$255 SINGLE OR \$350 DOUBLE

Contact:  
Mark Deam  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
E-mail: [REDACTED]

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**FAR WEST CHAPTER**  
AZ.CA.CO.HI.NV.NM.UT

REUNION - REUNION - REUNION - REUNION

FLAMINGO HOTEL - LAUGHLIN, NEVADA  
September 28 - 30, 2003

Optional trips include a trip to The Gold Road Goldmine and Oatman, Arizona.

Make your own hotel reservations by calling the Flamingo Hotel at [REDACTED] and ask for the ADVA group code SLAME03. Rates are \$22 per night.

For more information call Rich Merlin [REDACTED]

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**GREAT LAKES REGIONAL CHAPTER**  
IL.IN.MI.MN.WI

Kokomo, IN - 21st Annual Veterans Reunion  
September 18-21, 2003

The Great Lakes Chapter will be set up in the Big Tent Friday and Saturday night. Don't forget to check-in. For further information contact:

Terry Babler  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
E-mail: [REDACTED]

Watch the Newsletter for future Reunion that are planned.

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**ARE YOUR DUES PAID?**

lines open between veterans-and I hope it does for many years to come.

Thanks to all that made this scholarship possible.

Scott A. Little

**SECOND PLACE AWARD**

The second place award \$2,500 went to Jeanna Biliti from Brighton, Michigan and was sponsored by her father, John Biliti, who served in Vietnam with the 23rd Military Police Company. Jeanna will be attending the University of Michigan.



Jeanna Biliti

Jeanna writes:

Dear Mr. Short:

I would like to thank you and the scholarship board for awarding me with this great scholarship. The money will help me pay for my first semester at the University of Michigan in the fall. I have yet to decide what I will major in so my first year will be spent in taking the basic courses needed to graduate. I would also like to thank you for sending me another application and giving me another opportunity to receive this scholarship. Thank you again.

Jeanna Biliti

**THIRD PLACE AWARD**

The third place award of \$2,000 went to Martha Burch. Martha is from Mount Carroll, Illinois and was sponsored by her father, James Burch, who served in Vietnam with the 26th Engineer Battalion. Martha's grandfather, Burdette Burch, also served with the Americal in World War II.



Martha Burch with her Grandfather and her Dad

This quarterly Newsletter is to be commended for doing a great job of keeping the communication

Martha writes:

Dear Mr. Short and the Scholarship Committee:

I can't thank you enough for your generosity.

When my grandfather Burdette Burch (132nd Infantry, Cebu City and Japan, Platoon Leader) and my father Jim Burch (HHC and A Company, 26th Combat Engineers, Chu Lai, Sergeant) joined the Americal Division, I'm sure they had no idea that their service would open an opportunity for me at a crucial time in my life.

My freshman year at Knox College will be made much easier with the help of your scholarship, and for that I am thankful.

Respectfully yours,  
Martha Burch

#### FOURTH PLACE AWARD

The fourth place award of 1,500 went to Courtney Smith. Courtney is from Spartanburg, South Carolina and was sponsored by her father, Dantzler Smith, who served in Vietnam with 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry. Courtney will be attending Presbyterian College.



Courtney and her Dad

Courtney writes:

Dear Americal Division Veterans Association:

Thank you so much for the incredible scholarship you have offered me. There aren't enough words to thank all of you for what you have done to help me accomplish my dreams. From your service to our country to ensure mine, my family's, and my friends precious freedom to this scholarship enabling me to achieve a great education. Your hard work and devotion to the citizens of America is inspiring. I only hope that one day I can touch as many lives as this organization has.

Thank you for this scholarship allowing me to climb one step higher towards my dreams. Your generosity and courage will forever be cherished.

Thank you,  
Courtney Smith

#### SIXTEEN ADDITIONAL AWARDS OF \$500 EACH WERE GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS

Jason Boehmig. Jason is from Wexford, Pennsylvania and was sponsored by his grandfather, Otto Boehmig, who served in World War II with the 721st Ordnance Company. Jason attends Wake Forest University.

Jeffrey Brumbeloe. Jeffrey is from LaGrange, Georgia and was sponsored by his grandfather, Calvin Reese Jackson, who served in World War II with the 132nd Infantry Regiment. Jeffrey attends the University of Georgia.

Justin Cline. Justin is from Galesburg, Illinois and was sponsored by his father, John Cline, who served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry. Justin will be attending the University of Illinois.

Abigail Colicchio. Abigail is from Hockessin, Delaware and was sponsored by her father, Anthony Colicchio, who served in Vietnam with the 3rd Battalion, 18th Artillery. Abigail attends Virginia Tech.

Brian Gates. Brian is from Warren, Illinois and was sponsored by his father, Kenneth Gates, who served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry. Brian will be attending Western Illinois University.

Sasha Maluk. Sasha is from Staten Island, New York and was sponsored by her father, Stephen Maluk, who served in Vietnam with the 26th Engineer Battalion. Sasha will be attending the College of Staten Island.

Kelly Matthews. Kelly is from South Glastonbury, Connecticut and was sponsored by her father, Dennis Matthews, who served in Vietnam with the 4th Battalion, 21st Infantry. Kelly will be attending the University of Connecticut.

Kristine Stringham. Kristine is from Rockford, Illinois and was sponsored by her father, James Stringham, who served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry. Kristine will be attending Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Katherine Voelsing. Katherine is from Mooers Forks, New York and was sponsored by her father, Robert Voelsing, who served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 6th Infantry. Katherine will be attending the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

Jenna Cooper. Jenna is from Dartmouth, Massachusetts and was sponsored by her grandfather, Leonard Oliver, who served in World War II with the 221st Field Artillery Battalion. Jenna will be attending the University of Massachusetts.

Craig Coutermarsh. Craig comes from New Canaan, Connecticut and was sponsored by his grandfather, William Mansfield, who served in World War II with the 125th Quartermaster Company. Craig attends Marist College.

Jessica Forman. Jessica is from Leonard, Michigan and was sponsored by her father, Kirk Forman, who served in Vietnam with the 723rd Maintenance Battalion. Jessica will be attending Kettering University.

Laura McLean. Laura is from Orlando, Florida and was sponsored by her grandfather, Nicholas Shealy, who served in World War II with the 132nd Infantry Regiment. Laura attends Belmont University.

Kathleen Mitchell. Kathleen is from New Lenox, Illinois and is sponsored by her father, Ernest Mitchell, who served in Vietnam with the 23rd Administration Company. Kathleen attends Joliet Junior College.

William Robey Jr. William is from Marietta, Georgia and was sponsored by his grandfather, Calvin Reese Jackson, who served in World War II with the 132nd Infantry Regiment.

Johanna Swanson. Johanna is from Lawton, Michigan and was sponsored by her father, Charles Swanson, who served in Vietnam with the 1st Battalion, 52nd Infantry. Johanna attends Hope College.

I want to thank the ADVA members and associates who have given so generously to the Scholarship Fund. Our organization can be proud of the financial assistance that we are providing to these very talented young men and women. By providing this assistance we are honoring all who served with the Americal.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bob Short, Fund Chairman

#### \*\*\*\*\* THE FOLLOWING NAMED MEMBERS GAVE MORE THAN TEN DOLLARS TO THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Carole Fonseca  
in memory of  
David Fonseca

PNC Gary L. Noller  
in memory of WWII Veterans  
Joe Chin  
Ernie Carlson  
Joe Feeler

Carlo and Peggy Pola  
in memory of  
PNC Robert Thornton

John and Dola McNown  
in memory of  
2nd Plt Alpha Co. 1st Bn 20th Infantry

Alpha Co. 1st Bn 46th Infantry  
in memory of  
Our Fallen Heroes

E Company and Medical Det.  
in memory of  
Michael J. Zammiti  
James A. Bradstreet

PNC James C. Buckle  
in memory of  
Bob Hope

#### \*\*\*\*\* THE FOLLOWING NAMED MEMBERS DONATED MORE THAN TEN DOLLARS TO THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Leonard Oliver	-	Robert Keenan
Nelson Dion	-	Charles Engel
Gerald Borysiak	-	Charles Sizemore
William Shugarts	-	Mary Banis
Matthew Swajkowski	-	Leonard Graham
James Sipe	-	Eunice Stottle
Edward Raymond	-	Carl Richardson
George Tuttle	-	Jeff Dombroff
Sheridan Lightner	-	Jesse Goss
Gordon Aleshire	-	Fank Ballak
Col Robert Liddell (Ret)	-	Jim Brown
James Kitterick	-	Verner Pike
Richard Carey	-	Daniel Gill
MSG Warren Reed (Ret)	-	Joseph Salini
William Kring	-	Nicholas Shealy
Alphonse Hudon	-	Chester Sawyer
Russell Miles	-	James Jordan
Charles Arciotti	-	John Fleck

Stephen Lewis	-	Irbe Hanson
Ronald Krul	-	James Thomas
Terrance Siemer	-	James Richmond
Michael Biase	-	Richard Hill
Louis Des Rochers	-	Edwin Griffin
Darrell Wardien	-	George Haertel
Donald Stevens	-	Michael Criswell
Frank McQuaid	-	Paul McClafferty
Larry Henry	-	Bobby Preston
Manuel Santos	-	Richard McClellan
Robert Howell	-	H.O. McAdow
SFC William Burton (Ret)	-	Harold Hanson
Elizabeth Pariseau	-	Gerard McDonald
Wendell Strode	-	Ed Voras
Ron Schramm	-	Michael Lombardo
Roger Luckjohn	-	Herb Duverney
John Harris	-	James Cottarn
Jack Rudder	-	Mike Browning
Ed Loeb	-	Don Shebesta
Stanley Oshaben	-	Richard Curran
Michael Miller	-	Robert Kasting
Earl Cook	-	Daniel Webster
Jack Reid	-	Leslie Gorsuch
Dr. Oscar Patterson	-	Greg McCarthy
Mike Phoenix	-	Tom McPherson
Carlo Pola	-	Kirk Forman
Norman Walker	-	Dudley Farquhar
Richard Mazzarella	-	Lloyd Davis
William Pierce	-	Josephine Bruck
James Price	-	Dorothy Leaman
Gary Bjornstad	-	Bill Packett
Ron Ward	-	James O'Brien
Maj. Edward Denny	-	Jerry Baffa
David Kral	-	William Hanusek
A.L. Romeo	-	Arthur Maki
Anthony Commander	-	Alexander Kolody
Carroll Stanton	-	Larry Watson
Larry Finch	-	Max Hartwick
John Sears	-	Stanley Pijor
James Rhodes	-	Grant Finkbeiner
Margaret Amendolare	-	Reese Jackson
Flora Hollaway	-	Charles Swanson
PNC Ed Marsh	-	Richard Smith
Col William Tomlinson	-	Fernando Vera
John Nelson	-	Andrew Doro
Robert Nadolski	-	Donald Boito
Camereron Baird	-	Doug Bodman
Morris Spadaccini	-	Lewis Mayfield
Lanny Gilliland	-	John Moran
James Flynn	-	Andrew Ash
Donald Hall	-	Stephen Dant
Chuck Stirling	-	Ken Meaney

#### \*\*\*\*\* AMERICAL SCHOLARSHIP FUND APPLICATIONS

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

For more and complete information, Contact:

Robert G. Short Chairman

[REDACTED]  
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Tel: [REDACTED]

email: [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

FOOTSTEPS - A WAR WALK WITH DAD  
by Edward John Gekosky Jr.

I regret to inform the ADVA that Thomas "Frank" Marion passed away on March 30, 2003. He made his home in Romance, West Virginia.

Franks Marion served with the 182nd Infantry, Company G, 2nd Platoon with my father, Edward John Gekosky, and he visited our house when I was a child. He was very proud to have been a member of "Roy's Raiders", the nickname for the 2nd Platoon. He was wounded three times, the first on Hill 260, per Jack Morton, of the Company G veterans that I often talk to. Later, he made the night time bayonet attack up Babag Ridge in the Philippines and reached the top, only to be wounded by a sniper the next morning. That third wound gave Mr. Marion a substantial disability for the rest of his life.

As I researched my father's WWII activities, I cried when I came across the ADVA locator service, and found a 1997 posting from Frank Marion, looking for my father. My father had passed away in 1970. I used the posting to communicate with Mr Marion through his daughter. I wrote the following story after two years of research so my children and our family and friends would know what Company G went through. Perhaps the Museum would like the pictures, or maybe they can be posted to the Oral History project on the ADVA website. Much of my material came from Jack Moran and Clayton Brown, two veterans that served with Dad, that live in Oregon. To the best of my ability, I believe this article accurate and have crossed referenced nearly all of it to books, and to Jack Morton's memory.

Two of the pictures contain Frank Marion. Perhaps the Newsletter may want to honor Mr. Marion by including his picture.

## The Last of the Gallant Forty-Three



The remaining eight members of "Roy's Raiders", veterans of the long and bitter war on Bougainville are shown at a base in the Pacific. Left to Right: Sgt. E. Gekosky, Pfc S.L. Gonzales, Sgt. T.F. Marion, Sgt. H.P. Simmons, Lt. Richard L. Roy, for whom the group was named; Sgt. R.L. Egler, Sgt. J.G. Morton, and Sgt. H.K. Norman. (AP Wirephoto, as appeared in NY times 12/12/1944)

As the son of a veteran, I greatly appreciate the opportunities that the Americal Division Veterans Association gives to help children learn about what our parent did.

Sincerely,  
Edward John Gekosky Jr.

## That Picture!!!

That haunting, ennobling, aged and tattered newspaper cutout! All were looking at Dad (Edward J. Gekosky, Kulpmont, Pa. and Manville, N.J.). What happened? I needed to know. Dad seldom spoke of WWII before his death in 1970. Could I now make sense out of that picture? As child I remember Dad proudly marching in uniform in the Kulpmont Memorial Day parades. He placed great importance on his membership in the Kulpmont VFW, and I still have his 1970 membership card. He always went out of his way to get those little blue flowers that the Disabled American Vets pass out. I now needed to know more.

That picture, and Dad's war service, led me to answers beyond my imagination. Dad came back to life for me, in an important way. His footsteps led me on a walk, with him, through war, and life. Dad's action emphatically reminded me that there is good and evil in the world. Good needs to be greatly respected, evil must be stopped. My personal revelations provide me great pride, respect, and admiration for Dad. The personal became general lessons about appreciation for our service men and women, our country, and our way of life. This war walk with my long deceased father helped me see the greatness of America better than I have ever been able to before, and in the most personal ways.

## Manville Connection

Dad moved his family to Manville, N.J. in 1961, as jobs vanished in his Pennsylvania hometown. We spent nine wonderful years together, until his untimely death. Dad's wake was one of the largest attended in Manville. I have never been as moved, before or since, as when the VFW played taps for Dad, and draped the American Flag to honor him. Even today, I can't think about those moments without crying. In few short years Dad's quiet but family dedicated lifestyle, had earned him great respect from the Manville community. But that is later, and I want to start at the beginning.

## Kulpmont, Pennsylvania Boy

Having lost his father in a mining accident, Dad left school after the tenth grade. Pearl Harbor enraged all Americans. Edward John Gekosky was soon drafted into the U.S. Army from his small Pennsylvania coal town, at eighteen years of age. Following basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas, Private Gekosky sailed from Fort Ord, California. He spent eighteen tense days at sea, arriving in New Caledonia on November 15, 1943.

## New Caledonia and Fiji

New Caledonia was a Pacific Island defensive stronghold and replacement depot for the Americal Division, battle hardened in their stunning victory at Guadalcanal. The name "Americal" was derived from Americans in New Caledonia. Dad was assigned to the 182nd Infantry, Company G. Another sailing, and he joined Company G on Fiji, for defense activity and jungle training, November 29, 1943. New Caledonia and Fiji were needed to help keep the supply lines open to Australia and New Zealand.

## Bougainville

The 182nd with others, were sent to relieve the Marines and to defend the perimeter that protected

the new airfield. The air field allowed for attacks on Rabaul, the primary Japanese regional strong point. The fanatical Japanese held Bougainville with 65,000 troops and threatened to cut off Australia. Dad arrived at Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, on Christmas Day 1943. Dad's wartime friend from that picture, and as of last year a close friend of mine, Jack Morton, still remembers Christmas dinner on the ship at the Bay, knowing combat would follow.

Dad was introduced to war in the thickest jungle of the South Pacific. Company G consisted of about 180 soldiers as it arrived. The second Platoon of Company G, under Lt. Richard L. Roy, consisted of the gallant forty-three referred to in the picture. Pat Farino was the Platoon Guide. I recently found him through the internet. After telling me that he visited our family when I was young, Pat went on to say that he nicknamed the Second Platoon, "Roy's Raiders", in honor of Lt. Roy. The nickname stuck and made it's way into the national press. Lt. Roy's platoon became one of the most patrolled on Bougainville, so many felt the nickname appropriate. The Army replaced the Marines at aptly named places like "Hellzapoppin Ridge", which was featured in the May 30, 1944 Look magazine. "Roy's Raiders" then went on dangerous patrol after patrol. Jack Morton, told me that while his patrol total was unusually high, he stopped counting after he surpassed one hundred, but that is getting ahead of my story.

Dad recognized another Kulpmont boy on Bougainville, an engineer, Wally Bogush. Dad would occasionally see Wally as the war went on and this became very important for me later.

At Bougainville, Dad fought against troops led by Lt. General Masatame Kanda, commander of the Japanese Sixth Division, and General Hyakutake, the Japanese leader at Guadalcanal. General Kanda and his troops were infamous for the "Rape of Nanking", among the most evil episodes of the century. The General allowed his men to rape and then kill 80,000 Nanking women, in addition to the barbarous acts of decapitating and other wise killing several hundred thousand civilians at Nanking, Ching.

## Bougainville, "The Most Expensive Tree In The World"

As the weeks, shelling, sniper attacks, air attacks, enemy infiltrations, skirmishes, and patrols passed, Company G drew the task of protecting the lookout tower in the ancient, one hundred foot tall, twenty foot diameter, Banyan Tree atop Hill 260. It was outside the safety of the U. S. Perimeter by a jungle mile or three, a distance that would be an eternity for some. The tower was extremely important as an observation post for artillery. About eighty soldiers from G Company and some artillery observers were assigned to protect the tower.

On February 24, 1944, Japanese General Hyakutake told his troops, "It is our duty to erase the mortification of our brothers at Guadalcanal. Attack! Assault! Destroy Everything! Japanese General Kanda then exhorted the troops, many rapists and butchers from the Nanking atrocity, to "Strike, strike, and strike again, until our enemy is humbled forevermore! Brighten with the blood of the American devils the color of the renowned insignia on our arms". "They gave orders to take Hill 260 at all costs", and then to push the entire American Perimeter back into the sea.

Pfc Noah Tiger was killed by a sniper while on a twenty-seven man intelligence mission behind enemy

lines as they tried to determine when and where the Japanese would attack. Carlton Duley was killed March 7. Then, on March 8, the major Japanese attack began with three thousand rounds of incoming artillery. Patrols went out as it stopped. Harassing fire persisted all night. On March 9, artillery, rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire targeted G Company at the outpost.

Early morning of March 10, Japanese Colonel Muda's 13th Infantry sent extremely heavy mortar and machine gun fire into Company G. American General Hodge issued orders to "Hold at all costs" because of the strategic importance of Hill 260, and the Banyan Tree lookout post. Utilizing overwhelming forces, the Japanese overran the eighty defenders, leaving two small pockets of survivors taking refuge in pill boxes. The 182nd Infantry sent E Company and F Company to retake the tree. With heavy casualties, they occupied portions of the Hill within earshot of the overrun survivors. This brought two hours of hand to hand, close in, bayonet fighting.

March 11 brought Japanese reinforcements and they unleashed an all out attack, down the Hill. Company E, part of the rescue effort, was reduced from one hundred fifty men the prior day, to twenty-five men. Lt. Roy's platoon, with Dad, was sent to assist the remnants of E Company. "Roy's Raiders" suffered a great deal that day. They later joined Company B to help rescue, with intense use of flame-throwers, the handful of survivors that had been trapped the prior day. Lt. Roy's Bronze Star citation indicates that he rescued one of his wounded, trapped soldiers from entanglement in barbed wire, while both were exposed to heavy machine gun, rifle, and mortar fire this day. My father's Bronze Star Medal citation indicates that Dad neutralized an enemy pill box. When Dad's squad leader was killed, he assumed command, performed leader duties efficiently, and exposed himself to direct enemy fire without regard for his own personal safety during the rescue of wounded.

March 12. While the forces of Japanese Colonel Muda were entrenched, artillery took some toll. The Banyan Tree served as the central target. Then, elements of the 182nd Infantry, with assistance, tried to re-take control of the Hill against fanatical resistance, and reached the halfway point. The next day was nearly a repeat as hard fought for gains could not be held. On March 14 General Hodge concluded that the remaining Japanese forces were so weakened that they no longer were a threat to the Perimeter. They had absorbed over ten thousand 105-mm rounds. Artillery was close fired at the Hill, Banyan Tree, and remaining Japanese for several more days. The landscape, once the thickest of jungles, was totally denuded, but for the mostly stripped Banyan Tree. General Kanda quietly withdrew leaving only a screening force. On March 15, flame-throwers effectively reduced an increasing number of pill boxes. Savage fighting continued as it was necessary to root out the remaining Japanese. The screening force continued to use gigantic elevated roots of the Banyan Tree to protect numerous machine guns.

The Banyan Tree toppled and splintered on March 17th, leaving only a large stump-like protuberance.

On March 18th, Americans nearly reached the hill top, but could not hold their ground. The jungle had been decimated, pock marked earth, splintered wood, bodies and parts, and bunkers with still resistant Japanese were now all that remained. Artillery, flame-throwers, and infantry persisted in rooting out the remaining Japanese,

On March 22, six Japanese in a pill box yelled for surrender. Leaving the pill box with arms raised, the Captain, Lt. Roy, and several of "Roy's Raiders" proceeded forward. In an act of treachery, the six Japanese then jumped back into the pill box killing the Captain and two others. Lt. Roy survived. On March 23, Pfc Santana L. Gonzalez, from the picture, earned a Bronze Star.

On March 28th, the Japanese abandoned their effort and retreated. Their attack against the Perimeter was disastrous for them. Jack Morton recalled that "Roy's Raiders" were able to take off their water logged boots, to care for often serious foot problems, for the first time since the battle began. Shortly after the battle, Pfc Green suffered a grenade wound to his leg and bled to death while being carried back to the Perimeter aid station.

Military history books and newspapers, in recognizing that "heroism became something routine" named the giant Banyan Tree that once sat upon Hill 260 in Bougainville, as "The Most Expensive Tree In The World". It was paid for with lives, wounds, and terrible memories. On Hill 260, in not much more space than a couple of football fields, the Japanese suffered five hundred and sixty (560) killed in action. Wounded could not be counted. The three week battle cost the Americal (98) ninety-eight dead, five hundred and eighty-one (581) wounded, and twenty-four (24) missing in action. Many of Lt. Roy's men were lost and wounded. Dad survived and was promoted to Sergeant.

During March, the Japanese lost fifty five hundred (5500) killed in their ill-advised attack on the Perimeter as a whole, with an additional seven thousand (7000) wounded. The U. S. forces lost two hundred and sixty-three (263) dead. Poor leadership by General Kanda and Hyakutake, suicidal Japanese fanaticism, and the resolve of the American forces, largely account for the massacre. A Yank Magazine article dated May 19, 1944 noted that many Japanese carried a substance that could have been a narcotic, and soldiers commented about the behavior that appeared drug induced. The larger scale battle was a massacre for the Japanese. But the fighting for the Banyan Tree amounted to small groups of U. S. soldiers (who now live in places like Manville, if they survived), first being overrun, and then trying to reclaim, the heavily defended, strategically necessary site. Each side was willing to pay whatever it would cost, in lives, to obtain it.

**Bougainville, More "Roy Raiders" Heroics**  
 "Roy Raider's" followed the Japanese retreat from Hill 260 with continued aggressive, dangerous patrolling through the month that followed. Very few enemy surrendered, and very few would be taken prisoner. On the lighter side, Dad did manage to obtain a photograph of a movie star, during a USO entertainment show. When I discovered Dad's friends Jack Morton and Clayton Brown in 2002, they recognized the movie star as Carole Landis. But the Numa Numa trail, the Torokina River, the volcanic Mount Bagana, and the Laruma Road area and others required patrols and frequent enemy contact. Casualties mounted and jungle disease set in on many of our troops. Dad mailed home a picture of "Brownie", Frank Marion, (another post war visitor to our family recently located via the internet), and Pat Farino holding their Purple Hearts.

In late September, the Raiders encountered very strong Japanese positions. General McClure ordered enemy annihilation around a series of road

blocks. On September 29, 1944 the 182nd Infantry encircled the area. The Americans began an artillery barrage, and then an Infantry attack. More than fifty pill boxes were destroyed. On October 1, Dad earned an Oak Leaf Cluster for action at the Laruma road block to go with his Bronze Star. The citation indicates he killed a Japanese leader and another as the leader tried to reinforce a key position. Jack Morton and Bob Egler earned Silver Stars, October 1. Pfc Arnold West was killed when he lost his eyeglasses and stumbled in front of a pill box. Jack led his squad against a fiercely defended pill box, killed three by firing from the hip, fought off a bayonet charge, and threw grenades into the pill box. Bob rejuvenated his men after heavy casualties and led them aggressively, inflicting numerous enemy casualties. Other "Roy Raiders" may have also been honored. They were American soldiers, not ordinary men. Lt. Roy was reassigned, the nickname "Roy's Raiders" retired.

ON TO THE PHILIPPINES IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### COMPANY C - 121 MEDICAL BATTALION

I am enclosing a photo taken on Guadalcanal sometime in November or December 1942 with some of my buddies from C Company, 121st Medical Battalion.



Kneeling left to right: V. Palmermo, Sherman, S. Janoka, Markham, J. Lynch Standing: McCormack, M. Silva, Connors, R. Ferrera, ??, Mercado. McLean

Perhaps some of my buddies that are still living will see this photo and drop me a line..

Yours in comradeship,  
Robert Ferrera

Miami, FL 33176  
Tel. [REDACTED]

\*\*\*\*\*

**ATTENTION - ATTENTION**  
 Check the address label for your dues date. NOW!  
 If you do not agree contact:  
 Adj. Bernard Chase  
 [REDACTED]  
 South Yarmouth, MA 02664

**Recall ... After Over Sixty Years ... My Five Years As A Soldier**  
 (Or call these memories, "Helping To Keep the Japanese Forces from Seizing Henderson Airfield On Guadalcanal" ... or "The World War II Memoirs Of A Non-Hero")

Karl Wagner

The events pertaining to this personal recall have been supplemented by names of units, ships, battle casualties and statistics that were top secret and not available to participants at the time that the events took place. These data have been obtained in the '90's from various highly authoritative military journals and books

Time:  
 NOVEMBER 12, 1942 THROUGH  
 FEBRUARY 9, 1943  
 LATITUDE ABOUT 8 DEGREES  
 SOUTH  
 LONGITUDE ABOUT 165 DEGREES  
 HENDERSON AIRFIELD, NEAR  
 LUNGA BEACH  
 NORTH SHORE OF  
 GUADALCANAL ISLAND  
 SOLOMON ISLANDS



Newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant Karl Wagner - September 1942 - assigned to A Company, 130th Quartermaster Regiment, Noumea, New Caledonia

with several other luxury ships, re-fitted with three tiered bunks in the ship's hold for thousands of troops but keeping the civilian crew. Our ship, the rechristened USS Barry departing from Brooklyn Naval Base at about 17:00 on January 23, 1942... just six weeks after Pearl Harbor... part of a very large convoy... Task Force 6814.

But first... the events leading up to what was about to happen... years ago, ...in my twenty-fifth year.

I was drafted into military service among early draftees, April 1941... eight months before Pearl Harbor.... unceremoniously plucked from my job... my job ..... traveling salesman selling upholstery and drapery fabrics to decorators, upholsterers, furniture manufacturers and even major hotels in five eastern states ..... just promoted, one year ago from working in the company's warehouse ... giving up a life that included a brand new Dodge auto... generous expense account... the very best hotels..... a salary that in today's value would be about \$40,000 a year..... then given a pay of \$21 a month or in today's value about \$600 a year.

Frantic preparations ... boarding a train to Brooklyn Navy Yard then a 43-day boat ride on a small 200 foot pleasure cruise ship.... which, until a month ago before Pearl Harbor, had just been taken out of service as a Caribbean luxury cruise service..... put into the US Navy service..... and re-fitted, along

Every crash of the waves against the side of the ship sounding like a torpedo exploding... our imagination working overtime... down in the cargo hold below where hundreds of us were packed in, 150 feet down in the belly of the ship.... every inch packed with soldiers' bodies and gear.... advised by an officer that our mission had been changed and instead of England we were going to a place we had never heard of..... a place called New Caledonia... a French possession... somewhere in the South Pacific.

**New Caledonia**  
 Lots of torrential tropical rain. Temperatures from 60 degrees to 95 F ... with the non-combat field rations ... monotonous food such as dried eggs.... dried potatoes.... dried cabbage... dried onions.... canned stew ... canned Spam.... every fifth meal the same... every day the usual soldier business... keeping clothing and equipment dry, formations ... inspections... physical conditioning. Then in August 1942, a notice... there's a shortage of officers, non-commissioned officers needed to become officers. A mentor nominated me, Lt. Colonel Talley... who had prompted my PFC designation.... my Corporal promotion... my Sergeant promotion ... encouraged me to apply. I was interviewed by a panel of three field-grade officers (majors and colonels) who asked about high school and college grades... memberships in organizations... night college courses while working full time... fraternity president, executive secretary of a community political group ... patrol leader and Life Scout in the Boy Scouts... honor student in high school and Evening College Courses... worked part time in the Public Library during high school ... answers seemed to please them. ... notified of acceptances. I and my best buddy, Sergeant Hempstead Shaw, to the 1st Battalion, 130th Quartermaster Regiment, Jim Paiste to the 182nd infantry, Don Stark to the 182nd infantry.... along with about eighty other officer candidates from the 30,000 troops on the island ... transported by truck.... about 60 miles South back to the city, Noumea... a nearby beach area had been designated as an Officer Candidate School ... six more weeks of lectures, physical training, formations with emphasis on viewing the officer/enlisted men relationship in a different way. We were about to become officers and gentlemen, evidently an enlisted man was not a "gentleman"... told we had to act in a different way now. The training officers emphasized that now we were at a different level in the army "caste" system... this was the WW2 "brown shoe" highly disciplined army. Then as a newly appointed Second Lieutenant ... we were all being briefed by Captains and Majors of the First Marine Division who had been in the Guadalcanal fighting for 60 days, since August 1942. They had just returned to New Caledonia ... some were recovering from wounds ... some recovering from fatigue, some recovering from malaria. We were being told "you will be sent as part of a major reinforcement for the First Marine Division ... we need help, we are under heavy enemy pressure... you will be under Marine command". The First Marines have been in Guadalcanal for almost three months ... have the only airfield and about three miles by three miles of the ninety mile by thirty mile island... the rest of the island is controlled by the Japanese who are constantly attacking at various points around the twelve mile

defense perimeter with troops, artillery, scores of strafing airplanes, bombers and warships.

You've just received your lieutenant's bars... but don't ever wear them in Guadalcanal... Japs look for insignia first to select leaders to be a target... don't allow your men to call you lieutenant... same reason... have your men use your first name... then with all of these warnings in mind.... assigned to Company A, a company of two hundred men, fifty-two trucks and two other officers. Captain Tom Thornton and First Lieutenant Ed Williams... part of an infantry regimental support group (101<sup>st</sup> Quartermaster). Other duties of the Quartermaster Regiment included transportation, food supply, equipment supply, gasoline supply... graves registration (burial of the dead) the whole merged with the 182<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment and designated as the 182<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Combat Team of three thousand (of which three months later, 335 would be dead or evacuated for wounds) ... so, all of us, the 3000 rifle-bearing, steel-helmeted, full field-pack carrying, green fatigue clothed soldiers.... warned that landing under fire was anticipated... boarded the Navy AP (Attack Personnel) "President Adams" transport ship and three other Attack Personnel Transport ships... the McCawley, the President Jackson and the Crescent City boarded at Noumea for the four-day trip to Guadalcanal... part of Task Force 67.1.

#### Guadalcanal

So... here we are 04:00, Wednesday November 11, 1942, approximately 8 degrees South latitude and approximately 165 degrees longitude... a long way from my boyhood home, Dayton, Ohio... awakened by the Navy style of ship-side communication ... a long varying pitch of the boatswain's pipes.... "Now hear this... all hands... turn to... for breakfast and debarkation" ... wasn't sleeping too well anyhow ... glad to get up and get going... thoughtful breakfast... not much chit-chat... each absorbed in his own thoughts... each thinking... would he be a coward or act in a manner that would command the respect of his peers... how would he behave, under combat pressure... would he be killed? ... wounded?... disabled?... or maybe captured and death-marched or starved or forced into abused labor like those poor "bastards of Bataan"?

Then the "woo, woo, woooo" sound that the Navy uses to signal "General Quarters" which means all hands must go to their assigned "battle stations, pending action... we, the soldiers... get equipment ready to land... 06:30... our company called to topside (out of the ship's hold) line up along the side rail of the ship.... 3 lines



Karl Wagner, receiving his 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Bars at Officer Training Course graduation, Noumea, New Caledonia

deep... our first view of this fabled, sinister island iridescent, beetle-green tree line.... sickening, heady aroma of tropical flowers coupled with that of decaying dampish vegetation... spectacular pastel blue and pink sunrise sky.... foreboding... soundless and dramatic... what lies in store for us in this place... at the given command, with a forty-pound pack on the back... an eight-pound rifle plus a twenty-pound ammo belt... hoist one leg over the rail ... foot in the first square of the rope cargo net... twenty five feet below..... a small 20 man landing craft driven by a blue-clad sailor... pitching up, down, sideways in the light sea... making you wonder if the craft would be in position when you reached the bottom rung of the net, or worst case... would we lose our hold and topple off into the sea ..... top-heavy headfirst?

Then, clambering down into the landing craft... sequestered behind the metal drop-ramp in case of land based fire... peeking over from time to time... a short run of about eight football field lengths... the ramp splashes down... ankle deep in the surf..... directed to appointed assembly area... forming in squads and platoons..... fifty feet back from the sandy

beach... coconut palm trees planted in rows... looking like large tasseled corn in a farmer's cornfield... already apprehensive and then startled by the sound of artillery.... location of long range cannons, clued by white puffs from a jut of land (Point Cruz) to the west about two miles away... are they firing at us?..... no, the shells are

bursting near the ships that we had just left... a US Navy cruisers (later identified as the Helena) and a couple of destroyers wheeled to their starboard sides and proceeded to send broad-sides of heavy Navy fire where the puffs were showing ..... after a few more minutes ... the hostile gun emplacements quit firing ..... more landing craft with additional soldiers followed us to shore.... subsequent trips by the landing crafts ... unloading supplies ... building up stacks of boxes and cartons on the beach ..... orders to move supplies off the beach into shelter of small groves here and there among the stately rows of coconut trees.

#### From Quartermaster to Infantry

This is the beach nearest the airfield.... the airfield being the one part of the island that each side desperately wanted... we were A Company Quartermaster (truck company of 200 men, and one platoon of B Company) we had never been trained for combat... in fact, I had never fired a rifle at this point. Nevertheless, we had been selected to be the first line of defense on the beach, to man the thirty-inch trenches that had previously been dug in the sandy beach. Me ... put in to a defensive position about 70 feet from the ocean... the regular infantry had just returned from days of offense at the Matanikau River, another part of the defense line... they had been pulled back from attacking because of the threat of attack here on the beach, so we, being fresh troops would be assigned to the first line of resistance on the beach... with our M1 Carbines, one hundred yards back of us were ... two lines of veteran, combat-exhausted rifle-equipped marines and army infantry ..... lined up back of us ..."but don't retreat because each line has orders to fire on any people coming toward them" .... friendly artillery would be way back... would be firing over our heads... all I could think of was Bataan.... here we go again.

For the next three nights and two days we, while anticipating an attack by Japanese forces on Lunga Beach, sat, kneeled and lay on the "fifty-yard line" of the huge stadium of "Iron-Bottom Sound" and within eyesight, witnessed the horrendous Naval Battle of Guadalcanal between fourteen U.S. Navy warships and thirteen Japanese warships plus dozens of airplanes and ten Japanese troop transports, resulting in sinkings and damages to both sides.

Also on the third morning around 05:30 (they say), I didn't know what time it was ... shelling from the ocean to near our positions. It is said that almost a thousand shells landed but none directly on us, but we could hear them going over above us.... not hitting our positions but landing on the nearby airfield, less than a mile away ... close enough to us

that we could see the sandy terrain undulate like water struck by a pebble... the impact of the heavy 2000-pound shells caused the wave motion of the sandy beach. no doubt due to the fact that beach sand is low density compared to loam or rock.

Our portion of the island was only three miles by three miles, a total of nine square miles out of a total of about 360 miles but we still had the most important part of the island, the airfield ... and the airplanes from that airfield are all that was standing between us and an overwhelming enemy ship and troop attack.

Then over near Savo island to the west.... among other warships... we could see a mighty ship..... a ship that made the others look small... later, *from the history books it was learned that this was the giant Japanese battleship, the Kirishima* ..... seemed to at least as tall as a ten-story building and ... our air force was attacking this ship, too. The Kirishima towered up and large enough to cover three or four football fields. *It's mission, I later learned from the history books was the shelling of the airfield to neutralize the American air superiority, but we thought that they were firing at us in the trenches preparatory to the Japanese infantry attack*

After the three day Naval/Air battle, we, "A" Company, a truck company of the 101st Quartermaster Regiment, were placed in position to help protect the airfield... behind the infantry and forward of our artillery... 75 millimeter howitzers, firing over our heads... we were still in a defensive back-up position for about two weeks ... still quite close to the front-line of fighting... perhaps 3000 to 4000 yards distance.... as a comparison, a good rifle shot could be reasonably accurate at 500 yards... during this time, two Japanese sappers penetrated the guard detail one night at the airfield and dynamited and destroyed an airplane and a fuel truck within fifty yards of our position.... Captain Ken Turner thought he saw Japanese snipers up in the coconut trees and awakened the whole company one night at about 2:00 AM firing his Thompson machine gun at either the coconuts or imaginary snipers... finally quiet and sleep except for the muffled rush sound of artillery out-going over our heads.... we were sleeping in slit trenches.... intermittent tropical rains filling the slit trenches, forcing us out from the trenches, from time to time.... hordes of mosquitoes making us choose between mosquitoes or covering up with shelter halves and sweating from the 85 degree heat.

#### From Infantry to Quartermaster

Next duty was for some of our company detailed to help build a "corduroy road" (a series of logs over the bog, perpendicular to

the direction of the road) a road to be used to supply the infantry front line... then, after about ten days, the Navy felt it was finally worth the risk to bring back the transports (which had fled about 100 miles from the scene of the Naval action) to bring them back and finish unloading the other troops and supplies.... at this time we stacked our rifles and helped unload supplies including our ten wheeler trucks (called 2 1/2 ton trucks)... so now we were a truck company again.... I was issued a jeep to drive back forth between the beach and the spot locations, expediting wherever trucks were tied up for lack of work crews, break-downs or lost drivers... my assignment was to help coordinate truck dispatching under direction of the Beachmaster, Major Herring.... the major's job was to coordinate the flow of supplies from transports-to-landing-craft-to-dumping-on-the-beach-to-being-loaded-on-the-trucks-to-be-delivered-to-spot-locations which were about two miles away, under tree cover throughout our part of the island... then from these spot locations... the infantry could draw on food supplies.

Our trucks delivered food to the spot locations for the air force, about a mile away.... our trucks delivered gasoline in thousands of fifty-five gallon drums to the air force at the airfield.... and there at the airfield, part of our Quartermaster group, headed by my friend, Lt. Pat Kenney of Boston, used hand-pumps to pump gasoline from the fifty-five gallon drums to the airplanes ... this was really door-to-door service ..... our trucks delivered 50 pound

100 pound, 250 pound and 500 pound bombs to the air-force at Henderson airfield... our trucks delivered 30 caliber, 75 caliber and 155 caliber shells to the artillery about a half-mile away to two miles away... our trucks delivered all shapes and sizes and quantities of mortar shells, grenades, bandoleers of 30 caliber ammo to the infantry's spot locations (called "dumps")... our trucks delivered Marston mats to the Navy's famous CB's (Construction Battalions) at the airfield.... Marston Mats are the webbed steel mats (in 600 pound bundles) to be used to overlay the boggy ground so that the airplanes could fly off the swampy airfield.... our trucks delivered plane parts, bulldozer parts... all of the things that had been in short supply for the Marines for three months... our trucks delivered all of these things.

#### Turning the Tide

All of these supplies started flowing and this started to change the tide of the battle on the front lines of the infantry. It changed the tide from defensive to offensive... the front lines were a twelve mile semi-circle perimeter line from East to South to West with North being the Ocean shore, ... all of this orderly flow of supplies helped to change

the daily battles from frantic emergencies to a somewhat orderly offensive battle... but ... all of this flow.... night and day... night under floodlights except during raid alarms ... all of this flow was interrupted four to six times in every twenty-four hour period by heavy bombing attacks... plus apprehension caused by almost nightly intrusions by Japanese convoys who were bringing in Japanese reinforcements and supplies on their warships ... also many, many encounters by the U. S. Patrol Torpedo boats which were attacking the Japanese destroyers ... these destroyers and also Japanese submarines were carrying 55 gallon oil drums full of food and dropping them off in the water to be carried by the ocean current to the beaches where the Japanese were camped ... our apprehension was made more intense by rumors that the Japanese were coming to attack directly where we were in order to seize the airfield ... usually when the Japanese warships showed up there would be flashes and sounds of gunfire because our U. S. ships and torpedo boats and sometimes airplanes would attack them to thwart the reinforcements ... every moonlit night especially when the moon was more near being a full moon... brought us enemy ships or enemy planes or both.

#### Special Mission ... Aborted

Then one day ... got a telephone call on the field telephone (*the kind that you cranked before lifting the receiver so that you could generate enough electricity to make or receive your call*). So I get this call from a full chicken colonel... "This is Colonel —", Division G2 (intelligence), "... the Japanese are dropping fifty-five gallon drums off into the ocean up near the Matanikau river... the front-lines.... I want you and your men to go up there and retrieve some of those drums so that we can learn what they are doing. We think they are trying to supply their troops by floating the drums filled with food and supplies into shore. If you get us some of these drums we will know what the Japanese plans are"

So, even though we were Quartermaster non-fighting men, an order is an order, especially from a chicken colonel who is the division G2. So we drive our truck and jeep up to the Matanikau perimeter. We were making our plans ... Sergeant Callahan was volunteering to tie a rope around himself, swim out about 150 yards, secure one of the drums and we would pull him back in with the drum. We were discussing our plan with the infantry officer in charge of that area. He says, "you're crazy if you plan to swim out there in the ocean and try to retrieve those drums ... the ocean current is very strong and it will carry you right into the Japanese lines" He pointed out the nearby enemy lines ... we

could see some Japanese soldiers who were about 3000 feet away ... while we are pondering... the officer answers the phone... "It's for you Lieutenant", he says. My Quartermaster battalion chicken colonel was on the line ...he says, "you get right back here .... I don't care who told you to get those drums...that's not our job".... so thank goodness....I was relieved of trying to perform an impossible direct order.

#### Episode on/about December 1943

Tony Zito, was a former Navy Chief, who at the start of the war was automatically promoted to be a Navy Ensign ... not to be confused with the usual, young, fresh-cheeked, university graduate ensign ... Tony was what the Navy called a "mustang"... going on forty years old.... wore his belly over his belt...shirt tail always out...not the proper sort of Navy officer...but rules didn't apply to him ... he had many Admiral friends because he was such a legendary mechanic who could do things like devising and constructing a gasoline fuel line from shore to ship.....and make it drop below water surface during attacks so it wouldn't be hit by shells or bombs. Tony was reputed to be able to solve and fix any piece of machinery in the Navy... anyhow Tony wanted to get some fresh pineapples from an abandoned native garden that he had heard about. I, being an officer in a truck company, was one of the few officers who had access to a jeep...so Tony talked me into driving up the East Coast to the garden.... no need to take our rifles, the Japanese were there ten days ago but they are gone now...so we drive three miles east.... true, there was a garden but everything had been stripped...looking around for other gardens and off about 1,000 yards away several Japanese soldiers were approaching...stalking us and moving from coconut tree to coconut tree ... evidently as apprehensive as we were .... wondering if we were part of an attacking force or what? Needless to say, we jumped in the jeep and drove madly back to within the U. S. area. I really didn't need pineapples.

#### Episode on/about April 1943

Again with Tony Zito ... have you got Japanese rifles? Sure we've got hundreds of them ... well you get me six Japanese rifles... wrap them in a mattress bag. These Navy officers on these ships are crazy to take Japanese rifles back as souvenirs...I'll get a lighter (a small Navy craft)... we'll take them out to the Navy ships and trade them for Scotch whiskey. Well after considerable thought and discussion with my fellow officers, Captain Tom Thornton and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Ed Williams and the company Top Sergeant, Joe Muscarello, a plan evolved.

A recent replacement (released from the penitentiary if he would accept military duty)

sent to our company... had been part of an illegal Chicago whiskey-making outfit. His job had been to collect whiskey from farmers in northern Illinois who made whiskey in their silos.

In one instance he had gone up a long lane to collect the whiskey batch from a certain farmer.... the silo blew up while he was there at the end of the long lane..... the authorities showed up at the same time.... so, he had no way out except the long lane.... he was arrested ... agreed with his Mafia group that he would take the prison sentence and thereby not incriminate the others..... they in turn would send weekly money to his widowed mother for her support.

So this street-wise former bootlegger knew his way around.... the former bootlegger had been appointed the mess hall manager (couldn't be made a non-com because of his prison record). He ran a good mess-hall, had contacts with enlisted men in the air force...the air force pilots had fresh beef rations...it all made sense...trade the Japanese rifles for Navy officers' whiskey...share some of the whiskey with Tony Zito for arranging the trade ...give the rest of the whiskey to the former bootlegger who was acting mess sergeant .....who would trade the whiskey to air force enlisted men for air force fresh beef.....feed the fresh beef to our soldier truck drivers who hadn't had fresh beef for months and months.... raise morale in the Truck Company.... look like a hero to the soldier truck drivers ... in an environment of no money, bartering takes over .... just as it does under communism.

#### Episode on/about April 1943

Our company was stationed right near the airfield. The airfield was always the target for the Japanese bombing raids ... after so many bombing raids and no hits on us, I and my tent-mate, Lieutenant John Nicholson had gotten careless and had been neglecting to get up to go to the foxhole during the nightly air raids. This one night, for some intuitive reason, I did get up and shook Nich ... I left and got into the foxhole. Seconds later we could hear the bombs ploughing through the air. Nich jumped into the hole on top of us ... this time the bombs hit ...our tent disappeared. After helping some of the nearby wounded ... we slept the rest of the night in the foxhole. In daylight we could see that pieces of our bedding, clothing, tent and equipment ... every stitch that we owned, were hanging from the thirty-foot trees, looking much like ornaments on Christmas trees.

#### Returning Home

After this duty, interspersed with daily/nightly Jap air raids, day and night, I

was assigned back to garrison duty on the now semi-civilized existence of the re-supply base of New Caledonia. Relieved at being narrowly missed for assignment to the next push up the Solomon chain of islands to Munda or Kolombagara ... six more months duty with a truck battalion at the port of Noumea coordinating convoys of trucks hauling supplies from ship-side to depots and depots to supply ships in New Caledonia and then, based on the large numbers of months overseas I returned to the U. S. in officer class accommodations on the USS West Point, a major ocean liner. I passed under the Golden Gate Bridge ... ate heads of lettuce like apples after thirty months with no fresh produce. From San Francisco across the country by train ...home in Dayton for two weeks, then down to Camp Lee, Virginia, Officers Basic Training Course. Then to New York City stationed with the Military Police unit (meeting former classmate, now Captain Bert Weiner) for a few months being in charge of the unit's motorcycles, jeeps and squad cars. I was also doing patrol duty in the city's nightclub district, then transferred back to quartermaster headquarters, Camp Lee, Virginia for the Advanced Officers Training Course. Then I was assigned for a short time at the Richmond Quartermaster Depot doing administrative work in the Class I, which are the Army's canned food section, where I saw my first computer, a 40 foot long installation that used vacuum tubes, that burnt out after a few hours, then... the whole war is over. It was interesting duty there ... if you don't get hurt.

#### Where has this soldier gone?

After the war Karl Wagner became self-employed in the reclining lounge chair business, Dallas, Texas. Since 1971 he has been involved in a number of ventures in financial investing and technology analysis, including President & Board Chairman, Canadian Technical Analysts, and Director of Planning & Board of Directors, International Federation of Technical Analysts. Through the years he was very active as a downhill skier and tennis player, and has appeared as a singing chorus member in over 200 performances of amateur opera productions. A large company transferred Karl to Toronto, Canada over thirty years ago where he decided to retire. He remains a super-patriotic American.

#### Editors note from David W. Taylor, Contributing Editor and ADVA WWII

**Historian:** This remembrance by Karl Wagner is an edited version of his WWII memories, sent on a disk which - when printed covers 37 pages. Other parts of his memories will be incorporated into subsequent articles to be written about the Americal Division in World War II.

#### Salute to an officer and a gentleman

I have a story to tell about a man who is a soldier, an officer, and a caring individual. On October 12, 1970, my company, Co. B, 1/20<sup>th</sup> Infantry, assaulted by helicopter into a hot landing zone in Quang Ngai Province of I Corp. In the next 15 minutes, we went from being a company just off a three-day standown to one with many casualties. We had landed 100 yards from an NVA command bunker. We went in with no advance artillery or gunship prep of the area.

The NVA shot down four of our choppers. There were training charts on the wall of a NVA hootch showing how to shoot down choppers. The fierce action wounded many and it killed some very good men.

Included in the KIAs were the company commander and his radioman. CPT Francis Powers, Jr. was a religious person who cared so deeply about his men's lives that it cost him his own life. He was trying to save his own men. He made the statement "we don't leave our men behind" moments before he was hit while trying to rescue the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. They had taken casualties and were pinned down by heavy fire. SGT Cliff Wright, the RTO, was a good soldier and was always beside his captain.

A young officer named LT William Illingworth, 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon Leader, took over the company. He called in artillery, jets with napalm, and naval gunfire. He handled himself extremely well in a time of crisis.

After dark fell, he and I crawled out into an open rice paddy to verify that Powers and Wright were dead. Neither he nor I would leave those men lay out there until we knew for sure. They deserved so much more than that. I have never been so scared in my life, knowing that if the NVA regulars were still in the treeline 50 yards away we would be finished.

As we silently crawled out to the bodies, on of our fellow soldiers behind the cover dropped his steel helmet with a bang. We were lucky, it wasn't our time, and no fire came from the treeline. We reached the fallen men and carried their remains back with us.

LT Illingsworth should have received at least a Silver Star for taking

over the company on the ground while under fire. He moved the chopper landing zone back away from the incoming fire, organized the company to set up a perimeter to return fire to the enemy, set up a Medivac area, and displayed personal bravery.

I was fortunate to happen to meet Illingsworth again 32 years later while attending the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D. C. This was in conjunction with the ADVA reunion. I introduced myself and shook his hand. I had not forgotten his bravery from years before and I never will. He risked his life for the welfare of others.

The feeling I got was a tremendous energy and a great sense of personal relief. I asked him how he was. His answer was simply "Life has been very good to me." This showed the kind of man he really is! I wish I had been able to talk to him longer than was possible at the time. I hope that someday we will be able to meet again.

A few weeks after the NVA base camp battle, Illingsworth was severely wounded by a command detonated explosion that took both legs and caused other severe wounds. He was lucky to live through it. I will always wonder if I would have been able to keep that same fantastic attitude if I had lost limbs when I earned my two Purple Hearts. I do live by the adage "For those who fight for it, life has a flavor the protected will never know!"

LT Illingsworth, I salute you with respect. You are a fine example of a gentleman, and officer, and a soldier. The men and I were proud to serve with you and will never forget you.

Dale J. Belke; Co. B, 1/20<sup>th</sup> Inf.  
Brodhead, WI

#### Locator success

Gentlemen,

I am writing to you to express my deepest thanks for the fantastic Americal Division web site you maintain. I have recently begun a project to document my grandfather's experience with the Americal in World War II (he passed away in 1991) and have been aided immeasurably by your web site. I was able to track down someone whose father had served with my grandfather using your locator.

Daniel Behrens  
██

What Cheer, IA 50268

[IRS rules allow up to 15% of ADVA members can be non-veterans. Editor]

Imagine my immense shock and surprise when I found out that this gentleman even had photos and a wartime letter from my grandfather in his possession!

I really can't say enough about your site and the wonderful job it does of connecting and remembering the brave souls who fought with the Americal. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

David Colamaria  
(grandson of Tech Sgt Edward Monahan, G Co., 182nd, 1941-1945)

#### Associate members report

Dear sir,

Enclosed is an application to join such an elite group of men even if it is as an associate member. I want to tell you just how much I look forward to receiving the Americal Newsletter. Through the website I've found some guys that were in the same unit as my late husband, Cecil. He was with the 1/6<sup>th</sup> Inf., 198<sup>th</sup> LIB.

I want to say how much I appreciate being included with the Americal. I'm really looking forward to coming to the reunion in D.C. and meeting some of you. Can you believe it has been 20 years since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built? It will be something to see.

Mrs. Cecil L. Malone

Dear editor,

I am applying for membership in the ADVA even though I am not a Vietnam veteran. My brother, Tom Behrens, was killed on October 31, 1968 while serving with Co. D, 4/3<sup>rd</sup> Inf. Two years ago I began finding friends who served with him. I hoped to find one or two but so far I have found 16-18. I have joined forces with a girl in Mississippi who is doing the same for her father who also served with my brother. We hope to find as many guys as we can and help reunite them. Reunion plans are now in the works.

Daniel Behrens  
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What Cheer, IA 50268

**The Last Bird to Freedom – Vietnam – April 1975**  
This C-130A made history on April 29, 1975 as the last plane to escape Saigon during its final hours. It's a moving story of freedom.



#### The Final Quest To be Free

American veterans were privileged to take a tour of the Little Rock Air Force Base during the ADVA's 2003 Reunion. Sitting astride the main gate to the base -The Vandenberg Gate - is a C-130 aircraft, facing the main entrance, on guard as it were, for all to see. Its story is a story of a people yearning to be free.

This aircraft was the 126<sup>th</sup> C-130 Hercules produced by Lockheed and was accepted into the Air Force inventory on 23 August 1957, when it was assigned to the 314<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Wing, Stewart Air Force base, Tennessee. It was designated a C-130A, serial # 56-0518.

On 2 November 1972, this particular C-130 shown above was given to the South Vietnamese Air Force under the Military Assistance Program. She carried a trigger-controlled flare launcher to decoy surface-to-air missiles and was fitted with armor plating to protect crew, passengers and airframe from small arms fire.

On 29 April 1975, one day before the fall of Saigon, this C-130 made history when Major Phuong, a pilot in the South Vietnamese Air Force, flew her from Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam, to Utapao Royal Thai Air base, Thailand. On that morning, Viet Cong units had overrun parts of Saigon and the fall of Tan Son Nhut Air Base was imminent. With mortar rounds and machine gun fire at the front gate and over 100 aircraft destroyed, several soldiers, airmen, women and children rushed past two burning C-130's to climb aboard #518, "the last flyable Her to leave Saigon."

Without a copilot or flight engineer, Major Phuong urgently cranked engines, yelled to the back for a "copilot of some kind", and taxied for takeoff on the 10,000-foot runway.

As the C-130 taxied down the flightline, Major Phuong left the ramp door open, and kept jamming on the breaks, causing the people on board to be pushed forward, making room for more passengers on their way to freedom. Major Phuong attempted to takeoff at the 9,000-foot mark, but couldn't get off the ground. The aircraft rolled off the end of the runway onto the 1,000-foot overrun and finally became airborne, lugging herself upward in a shallow climb.

But the ordeal was not yet over. In the chaos major Phuong took off without a map. Utapao was normally a 1-hour, 20-minute flight. After 1-hours, 30-minutes over the Gulf of Siam, a C-7 pilot finally made his way to the flight deck from the cargo department with a map and began navigating, "starting with a 180-degree turn." They found Utapao, and Major Phuong made a soft, smooth touchdown after the 3-hour, 30-minute flight.

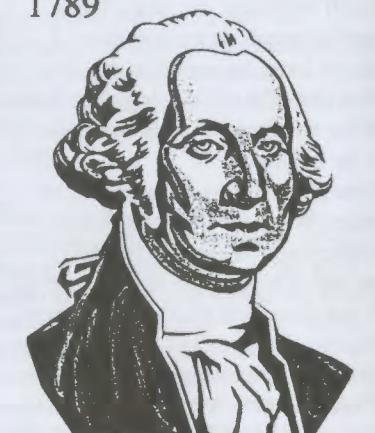
Eye witness accounts reported 437 adults and 15 children exited the aircraft for a total of 452 people seeking freedom, including 32 people on the flight deck. The takeoff weight was more than 20,000 pounds over the maximum allowable wartime weight.

Upon landing at Utapao, the US Air Force reclaimed #518. In 1976, she was assigned to the Oklahoma Air National Guard (ANG), where she served for 3 years. The aircraft then joined the ANG's 118<sup>th</sup> Tactical Airlift Group in Nashville, Tennessee in 1979 and was nicknamed "Airdawg." She flew with the Tennessee Guard for 10 years, from 1979 until her final flight to Little Rock Air Force base on 28 June 1989.

(This story courtesy of the staff at Little Rock Air Force Base, Little Rock, Arkansas).

***"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country."***

— General and President George Washington  
1789



#### Reunion reenlistment



Ensign Brian Gelnett, U.S. Navy, administers the reenlistment oath to Master Sergeant John (Dutch) DeGroot, U.S. Air Force Reserve. The ceremony took place at the 2003 ADVA reunion in Little Rock, AR. Looking on are John Mathews, Master of Ceremonies, and Nicky Bacon, MOH, Reunion Chairman.

DeGroot is the NCOIC of the Visual Information Section, 440<sup>th</sup> Communications Flight, 440<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing. He and his wife Jan reside in Mt. Prospect, IL.

#### Co. D, 5/46<sup>th</sup> Inf. Memorial



A memorial was erected in the company area to honor the members of Co. D, 5/46<sup>th</sup> Inf. who lost their lives while serving in Vietnam. As of December 1969 there were 18 names on the memorial. By March 1970 the unit had suffered a total of 32 KIAs.

Photo by Leo Pillow; Co. D, 5/46<sup>th</sup> Inf.  
Apple Valley, CA

#### Stamp honors Purple Heart

The U.S. Postal Service recently issued a 37 cent stamp depicting the Purple Heart. The stamp is available at most post offices but it is in limited supply.



#### "I am an American"

By MJ Martin © 9-2002

She was an Asian girl...cuttin' my hair. We were talkin', passin' time.  
I mentioned that I had once been there...one year of my life.  
She said, "Thank you for your bravery, Sir...and for your sacrifice.  
You may think sometime that no one cares...but that would not be right."

She said she cam to this country, she was five years old... in a family of nine.

She said they fled Siagon in fire and smoke...leavin' everything behind.

She said she ~~grew up~~ here in a different world...from anything she'd known.

She said her father and mother had raised her well...and they made this their home... Then she said:

(Chorus)

"I am an American! I love this land...Heart and Soul!  
I am an American! I would die for this country! I want you to know..."

What it means to me...simply to be free...to be what I can be...

I am an American! Oh, oh, oh, oh! I am an American! Oh, oh, oh, oh!"

She said her father had fought alongside the Americans...down around Cu Chi.

And when Saigon fell, his friends who were American... saved his family.

She said he came here, he worked hard as a fisherman...sent his kids to school.

She said he paid his debts. He's proud to be an American. His kids are all proud too... Then she said: (Chorus)

[Editor's note: Michael J. Martin is a professional musician and veteran of the 4/3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry, 11<sup>th</sup> LIB. Martin has provided entertainment at several ADVA reunions and appears across the country at concerts and special events.]

#### WWII Memorial dedication

The WWII Memorial in Washington, D.C. is scheduled for dedication on May 29, 2004. Thousands of Vietnam veterans are expected to be in attendance to honor their parents, aunts and uncles, and the many others who served during a time of great need. Watch for more details in the next newsletter.

## Lest We Forget ... Americal Vets Honor the Sacrifice of Their Fellow Soldiers

American veterans across the country honored those who fell during Memorial Day services and other special occasions during the spring and early summer. This article highlights the spirit and dedication which ADVA members continue to give so that Americans will never forget the sacrifice of those who went before us.

### Remembering in Washington, D.C.

During Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, when Memorial Day is celebrated, Colonel John Insani and PNC Ed Marsh placed wreaths at the Americal Division monument in Arlington National Cemetery and also one at the Korean War Memorial. They then attended the ceremonies at the Vietnam Wall in Washington and placed a large wreath at the Wall as part of the ceremony. In doing so they were duly recognized by the Master of Ceremonies and the crowd, as it was announced, "the wreath laying by members of the Americal Division."

### Remembering in Canton, Ohio

Ceremonies marking the anniversary of the death of 1LT Sharon Lane were held at Aultman Hospital, Canton, Ohio on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Aultman Hospital was where Sharon Lane received her nurses training prior to her entry into the Army. Captain Tamara S. Durham, US Army Nurse Corps on active duty was the featured speaker. The Vietnam Veterans of America Sharon Lane Chapter #199 sponsors the annual memorial service.

The memory of Sharon Lane was also marked on May 2<sup>nd</sup> with her induction into The Ohio Military Hall of Fame in Columbus, Ohio, the state capital. The Hall of Fame was founded in 2000 to honor Ohio military veterans who have been awarded medals for valor on the battlefield.



(Left) Kay Lane, mother of Americal nurse 1LT Sharon Lane, with Army Nurse CPT Tamara S. Durham, the guest speaker.

### Remembering At The North Wall – Windsor, Ontario – Canada

July 5<sup>th</sup> marked the 8<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of Canada's "North Wall"; the Vietnam Memorial in Windsor, Canada dedicated to Canadians killed in the Vietnam War while serving with the American military. This year marked a special occasion for Americal vets because a new name was added to the wall: **Warrant Officer Ralph Bigelow**, was shot down in his Helicopter on May 22, 1970, while assigned to the headquarters, 198<sup>th</sup> Brigade, Americal Division.

The story of Canada's "North wall" reflects the divisions of the Vietnam War itself and the determination of those who fought in it to not forget the sacrifice of those who fell. The monument was financed and built largely by the Michigan Association of Concerned Veterans (MACV). Americal veteran Bill Allen remembers, "no major Canadian City wanted to sponsor a memorial for Canadian citizens killed in the war. The city of Windsor, Ontario which was situated appropriately across the Detroit River from the USA, finally agreed and dedicated prime space on their Detroit River shoreline, next to the Ambassador Bridge connecting Windsor to Detroit."

Complicating the establishment of this memorial was the long history of contentiousness of the war itself and Canada's opposition to it. Canadian law prohibits its citizens from serving in the army of a foreign country fighting a "friendly" country. During the time of the war, Canada as did the United States, recognized North Vietnam as a separate state and, since it was not in a war with North Vietnam it was therefore a "friendly" country. Canadians wishing to serve in the US Military in Vietnam had to enlist from the US and provide a US home of record. Ralph Bigelow, for example, entered the Army from Delevan, New York which was his home at the time.

It is difficult to know how many Canadian citizens served in the US military in Vietnam but reliable estimates are in excess of 30,000. To-date 107 names had been placed on the North Wall; Ralph Bigelow's was #108. Canadian and American Vietnam vets continue to search the ranks of their KIA for additional names.

On 22 May 1970 Company C of the 1<sup>st</sup>/52<sup>nd</sup> infantry battalion was surrounded by the NVA in the Ashau Valley and the company commander called for a lift for the company forward observer, 2LT Neil B. Hayes and another artillery officer 1LT John Kaugers, Delta Battery, 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> Artillery. Ralph accepted the assignment and flew his LOH to the prepared landing zone (LZ) which was in a stand of trees. The LZ was achieved by blowing a hole in the forest a little wider than the radius of the helicopter blades. Ralph hovered into the LZ and picked up the two officers and began his ascent.

When Bigelow cleared the top of the trees a sniper opened up on the aircraft causing it to plummet to the ground to the same area it lifted off from. When it crashed to the ground it burst into flames. Company personnel raced to the aircraft to rescue the men but the deadly fire took its toll.

**WO1 Ralph Bigelow's** body was taken to the Graves Registration Point in Chu Lai. His cause of Death was 3<sup>rd</sup> degree thermal burns over 100% of his body. 2LT Neil Hayes died before reaching the Chu Lai base. 1LT John Kaugers was medevaced to the 91<sup>st</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai suffering from 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> degree wounds and amputation of his left leg. He died shortly after. Kaugers, Bigelow and Hayes are listed as the 3,242<sup>th</sup>, 3,243<sup>th</sup> and 3,244<sup>th</sup> casualties of the Americal Division in Vietnam.

By a sad fate of irony, Ralph's brother Wayne, who was a team leader in his engineer company, was also in the valley that day, clearing mines with his bulldozer and was a witness to the whole sad event. He did not realize at the time his brother was piloting the helicopter, which went down. Wayne Bigelow would escort his brothers' body home.

Each year since the North Wall was dedicated, Americal Division veterans have been present at the annual memorial service, offering their support, a memorial wreath and ... their memories. That tradition will continue as we remember our northern neighbors who saw a cause and a duty and gave of themselves even though it was not required. As Ed Johnson, a Vietnam vet from Michigan and one of the original organizers to build the Wall in Windsor reflects, "I often wonder how many American mothers son's came home from Vietnam because a Canadian either gave his life or saved a life through some heroic act. We as Americans should always be in their debt for what they did."



(Above) WO1 Ralph Bigelow in his UH-1H, "Canadian Club". (Lower left) Left to right: Americal Vet Bill Allen with Wayne Bigelow and Karen Bigelow, at the dedication of their brothers name to the North Wall. (Lower right) The North Wall, Windsor Canada, July 5<sup>th</sup> 2003.

Contributing Editors Note: Grateful appreciation is acknowledged to Bill Allen, Ken Bigelow, Gary Noller and Paul Stiff for their contributions to this article.



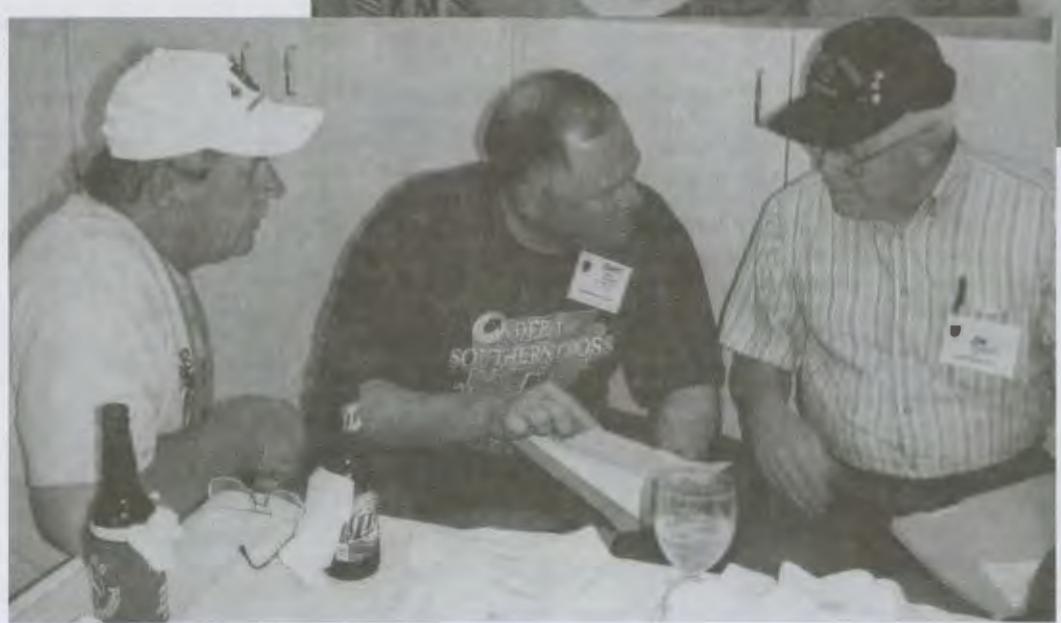
Ralph Bigelow was one of four brothers, all Canadians by birth, who joined the US Army and volunteered for service in Vietnam. The oldest was Wayne, second oldest Ralph, then Jimmy and Ken. Three received orders to go: Ralph, Wayne and Ken. Ken's orders were rescinded because Ralph and Wayne were in Vietnam. He remained stateside and Jimmy was sent to Germany. The Bigelows also include two sisters, Karen and Mary, both born in the US and therefore US Citizens. Ralph went to helicopter flight school at Fort Wolters, Texas and Fort Rucker, Alabama, graduating in June 1969. He arrived in Vietnam in July and was assigned to the Americal Divisions' 176<sup>th</sup> Assault Helicopter Company.

Ralph's brother, Wayne Bigelow, followed him to the Americal in August 1969 and was assigned to the engineers located on LZ Bayonet. Ralph received his Aircraft Commander rating in October 1969 and christened his aircraft "Canadian Club". He flew UH-1H's ("slick's") for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon of the 176<sup>th</sup> until he was offered a transition course to fly Light Observation Helicopters (LOH) OH6 "Cayuse" in January 1970, which he accepted. Since there was a shortage of pilots Ralph was temporarily assigned to the Headquarters Company of the 198<sup>th</sup> Brigade Aviation Section intermittently until he was permanently assigned in April 1970. His call sign was "Slow Motion 00".

## 2003 National Reunion Highlights -- Little Rock, Arkansas



(Left) REUNION COMMITTEE:  
Left to right: Tamera Bacon, wife of Nick Bacon, Bill Bacon, Cameron Baird - South Midwest Region Commander and Nick Bacon, (MOH) and Committee Chair.



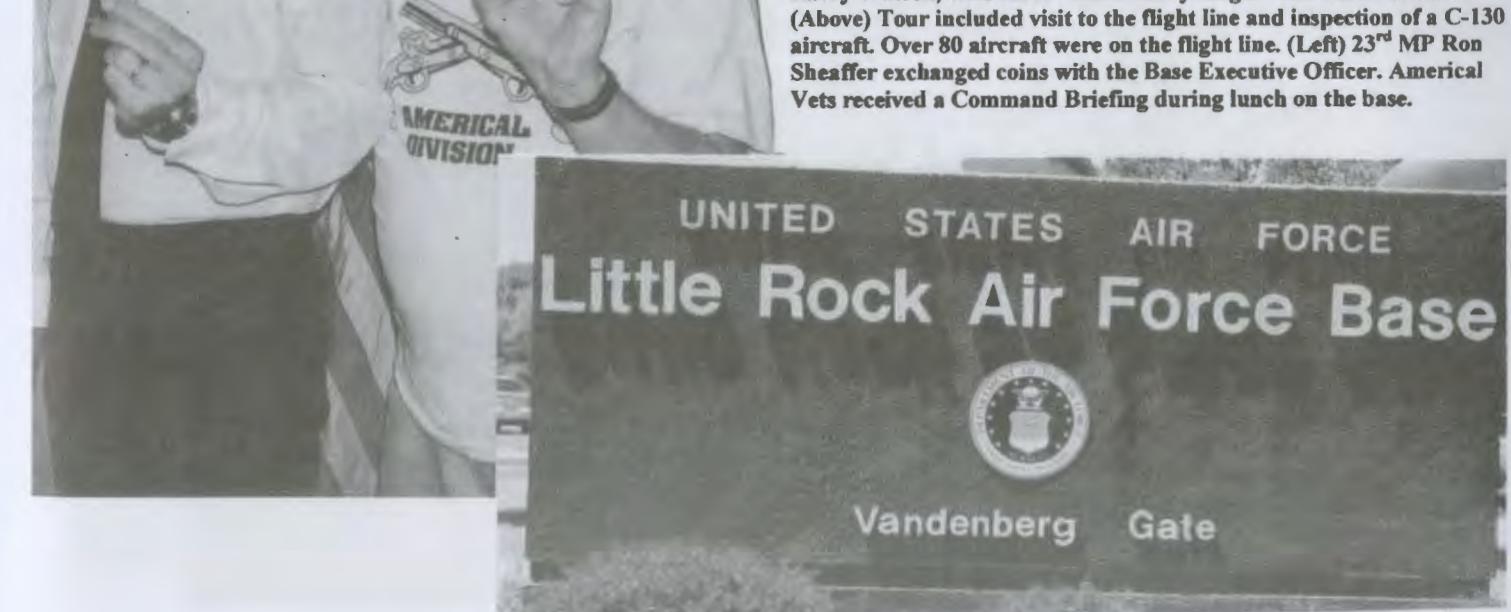
(Left) Left to Right: PNC Ron Ellis, PNC Gary Noller and Newsletter Editor-In-Chief Jim Buckle confer with each other.



FRIDAY TOUR: LITTLE ROCK AIR FORCE BASE:  
VIP treatment provided by the US Air Force. Each bus had three Air Force Officers as tour guides. Little Rock AF Base is the key base in the Air Force for C-130 aircraft training and doctrine.

(Top photo) Air Force officer guides pose for photo with Americal vets (left to right) Vic Kornaski, Jerry "Doc" Anderson, Venice Owens and Larry Watson, with three "somewhat younger" Air Force officers.

(Above) Tour included visit to the flight line and inspection of a C-130 aircraft. Over 80 aircraft were on the flight line. (Left) 23rd MP Ron Sheaffer exchanged coins with the Base Executive Officer. Americal Vets received a Command Briefing during lunch on the base.





**FRIDAY NIGHT FISH FRY & ENTERTAINMENT:**  
A great time at the River Market Pavilion! Fish fry included fried catfish, chicken, fry's, hush puppies and cole slaw. (Above) 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Dave Navy joins the band to sing patriotic tunes. (Below) Jazz Band entertained while vets ate and danced in the pavilion overlooking the Arkansas River.



**SATURDAY NIGHT ANNUAL BANQUET:**  
(Above) Members of the OLD GUARD pose for a group photo. All World War II vets who attended the reunion were presented with Americal coins. (Center) On the left, Darla Crabtree from the Little Rock Veterans Administration office sings a patriotic song she wrote after the tragedy of 9/11. On the right, Americal vet Michael Martin provides entertainment. To the left are fellow vets who provided cadence in one of his songs. (Below) Missing Man table was set for comrades who never returned.

**Ken Musselmann, married at age 19 and drafted at 21, sought to serve his Vietnam tour and return to his wife to build a life together. He returned – with no legs – and together they built a life of love and service.**

David W. Taylor

#### An Early Love

Ken Musselmann and Diane Crowell met in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade in Pico Rivera, California. From the moment they met Diane was stuck on Ken but his interests moved to other girlfriends. Ken remembers those early years of puppy love; "I was slow to warm up to Diane. She invited me to a party in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and I brought another date". Diane was persistent to make things work with this young man she admired, a trait that would serve her well throughout her life. Ken recalls, "even though we knew each other in High School we didn't start dating until our senior year. I was a football player and she was a cheerleader. We married two years later in 1966, when we were both 19".

Ken went to college and applied to be a police officer with the Los Angeles Police Department. He passed all the tests and waited for the final physical test. "I was quite sure I would pass and be selected for the Police Academy" he remembers, "so I decided not to go to school during the Spring 1967 semester to make some extra money". But since he was no longer a full-time student, while waiting for his appointment to the academy during the summer, he was drafted in August and entered the Army September 20, 1967, the day after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

#### In-Country

Draftees in Southern California were typically sent to Fort Ord for their Basic Training, so Diane looked forward to seeing Ken on a regular basis. This false assumption would be their first introduction to "Army logic". While at the reception center the first 20 recruits (of which Ken was one) were told, "you're going to Fort Bliss Texas". After Basic at Ft. Bliss and Infantry AIT at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, Ken volunteered for the NCO School at Ft. Benning, Georgia, where he graduated in May 1968. From there it was back to Ft. Polk as a drill instructor for a AIT cycle, then orders for Vietnam as an individual replacement, where he arrived in late August.

After Ken left for Vietnam Diane went back to her home in Whittier. She recalls, "back at that time not many of our friends went into military service but that's what happened to us. Our friends were very supportive of Ken. I became increasingly upset with the protestors. Our lives had been interrupted so Ken could fight to protect their freedom". Sergeant (E-5) Ken Musselmann was assigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, Company B, 5<sup>th</sup>/46<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, 198<sup>th</sup> Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. Although qualified to take over a squad, company SOP had him first paired with

## Coming Home ... 1969

another squad leader with in-country experience. From September to December 1968 he operated off of LZ Gator, the battalions base camp, for missions lasting 3-4 days to 2 weeks. In November he was given his own squad in the second platoon. The next month his platoon sergeant selected him for sniper duties with a specially modified M14 because of his Expert qualification with the M14 stateside. This was part of the Army-wide test program in Vietnam to look at the effectiveness of sniper operations. On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1969 Sgt. Musselman went out on a series of Special Long Range Patrols (SLRP's) which the battalion used in all its line companies.



Diane and Sgt. Ken Musselmann  
Fort Benning, Georgia – May 1968

#### Hell on a Hill

Ken's SLP team met up with his company on the morning of January 11<sup>th</sup>. At that time his battalion was heavily engaged in Operation Russell Beach, an Army/Marine Corps and ARVN joint operation on the Batangan Peninsula, just south of Chu Lai, to root out the 48<sup>th</sup> Viet Cong Battalion and pacify the area. The peninsula was notorious for mines and booby-traps.

Ken knew it would be a short operation for him. The next day he was scheduled to be pulled out of the field for R&R and meet Diane in Hawaii.

At 1700 hours Company B was hit with an enemy mortar round which wounded several soldiers. After a dustoff, and conscious that the enemy had them zeroed in, the company moved to higher ground for a night position. Ken's squad was called to the front to run point. Once they reached the top of a hill he

began placing his men out for the night. He saw a punji pit and called his Platoon Sergeant to have a look. That moment is forever etched on his mind; "one of us stepped on a mine next to the pit. I don't know who, but we both got hit and both of us ended up losing both of our legs." Soon after the explosion the company was engaged in a big firefight and, in the process, Company B soldiers hit two more mines. Ken remembers, "we were all wounded on the hill for 45 minutes to an hour, the dustoff's were taking fire and didn't want to land. I remember just laying there, awake most of the time ... the morphine had taken over."

Finally, with the help from helicopter gunships and artillery, a dustoff was made and the wounded were taken to the 312<sup>th</sup> Evacuation Hospital in Chu Lai. It had been a bad day for Company B. Seven men had been wounded from the mortar round and four wounded from mines on the hill. Two of the soldiers, including a platoon leader, died at the hospital.

The next morning after surgery (legs removed, one above the knee and one below the knee), Ken wrote a letter home to Diane on Red Cross stationary. The following day he was evacuated to Camp Zama, Japan. Diane learned of his wound from Ken's father, who had been home when his telegram arrived. "The telegram noted his wounds were serious", Diane remembers, "but Ken's father, who was laid-back like Ken, took the fact that since he was alive he would be OK. He didn't read, or pushed out of his mind the lines which read 'traumatic amputation of both legs' and 'concern for his life'. I didn't find out for two more days that he was alive until I received a telegram he was in Camp Zama, Japan. I called Camp Zama and was told he was in surgery. I was told that he had also been shot in the arm. This happened while he was lying wounded in the grass from the mine and the firefight was raging".

Diane's first words with Ken after surgery remains in her mind and reflects their relationship with each other and their attitude about life: "When I finally got him on the phone I asked, 'can we still have kids?' His response was typical of Kenny. He replied, 'well ... I can ... can you?' My only feeling at the time was, 'if he is alive then we're OK' All of us, myself and his parents decided to take our 'Q's' from him ... but he never was bitter, never depressed. Now that I'm the parent of a grown son I can reflect in retrospect that Kenny's parents handled it quite well".

#### Coming Home – 1969

After a little over a week at Camp Zama, Ken was flown to California. He was told, "you're going to Letterman Army Hospital in San Francisco, since you are from California". Ken thought on his way home, "great, this will mean easy travel for Diane to see me in the hospital". He had forgotten his earlier lesson in "Army logic". When the plane landed it was Déjà Vu all over again. Before he was moved off the aircraft the doors were closed. "You didn't get off because the ward is full" he was told. "You're going to William Beaumont Hospital at Ft. Bliss, Texas".

Diane and Ken's parents drove to Texas the weekend after he arrived. "When we arrived in his ward", Diane recalls, "we didn't even recognize him. He was totally thin, had a shaved head, sat in a WWII wooden wheel chair and had scars and bandages all over the place". Ken acknowledges "when I went to Vietnam I was 165 lbs. By the time I was wounded I was down to 140 lbs. And I lost more weight in the hospital because I ate very little. I had to call out to them before they recognized me."

After six weeks at Ft. Bliss, Ken was to be discharged from the Army and sent to the Veterans Administration (VA) hospital in Long Beach, California for follow-up care. "They told me I needed one more operation in a couple months ... that I could stay at the VA hospital or go home. I replied, 'where's the door'".

Ken remembers, "when I was ready to check out at Ft. Bliss a Sergeant told me, 'you can't leave the Army without all the clothes you are entitled to'. So they took me to the supply room in a wheel chair, with a hospital gown on me, and issued me a hat, shirt, pants, etc. The Sergeant asked me, 'what size boots & shoes do you wear?' I replied '... ah, I don't think I need boots or shoes'. The Sergeant replied, 'Sergeant, you're not leaving the Army without boots and shoes'. I still have them".

Diane's excitement about Ken's return to home was soon dampened. She remembers, "I called the Los Alamitos Naval Air Station where he would arrive, to find out his flight number, what time he arrived, where I could meet him, etc. They told me, 'you cannot be at Los Alamitos to meet your husband ... because there are protestors at the gates'".

#### Getting On With Life – And Service

Ken Musselmann started his home leave and VA rehabilitation in March 1969, with his official discharge from the Army in May. "The VA made my first set of legs in early June and I recuperated the rest of the summer of 1969" he recalls. "I went back to college in January 1970 and earned a Bachelor's of



Diane and Ken Musselmann in their 1962 Corvette; Yuma, Arizona Car Show, March 2002

Science degree in Operations Management. I got a job at the Navy Weapons Station in Seal Beach, California as a computer programmer". In 1974 Ken became very

active with the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) in California. In 1980 he was elected State Commander and in 1986-1987 was elected National Commander for the DAV, and took a leave of absence from his Navy job for that year. Two years later he was asked to become the California DAV State Adjutant, a full-time position and left his Navy job, even though he was a Division Manager. He has no regrets. "I am glad I did it because it has allowed me to work with veterans and veterans issues on a daily basis".

Ken and Diane have two children, a daughter Kenna, who is now 33, married with two children and an executive at the Wells Fargo Bank and a son, Matthew, who is now 30, married and a Cadet at the California Highway Patrol Academy. Raising their children had its challenges like other parents, but with some special twists. Diane recalled, "Matthew in Kindergarten had a period each day where they shared things. He told his teacher and the class, 'my daddy takes his legs off when he goes to bed'. The teacher called me and said, 'I had to talk to your son Matthew because he was telling some whopping lies'. There was silence at the other end of the line when I said; 'well ... that's not a lie ... it's true'. She apologized to our son and the class the next day".

Ken and Diane still water ski and Ken never fails to raise a few eyebrows when he ski's along with no legs. They also continue their love of camping and putting family first in all things. Ken also spends time with his two other passions, restoring old cars and antique motor cycles. Diane looks back at their life together, which began as a childhood romance; "Kenny is no different now than he was before he went to Vietnam. He is never depressed or bitter. He was always confident everything would be fine ... that we'll work things out. He's still the same guy I fell in love with at age 11 in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade".

Ken reflects back on their child raising years: "The high level of my amputation never made it easy to walk with artificial legs. Usually I don't use one of them. But when my daughter was young I always told her I would walk her down the aisle when she got married.

**Ken and Diane Musselmann reside in Los Alamitos, California.**

## Proudly Served! The 23<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Company

No other company was more widely dispersed and multi-tasked than the Americal's combat MP's

David W. Taylor

### More than Policemen

The 16-foot "Boston Whaler" slowly prowled the An Tan and Tra Bong river complexes, setting up floating ambushes to catch unwary Viet Cong sampans. Dubbed "River Rats", the soldiers inside the boat watched the riverbanks warily, careful they didn't become the hunted instead of the hunter. One soldier sported a steel helmet that had a large dent in it, a souvenir from an enemy AK-47 round during a previous firefight from the riverbank. Each boat was outfitted with 80 and 85-horsepower motors, M-60 machine guns, an M-79 grenade launcher, two M-72 anti-tank weapons, hand grenades and individual M-16 rifles. They were ready.

Further north, soldiers from the same company patrolled 32 miles of highway #1, from Quang Ngai in the south to Tam Ky in the north, and all towns, villages and hamlets in-between. Their quarter-ton gun jeeps with specially mounted machine guns may not have been enough if hard hit in an ambush, but it's all they had. The floors of the jeeps were covered with sandbags to hopefully protect legs from being blown-off should the jeeps cross a command-detonated mine.

Still further north two other soldiers from the same unit landed by helicopter to the scene of a savage firefight, to take charge of 18 Viet Cong prisoners. The soldiers of this company manned bunker defenses, guarded bridges, searched for VC infiltrators, raided remote areas for illegal drugs and contraband, as well as stragglers and AWOL's. And some ... paid the ultimate price of a warrior. These were men who were a new kind of soldier in a new kind of war: the combat military police of the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company, Americal Division.

### A Proud History

The roots of the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company go deep with the Americal Division. Constituted April 3, 1943 as the Military Police Platoon, Americal Division, it was activated on May 1, 1943 in New Caledonia, South Pacific.

Inactivated in December 1945 at the conclusion of World War II, it was activated again in December 1954 to serve with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division at Fort Amador, Canal Zone until its inactivation in April 1956. In April 1967, with the advent of Task Force Oregon in Vietnam, half of the 148<sup>th</sup> platoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> MP Brigade and half of the 544<sup>th</sup> platoon of the 196<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade came together as the MP Platoon in support of the task force.

Operational control of this MP platoon came under the Provost Marshall of the task force. This consolidated platoon eventually became the 23<sup>rd</sup> Military Police Company with the changeover from Task Force Oregon to the activation of the Americal Division. This



23<sup>rd</sup> MP's Standing Inspection at Guard Mount – Americal Division, Chu Lai  
Photo courtesy of 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Web Site

company would always be spread thin serving throughout the division's area of operations (AO).

### Coming Together – Vietnam

Major Warren Lucas was the Deputy Provost Marshall of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division in Vietnam when he was called to Saigon in the spring of 1967 to plan for the MP assets of a new task force being formed, called "Oregon". By the summer he was heading north to Chu Lai to begin the process of assuming control of Provost Marshall (PM) and military police duties in this large operational base on the coast, soon to become the headquarters, Americal Division. "The biggest problem we faced", he recalls, "was understanding what to do. Each component in Chu Lai, the Air Force, Navy, Marines and Sea Bees had their own security element. But within one month it was under Americal Division control".

Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Lucas focused on three primary areas: First, coordinating with the separate brigades who had their own PM with the rank of Major, and a dedicated MP platoon ("this was my biggest focus"). Second, providing security for the entire Chu Lai base perimeter, both land and seaside and operation of the American POW camp. "My particular emphasis was on keeping the Vietnamese that were allowed on base from stealing everything that they could get their hands on" and third, coordination with local police to control the interface of the soldiers with the civilian population.

Captain George "Ron" Sunderland assumed command as the first 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company Commander, on 27 December 1967 and

reported to the Division PM. "At that time we operated under a modified TO&E" he recalls. "I had two line platoons, a security platoon and a headquarters section. Even though it wasn't according to MP doctrine, we used the security platoon at the POW cage. The two line platoons performed security around the division Tactical Operations Center (TOC), the general's quarters, discipline law & order duties, front gate security, etc. Within a couple days we also got the commitment to run daily convoys north to LZ Baldy and occasionally south to Qui Nhon".

Sunderland's biggest responsibility outside Chu Lai was the daily convoys, both north and south. He recalls, "After we started the convoys we soon got enough jeeps but I wanted them modified. We moved the M-60 machinegun mount back further so we could get more traverse on the gun. We took out the windshields and put a rectangular "flower box" across the front, with sandbags inside it and we put wire cutters on the front of the jeeps. We then got some 106 Recoilless Rifle jeeps from some infantry outfit turning them in and put the 106's in our supply room."

Sunderland's previous MP Company Command in Germany came in handy with the heavy maintenance requirement for the jeeps. "We found out early on we were wearing out those jeeps quickly. Those vehicles were eaten up because of the slow speeds, low gear driving, and heavy weights with the gun mounts, sand bags on the floors, etc. We were wrecking jeep transmissions with less than a thousand miles on them. With the beating the jeeps were taking we were changing oil about

### Forward ... With the Grunts

Roy Dolgos was assigned as a 196<sup>th</sup> Brigade MP when Task Force Oregon was formed. He recalls, "The 196<sup>th</sup> would take two MP's and send them to each line battalion to take care of POW's and informants captured in the field. At that time we were usually in the field for one-two weeks at a time with the grunts, usually on company size operations. On one operation we captured an informant late in the day. The company CO expected to get mortared that night. He told me 'Don't let him escape' so I placed my handcuffs, one on his wrist and one on mine. That night we got mortared and I ran to the right and he ran to the left. This happened 2-3 times like a Laurel & Hardy movie, until I got control of him in the dark and he went my way".

Regarding POW control in those early days Sunderland reflects, "We never had any escapes during my tenure (one or two attempts) and by and large the prisoners were happy to be under US control. I remember two prisoners though: One was an NVA and the other a VC, who were both witnesses to an alleged war crimes case. We called one "Twiggy" and the other "Horseface". "Twiggy" was so named because he had had malaria and was nothing but skin and bones. He became our bartender at the MP Club. "Horseface" was so named because he had been smashed in the face with the butt-end of an M-16. We used him as our 'Straw Boss' to supervise the prisoner details cleaning the area".

SFC William McMinn started his tour in May 1968 as the Operations Sergeant for the Division PM and witnessed the transition that finally brought the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company together division-wide. By late 1968 the brigade MP platoons reported to the division MP Company and the division PM oversaw the entire Americal. McMinn remembers, "On Chu Lai we didn't know who the enemy was ... we had so many Vietnamese working on the base. We had to watch them carefully. I do remember this ... we had a lot of enlisted draftees but overall they were just as good as the RA's. They were a great group of soldiers".

"River Rats" – Patrolling the Water Ways

As Operations Sergeant McMinn spent an inordinate amount of time on vehicle accidents within the Chu Lai base. "I remember we had an APC hauling a tank and the APC lost its breaks, crashing into a 1/2 ton truck which was bringing some new soldiers out of Combat Center. About eight were killed. There were lots of stolen vehicles... units trying to get more than they were authorized. We even had marines stealing Army jeeps even though they were an entirely different configuration. We collected so many stolen vehicles our compound looked like a used-car lot."

### Organization: 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company by late 1968

- Headquarters (Chu Lai)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon – 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade (Duc Pho)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon – 196<sup>th</sup> Brigade (LZ Baldy & Hawk Hill)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Platoon – 198<sup>th</sup> Brigade (LZ Bayonet)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Platoon – Line MP's (Chu Lai)
- 5<sup>th</sup> Platoon – Security Platoon in Chu Lai (POW, PX, Division TOC)
- HQ Platoon – Chu Lai (Headquarters, Motor Pool, etc.)

especially the M-60 being operated by Bob Little. They managed to blow up the other bridge the infantry guarded. We had no place to run. I killed three or four of them in the ground attack. I had my eardrums perforated by a rocket that exploded. The attack lasted a couple of hours and afterward Bob stood up in the bunker and saw that a rocket had hit only about a foot above his head. The next day we found a few bodies around the area. We held the bridge."

Jerold "Jerry" Lear also patrolled the waters, but south of the Chu Lai Base in the forbidding complex of the Tra Bong River Basin. An incident in early May 1968 reflects the treacherous conditions river rats on the Tra Bong were subjected to. Lear relates how, "It was a beautiful day, we were happy for daylight because the ARVN had shot at us the previous night while we were on the river in ambush. We had to send up flares and give our position away. We always traveled in two boats; each boat had two MP's, two infantrymen and an interpreter. Some places on the river were only 6-8 feet wide where we could get our boats through because of sandbars. We were canalized and sitting ducks. We were trying to wind our way through one of these when the VC opened up on us from a machinegun nest. By targeting us in that close space all hell broke loose. Three of us were hit; Brent Smith was the worst, getting hit 3-4 times. With the machine guns from both boats directing fires we finally masked the fires of the VC. We got on the other side of the channel and called in a medevac. Brent was bad ... I never saw so much blood. When we got him on the medevac he was face down but I know he was alive. We heard he had been sent to Okinawa. Three months later he came back walking into our base camp. We thought he was crazy. He said, 'I have no one at home, my friends are here.' That guy had balls. He survived the rest of his tour".

### Convoy Duty: Down "Mine Alley"

From the southern end of the division's AO to its northern limits, possibly the most dangerous duty for 23<sup>rd</sup> MP's was convoy duty. No where was that more evident than Highway 535 in the 196<sup>th</sup> Brigade AO.

Cordie Croft remembers the area well: "I arrived in Vietnam in early March 1969. I was fortunate to have Gary Akers, a guy with experience, break me in on how to do convoy runs. The platoon did a lot of them to LZ Ross, which was south and west of LZ Baldy where we were located. Ross was a rearming and refueling point for the Hiep Duc campaign and also a place for refugees to gather. So there was a continual need to run resupply convoys to it. The lead MP vehicle called the checkpoints into the battalion Tactical Operations Center, and then the trail vehicle would call a "touchdown" when they passed through the gate at LZ Ross. Convoys were made up of JP3 tankers, mogas, and small arms ammo up to 8" shells, food and personnel.

"Convoy duty was dangerous. We constantly lost vehicles. If your vehicle hit a mine you did your best to drive it off the road. In the convoy we had the pressure truck, a 5-ton truck with lots of steel plate and sandbags and with extended steering and brake/clutch, etc. so that the driver could sit up inside the truck bed. In the middle of the convoy we had a Quad .50 caliber machine gun truck. Our rules of engagement were to fire on anything that shot at you or looked suspicious, and to keep the convoy moving."

Samuel "Varn" Varney, another 196<sup>th</sup> MP recalls "The most dangerous duty we had was the convoy on Highway 535. It was better known as 'mine alley'. The Americal lost some 70 vehicles from January to August 1969. The convoy to LZ Ross passed through a village called Que Son. This ville was known to be 90% or more VC or VC Sympathizers".

On March 26, 1969 another convoy was readied to make the hazardous trip from LZ Baldy to LZ Ross. MP Jerry Widiker will never forget the day. "I was slated for convoy duty that day. The duty roster listed Bob Corey and I in the lead vehicle. He was the driver and I was on the M-60. Two months earlier I wouldn't have been fazed by this assignment, but ever since Tet 1969 the convoy route had been filled with mines. Bill Fenton, an MP who had worked in the PW cage, informed me that he too would be making the trip. Bill and our jeep mechanic, Gene Zugelter, who had never been out on the road before, but had volunteered for this convoy, had to transport ten Vietnamese prisoners to Ross.

"Bill and Gene had borrowed a 2 1/2 ton truck from our artillery unit, picked up the ten prisoners and were ready to go. As we left the platoon area, Bill yelled to a few buddies standing outside our tent, 'Well, I'm gonna go out and get my shit blown away'. As we left out the west gate of Baldy, Corey and I were in the lead vehicle with Bill and Gene in the truck right behind us. About twenty vehicles trailed them.

"We started down 'Graveyard Alley', a 200 or 300 meter stretch of road so named because it had been the scene of all but two of the 35 mine ambushes during the past six weeks. I turned and looked at the deuce-and-a-half, which was about 30 yards behind us. Gene and Bill looked as tight as I was. I stuck up my middle finger and waved it at them in an attempt to ease some of the tension. Bill quickly returned my signal.

Widiker continues, "we got half way through the critical stretch when it happened. The truck went over a command-detonated mine. Though Corey and I was a safe distance away we were pelted with fragments of rock and metal. Corey stopped instantly and radioed for a Medevac. I grabbed my M-16 and headed back towards the truck. The prisoners were sprawled out on and off the road groaning and crying. Several severed body parts were lying among them. I gutted the courage to look for



River Rat Base Camp at the An Tan Village with a 23<sup>rd</sup> MP. The An Tan River is in the background. Photo courtesy of Tom Brown.

Gene and Bill. Gene was lying about 100 feet off the road. Bill, who was lighter and absorbed more of the impact, was thrown an additional 50 feet. When I got to Gene he was unconscious but groaning. I looked out at Bill who didn't appear to be as badly wounded as Gene. A medic arrived within seconds and began administering first aid to Bill.

"I stayed with Gene and tried to do as much as I could. I turned his head to the side and scraped all the blood and broken teeth from his mouth so he wouldn't choke. His right leg was badly wounded around the knee. I tied my shirt around the wound to slow the bleeding and kept clearing his mouth until the Medevac arrived about fifteen minutes after the blast. As we loaded Gene on the chopper Bill was already on board. One look at him and the apparent absence of wounds assured me that he would make it. Gene appeared very critical."

After returning the convoy back to Baldy the MP's learned the hard news. Gene Zugelter, although critically wounded, would survive. Bill Fenton had caught a large piece of shrapnel in his chest that killed him almost instantly. On April 30<sup>th</sup> "Varn" Varney was on another convoy on Highway 535 when an 8" self-propelled artillery piece hit a mine. He remembers vividly, "fourteen men died on this vehicle, climbing out of it with fire all over their clothes. There were five crewmen and nine ARVN passengers hitching a ride back to Ross. I'll never forget the explosion - the fireball and the cloud of black smoke rising..."

Further south in the spring of 1969, 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade MP's were supporting a convoy from

Sa Huynh to Duc Pho along Highway 1. The last vehicle, acting as rear security, hit a mine. The MP machine gunner, SP4 Peter Jewell was thrown from the jeep. The driver stayed with the damaged jeep as it swerved off the road. Although wounded Jewell low crawled 100 yards to his jeep and began firing his machinegun against enemy fire coming from both sides of the road. He recalls, "that low crawl back to the jeep seemed like an eternity. I always wanted to have lots of ammunition with me at all times and there I was, wounded, away from my gun with only a side-arm." In short order two armored personnel carriers arrived from E Troop, 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry to turn the tide. Jewell was promoted to Sergeant the next day and subsequently awarded a Bronze Star for Valor.

#### From Civic Action to Confiscation

23<sup>rd</sup> MP's were tasked with a myriad of duties. Working with South Vietnamese police, the MP's habitually set up roadblocks to stem the flow of black market goods. When checkpoints were set up on Highway 1 near Quang Ngai City in the summer of 1969, about one in every five vehicles was found to be carrying illegal goods. After a couple days the Americans and Vietnamese would move to other roads and catch traffickers trying to detour the roadblocks.

South Vietnamese police also worked with the MP's in the field. In August 1968 a platoon of the Vietnamese National Police Field Force (NPFF) arrived in Duc Pho to work with MP's and infantry in the areas of demolition, psychological warfare, field interrogation teams, intelligence and special search squads.

Working closely with Vietnamese civilians put MP's in unique situations that required these young soldiers to have a discerning maturity beyond their years. "Civilians" could be Viet Cong, black marketers or friendly villagers in support of the government. In July 1968 quick thinking by a 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon MP near Sa Huynh saved a woman's life. Villagers brought him to a woman who had a deep gash in her head. Her vein was broken and she had a sandbag tied around her head to stop the bleeding. He kept her from bleeding to death and took her to a nearby aid station.

#### Facing the Challenge in a No Win War

As the war began drawing to a close with Vietnamization and the slow departure of American units in 1970-1971, the Discipline, Law and Order function of the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company's role became critically important. John Baky was assigned to the company in that time frame in a number of capacities: OIC of the POW cage, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Leader and Company Executive Officer. He recalls, "The morale started sliding when I got there ... everyone from a newly assigned private to a senior company commander had this unmistakable sense we weren't in it to win ... just to figure how do we get out. People were pissed off they could get killed by mortars or rockets for no good purpose. We weren't going to win or couldn't win but yet couldn't get out."

Adding to this growing tension were the numerous accidents occurring with GI's driving at high speeds to avoid mines but hitting civilians. This reached the height of crisis when a GI killed a pedestrian near Quang Ngai City. MP's arrived to restore some order. The civilians put a sheet on an MP jeep and used it as an altar for the body. Baky remembers, "The civilians surrounded the convoy so it could not move. They knew a Civil Affairs rep would fly in to pay off the villagers. Vietnamese soldiers (ARVN) started to hang around to see what they could get, siding with the villagers. My men, trying to restore order were agitated and started to argue with the ARVN. I was proud of how much crap my men took that day. They could have unloaded on the ARVN."

In an effort to stem the high rate of accidents MP's went to the air, flying in Light Observation Helicopters (LOH) and accurately estimating the speed of trucks on Highway 1. Recalls Baky, "We flew in the LOH's and would land on the highway, stop the truck and give them a ticket. We gave a lot of tickets and lowered the number of accidents. But it didn't help the morale of those drivers trying to do their job. And we agreed with them."

Dale Meisel served with the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP's in the same time frame, as 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon Leader in Duc Pho and then Division Provost Marshall Operations Officer. "The Vietnamese sensed we were pulling out and one of our duties was to set a payment schedule for everything, from a pig being killed, to a Moped damaged, etc. This became a rather contentious issue with the Vietnamese." When he was a platoon

leader, in an effort to stem black market activities, the military across Vietnam changed the Military Payment Certificates (MPC). "We had a lock down at the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade base in Duc Pho", he recalls. "We prohibited all movement - in and out - until the currency changeover was completed. It was a huge headache logically. I remember the Koreans ran the PX Concessions in Duc Pho and elsewhere. They were only supposed to have X amount of money and they had much more. They got caught short with the MPC change-over."

Captain Gary Lundgren was the last Commander of the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company - Vietnam. He was assigned in Chu Lai for approximately five months before the division base was moved to Danang after a hurricane devastated the Chu Lai complex. Lundgren remembers, "At 24 I was a very young Captain but I had a very experienced First Sergeant, John Skittlethorpe (now deceased) who was in his 50's and the senior E-8 in the MP Corps. Every other word out of his mouth was a four-letter word but he ran a tight ship. Drugs were rampant at the time but it was not a big issue in the company. We were a tight group."

Lundgren continues, "When we moved to Danang and the pull-out was in full swing I continually preached esprit de corps. I told my men 'do your job professionally - keep it consistent.' One of our tasks was guarding the main gate in Danang near Freedom Hill. ID cards were very important. One of my men stopped a general at the gate who didn't have his ID card. The general was quick to point out his position to my sentry. The MP replied, 'sir, don't confuse your rank with my authority.' Needless to say the Provost Marshall and me had a 20-minute audience with the general hearing about rank and authority. But I gave my sentry an attaboy."

True to the diverse nature of the 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Company serving throughout the Americal's area of operations, when the final ceremony was held in Danang to retire the division colors, Lundgren's 23<sup>rd</sup> MP's were there ... standing tall ... and proudly serving.

#### Proudly Served!

John Baky left active duty, obtained a masters degree in Library Archival Management and is Director of Libraries & Research, LaSalle University, Philadelphia. He lives in Gladwyne, PA.

Tom Brown left the Army and returned to his roots where he has worked for 30 years in the Produce Business at the Food Distribution Center, Philadelphia, PA. He and his wife and two children live in Upper Darby, PA.

Cordie Croft retired from active duty in 1977 after 20 years and served as a police officer in Hopkinsville, Kentucky - where he resides - until retiring in 1998. He now serves, at the age of 62, as Deputy Sheriff/Chief Bailiff in charge of Justice Center operations in Christian County, KY.

Roy Dolgos left the Army and returned to Chicago, Illinois and college. Dolgos is very

active in veterans' affairs, serving as President of VVA Chapter 242 (Chicago Loop). He was also Chairman - Veterans Advisory Group, City of Chicago. On March 5, 2003 he was appointed by the Governor of Illinois to head the states Department of Veterans Affairs. Dolgos is also the National VP of the 196<sup>th</sup> Brigade Association.

Peter Jewell finished his Army stint in September 1969 and returned to his native New England. Since then he has lived in rural Maine keeping busy in the antiques and livestock businesses. He lives in Smithfield.

Jerold Lear left the Army and has been involved in industrial selling ever since. This former "River Rat" appropriately lives in a house on the river, in Delphos, Ohio.

LTC Warren Lucas remained on active duty, retiring in 1973 with 24 years of service. He lives in Mount Pleasant, SC and works in physical security consulting and commercial real estate.

Gary Lundgren remained on active duty, retiring in 1989. He is a High School teacher in Tampa Florida where he lives. He works with sick children at the Tampa General Hospital, teaching all subjects.

SFC William McMinn remained on active duty, retiring in 1982 as a Sergeants Major. He earned a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice and worked as an Abuse Investigator - Nursing Homes & State Schools - State of Texas, retiring in 1998. He lives in Copperas Cove, Texas.

Dale Meisel retired from active duty in 1988 and is the Warden of Lehigh County Prison, Allentown, Pennsylvania. He lives in Wescosville, PA.

CPT George "Ron" Sunderland remained on active duty, retiring in February 1980 in North Carolina. Since then he has supervised a six county Community Health Center working with substance abuse cases. He resides in Fayetteville.

Samuel Varney left the Army and returned to his native West Virginia, returning to the teaching profession he had been in before the Army, retiring in 2000. He was recently classified disabled from the effects of Agent Orange. He lives in Crum, WV.

Jerry Widiker returned to his native Milwaukee, Wisconsin after the Army, and regained the job he had at Evinrude Motors before he was drafted. He recently retired after 32 years with the company.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

In addition to interviews conducted by the author, references include Americal Division Magazine - fall 1968; 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade Trident Newsletter, April 4, 1969; Southern Cross Magazine: August 17, 1968 & August 20, 1969. Quotations from Tom Brown, Cordie Croft, Roy Dolgos, Samuel Varney and Jerry Widiker are courtesy of written interviews provided by Dale Meisel as well as the author's own interviews.

## American veterans still serving

Hi to all Blueghosts! I guess I'm the last one still on active duty. Soldiers stop me regularly and ask about the American patch. I'm in Kuwait awaiting the action in Iraq, which is hours or days away.

CW5 Derrick Henry  
7-159 Aviation Regiment

Editor's note: Blueghosts is the name of F Troop, 8<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. The message above was written on March 18, 2003.

I am a Command Sergeant Major in the United States Army Reserve. I served in Delta Company, 1-52nd, 198th LIB (1969 - 1970). I will not retire until mandatory age of 60, that is 2007! There are things that the guys still on Active Duty and in the Reserve Components and still do for the Association. But you have to let us know. The Association should seek us out and use us to help all of the GREAT American Veterans.

Ron Brown; CSM, USAR  
3-318th Regiment (MP/CM-OSUT)  
1st Brigade (MP-OSUT)  
80th Division (Institutional Training)

COL David K. Germain is serving with the National Guard Bureau. Germain is a veteran of the 3/16<sup>th</sup> Artillery and resides in Virginia. He is a member of the ADVA. (Submitted by COL Tom Bedient.)

MSG John Barratt is serving with the G-3 section of the 63<sup>rd</sup> RSC DCSFOR. (Submitted by Milt Houghton)

## Seen in print

PARADE magazine published a story titled "I Knew I Stood For Something" in its June 29, 2003 edition. The article featured ADVA member and 2003 reunion chairman Nicky Bacon. Bacon received the Medal of Honor while serving with Co. B, 4/21<sup>st</sup> Infantry near Tam Ky on August 26, 1968. He is currently the director of the Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs and president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

VIETNAM magazine published a story titled "Thanksgiving Assault on Hill 63" in its February 2002 edition. Colonel James F. Humphries, U.S. Army (Ret.), wrote about the 1967 battle between U.S. forces and the 2<sup>nd</sup> NVA Division in the Que Son Valley. The action involved units of the 196<sup>th</sup> LIB to include the 4/31<sup>st</sup> Inf., 3/21<sup>st</sup> Inf., 2/1<sup>st</sup> Inf., 1/1<sup>st</sup> Cav., and F/17<sup>th</sup> Cav.

Task Force Dorland, named after its commander, Major Gilbert N. Dorland, it had as its objective to "find, fix, and destroy the enemy around Hill 63." The battle occurred on November 23-25 and resulted in 128 enemy dead. Seven Americans were killed and 84 were wounded in the fierce fighting.

## Kham Duc Challenge

By Bill Bacon; , Co. A, 2/1<sup>st</sup>, Inf., 69-70

In May, 1968, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry, 196<sup>th</sup> LIB, Americal Division was sent to a little known landing field and village in western Quang Tin Province just a few miles from the Laotian border in I Corps. Their mission: slow down the 2<sup>nd</sup> NVA Division and extract the Special Forces and their CIDG who were based in Kham Duc. Three days of intense fighting followed with heavy casualties on all sides before the mission was completed and the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup> and supporting elements were released to their original AO. It was Mother's Day, and Mother, what a day it was.

So find your friends and buddies and get them committed to the reunion in Reno. It's going to be one of our all time best reunions.

Semper Primus  
Bill

## LZ Oceanside II

The planning of Oceanside II is in the works. The dates are Wed April 21-April 25, 2004 in Melbourne, FL. The tentative schedule is as follows: April 21 - Jamica Night at the Holiday Inn; April 22 - Alligator night / music on deck; April 23-25- Florida Vietnam Veterans Reunion. For more information contact Terry Babler.

## Dues to increase in 2004

Annual dues for Vietnam veteran members of the ADVA will increase from \$12 to \$15 effective January 1, 2004. This is the first increase in dues in many years and is necessary to cover the expenses of operating the association.

Dues for WWII veterans will not increase. The three-year dues option will be deleted. No changes in Paid Life dues were made. Make all dues payments to the National Adjutant.

sighting and leading actual in-flight Hueys.

Having carried my "war trophy" with me for 33 years, I am going to give it up. I am having it mounted in a glass case with brass nameplates at the bottom. I will award it beginning in June 2004 to the Kham Duc Company with the most members at the annual ADVA reunion. This is not exclusive to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/1<sup>st</sup>. There were companies of 1/46<sup>th</sup> and 3/21<sup>st</sup> involved in the action. Plus there were batteries from the 82<sup>nd</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Artillery out there with us. In addition we had close air support and engineers and other supporting units.

I am requesting from Rich Merlin a hospitality room for the Kham Duc Hunt Club (the base was initially built as a hunting camp for the RVN Premier) and suggest all veterans of either excursion bring photos, maps and other memorabilia to display. Having met with Bill Schneider in Little Rock, I saw "before" photos and hardly recognized the place since he went in '68 and I in '70.

So find your friends and buddies and get them committed to the reunion in Reno. It's going to be one of our all time best reunions.

Rick Turton; 226<sup>th</sup> S & S Co.

Dear editor,

I'm sorry to report that I received notice that Danny Robinson of Valparaiso, IN passed on May 9, 2003. Danny served with the 23rd MP's in 1969-70. He was assigned to Chu Lai and worked the POW cage. Danny was able to join us at the Cleveland Reunion and he was also a member of the ADVA.

Another Good Man Gone. May He Rest In Peace.

Paul Stiff; 23<sup>rd</sup> MP Co.

Dear editor,

I was stationed in Chu Lai in 1970 - 1971. Originally, I was with the 226th Supply and Service Co. attached to the Americal Headquarters. Then, if memory serves right, we became part of the Americal Division. My buddy who left 2 months before me wore the "Leaning S\*ithouse" patch of the 1st Log Command. But when I left I wore the Americal Southern Cross Patch.

I can't seem to find any history of the 226th and reference to the Americal Division. Can you help or at least point me in the right direction? Thanks.

Doug Mather;

Dear editor,

How can I get the exact date that William Alvord was injured in a firefight North of Chu Lai sometime or during the week preceding 27 May 1969? He was with H Troop, 17 Cav., 198<sup>th</sup> LIB. I believe I have all the other information required to complete application on his behalf for the Purple Heart but need the exact date of his injury.

Rod Ostby;

Dear editor,

I am interested in information on two individuals who were killed-in-action while serving with the Americal Division in Vietnam. The individuals are:

Richard Weidner of Bellmore, NY, an infantryman with the 198th LIB who was KIA May 25, 1968 at Quang Tin. Daniel Thompson of Wayne, NJ, who I believe was a tank APC crewman and was KIA May 23, 1968 at Quang Tin.

Joseph Brookings;

Dear editor,

I attended grammar school with Richie when my family lived on Long Island, and I graduated high school and worked with Dan after school in a supermarket in Wayne, NJ.

Tom Casey

Miami Beach Fl. 33141  
tel [REDACTED], fax [REDACTED]

Dear editor,

I'm looking for information on two men who were in the 198th LIB, but I'm not sure in what capacity. They were: Sgt. James Gerald Anderson and SP4 Floyd Watsel Lamb, Jr. Both of these men were KIA on 5/4/1970. Is there a way that you can help me to figure out their units and duties?

Sarah Lund-Goldstein;

Carol Smurawski

[REDACTED] Chicago, IL  
60638

Dear editor,

A reunion of veterans of C Btry., 1/14th Artillery will be held May 6-8, 2004. The location is the Royal Inn, 2626 Parkway, Pigeon Forge, TN 37863. Lodging reservations can be made by calling (865) 908-7178 or 1-800-486-7178. More information is available at [www.charliebattery1-14artillery.org](http://www.charliebattery1-14artillery.org) or by writing me at 554 Balmoral St., Porterville, CA 93257. I can also be reached at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Clarence L Marrs; Btry C, 1/14th Arty

Dear editor,

Co. D, 1/20<sup>th</sup> Inf. will have a reunion on the weekend beginning April 30, 2004. The location will be the Holiday Inn at Pigeon Forge, TN. Call the hotel at [REDACTED] and ask for the special Delta Company rai. For more information write to me at [REDACTED] Boulder, CO, 80303.

Alan Conger; Co. D, 1/20<sup>th</sup> Inf.

Dear readers,

Please send your Vietnam stories and requests to Gary L. Noller, Vietnam Editor, 1662 Landmark, Kerrville, TX, 78028. Send e-mail to [REDACTED]

Submissions cannot be returned so please send copies of anything you wish to retain. Deadline is the end of the first month of the calendar quarter.

BAMBOO CURTAIN CRUSHED  
(D/B/3/1 Infantry)

LZ BRONCO - In a recent day-long battle six miles west of here, an old fallow rice paddy became the graveyard for 15 NVA soldiers who fell under an onslaught from soldiers of the 11th Infantry Brigade.

Soldiers of D Company, 3rd Bn., 1st Infantry, had been on search and clear operations in the area for several days when an early morning mortar attack on their night laager position triggered a counter-attack.

## Clash With The Enemy

Leaving their positions, D Company moved out in search of the enemy, sweeping through hedgerows and dense brush, until they emerged into an open field where they met fierce resistance.

CPT John S. Walker (Wakefield, RI) Battalion operations S-3, described what immediately confronted the Company. "The NVA were in a trenchline between two open fields with bamboo around the trench. They were equipped with a machinegun, an RPG-7, AK-47's, an AK-50, and they weren't sparing the ammunition!"

With nothing but tree stumps for cover, the Company moved forward on a line until forced to halt as the enemy beat out a steady tattoo of automatic weapons fire.

## Jack-In-The-Box

"I was within 10 feet of that bamboo thicket and I still couldn't locate their positions," recalled PFC James A. Skapara (Boston). Then all of a sudden, a camouflaged trap door to a 'spider hole' popped open, a burst was fired -- and down went the lid."

Meanwhile, B Company moved west, forming a cordon around the well-entrenched enemy. Valuable assistance came from the air as Army helicopters from the 174th Assault Helicopter Co. and B Company, 123rd Aviation. Bn. made repeated strafing runs on the enemy positions.

Action began picking up as two members of a B Company machinegun team, PFC Chris Osgood (Huntington Beach, CA), and PFC Richard Olson (Minneapolis, MN), moved far forward of the main element and laid down suppressive fire. SP4 David Schoolous, a squad leader, made repeated dashes to the enemy positions, silencing them with hand grenades, one by one, as other members of the Company gave him covering fire.

\*\*\*\*\*

IT'S A 'HARD DAYS NIGHT' INFANTRYMAN DISCOVERS  
(11 LIB C/4/3 Infantry)  
By PFC John Calderonello

LZ BRONCO - SP4 Bob Keefe (Boston), from 11 Bde's 4th Bn., 3rd Inf., had a hard day when his unit made contact with an unknown size enemy force 12 miles northwest of here.

The 1st Platoon of C Co., the lead element that day, halted for a brief respite from 'humping' through rough, mountainous terrain. Keefe was talking to one of his buddies when, as if by inborn response, he casually turned aside and fired his M-16, instantly downing a NVA standing beside a nearby tree.

## Ambush

The Company continued on its way when he raucous sound of an AK-47 split the air. It was coming from an extremely close hole along the trail.

Keefe, SP4 Grady Wilson, (Davenport, FL), and PFC Butch Hillegas, (Quakertown, PA), provided fire support while SP4 Tim Smith (San Francisco, CA) threw a fragmentation grenade into the hole, killing the VNA soldier.

Gunships were soon called in to pound the area with rockets and miniguns, after which the Company again moved down the trail.

Arriving at a sharp drop-off, Keefe saw another NVA step out from behind a tree at port arms. Eyes met, and both stood stock still for several seconds.

## More Hard Luck

Recovering from the initial shock, Keefe reacted first by attempting to fire his M-16. His weapon misfired and Keefe dropped to the ground for cover. The man behind quickly fired in the direction of the enemy.

Two NVA then jumped out from behind the same tree and began to spray the area with AK-47 fire, but C Company immediately responded with M-60 and small arms fire.

Luckless Keefe then pulled out a grenade and tossed it at the two NVA only to see it hit a solitary overhanging branch and bounce back, narrowly missing him. The enemy quickly retreated down the hill, and Keefe was ready to call it a day.

\*\*\*\*\*

NVA SNOOZE ZAPPED  
D/4/31st Inf

LZ-WEST -- The discovery of a large enemy basecamp consisting of more than 200 reinforced bunkers began a busy day for the 4th Bn., 31st Infantry.

While conducting a search and clear operation northwest of Tam Ky, D Company of the 196 LIB unit found the enemy fortifications. The basecamp was spread out over a large area with the bunkers connected by a huge tunnel network amidst thick jungle terrain.

The infantrymen observed an NVA sleeping in a hammock inside the hootch. Two other NVA slept on a nearby table. "Suddenly, the guy in the hammock spotted us and went for his rifle," Coyne said. "We opened up and got all three of them before they could get moving."

Three weapons were captured including an M-1 carbine and an M-16.

Later the same afternoon, D Company was set up in their night defensive positions when five NVA wandered into the area and came under intense weapons fire from the 4/31 Infantrymen.

Two NVA were killed and blood trails branching off from the area indicated others were wounded. Captured packs yielded rice, canned fish and 9mm pistol ammunition.

\*\*\*\*\*

The three stories on this page were taken from the 'Southern Cross' December 1969 issue.



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## **Eligibility for Membership**

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

World War II	1942-1945
Korea War (Caribbean)	1954-1956
Vietnam War	1967-1973

**Eligibility includes those who served with Task Force 6814 and Task Force Oregon. Branch of Service is immaterial.**

## Dedication

ADVA is dedicated as a LIVING MEMORIAL to all veterans of the Americal Division and is pledged to foster true American patriotism, social and welfare activities for all members, allegiance to the United States Government, and its flag, and to perpetuate the traditions and history of the Americal Division of the United States Army.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**  
**AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION**  
**Bernard C. Chase, National Adjutant**

**South Yarmouth, MA 02664**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_

## Telephone

Street \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

City

## State

Zip

**Americal Unit Rgt/Bde**      **Bn**      **Co**      **Other**      **Associate**

**Occupation** \_\_\_\_\_ **Name of Spouse** \_\_\_\_\_

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