

OCT • NOV • DEC

2005



AMERICAL

NEWSLETTER

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



Anniversary
ISSUE

PRESERVING AMERICA'S FREEDOM: WORLD WAR II • KOREA • VIETNAM

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Commander's Comments**National Commander**

Greetings to all: summer is passed and fall is rapidly coming to an end. I regret that I was unable to get to Kokomo for the reunion this year, have heard that it was a great time, but due to this year's storms and the fuel crunch, it was not a trip I could make. The Far West Chapter had a mini-reunion and the Eastern Chapter as well. For those of you who live in these chapter areas, the mini-reunions are a lot of fun, so if you get a chance, I recommend you go to them.

All of you know of the storms that hit the Gulf Coast this year and destroyed so much. Please put our members who live in these areas in your thoughts and prayers. Recovery has started but it will be years before those areas fully recover. I have talked to a few members who made it through with little problem but I know that these storms have affected us all in one way or the other. And as I write this the latest storm, Wilma is churning out there and supposed to head for Florida. Seems there is no end to these storms the last 2 years.

I received an e-mail from Don Shebasta, our Jr. Vice Commander, and sadly have to report that, due to personal health issues, he has made the decision to step down from his position. I wish Don the very best and will hope that all goes well with him. I have asked Larry Watson to step up and take over for Don and he has graciously accepted the position. Larry ran for Jr. Vice when Don was on the ballot and lost by a few votes. He was the close runner-up. Larry was very instrumental in helping Dave Taylor put on the national reunion in Cleveland and he works full time as a Veterans Service Officer helping all of us.

Please let me know what you think of the new newsletter design. 2005 was, indeed, a milestone year in many respects. The new newsletter is a reflection of that. But even more so are the reflections contained in the following pages. My best wishes go to you in this holiday season and for a New Year of hope, good health and increased comradery.

Editor's Notes**Editor-In-Chief**

Dear Fellow Vets: This issue marks my first full year as your Editor-In-Chief. As you can see, we've made some additional changes from the initial changes we put into place in the fourth quarter 2004 issue. Starting with this issue we will electronically send each issue to the printer, getting better quality and lower costs since the printer does not have to scan each photo individually as before. While we will improve on the cost effectiveness of how we create your newsletter, we will spend the monies needed to insure the newsletter meets your needs of providing information and items of human interest specifically for the Americal Vet.

To help take us to this next level of your newsletter, I've brought on staff the addition of PNC Dutch DeGroot, as newsletter "Creative Director." Dutch is in the profession of graphics design and creativity and has graciously accepted our invitation to be part of the team. Without him, we could not get to this next step. Also, we have included as "Chief Artist", Michael VanHefty another creative associate of Dutch's who has contributed tremendously to the new design concepts you will see on these pages. Mike, when not involved in graphics design, is an Air Force Reserve Captain in Intelligence, who periodically takes active duty tours to the Iraq/Afghanistan area of operations. He is always in our prayers.

Please let me know what you think of the new newsletter design. 2005 was, indeed, a milestone year in many respects. The new newsletter is a reflection of that. But even more so are the reflections contained in the following pages. My best wishes go to you in this holiday season and for a New Year of hope, good health and increased comradery.

Chaplain's Corner**ADVA Guest Chaplain**

(Chaplain Jim Sheil was with the 11th LIB in Vietnam and he remains on active duty)

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ some 2000 years ago the Gospel calls us to repentance, and to change where we look for happiness. This does not mean that we are bad people or that we do terrible things. It does mean that we live in a society whose values are very different from Gospel values. During the Advent season leading to the birth of Christ John the Baptizer tells us to "prepare the way of the Lord." Preparing the way of the Lord in our own life is something that no one can do for us. It is an intensely personal matter, which has powerful social implications. What happens in our prayer life affects how we live and make our choices. A good start is to do what we can in our own small part of the world, to insure it is peace-filled and to open ourselves to the peace we could bring to others.

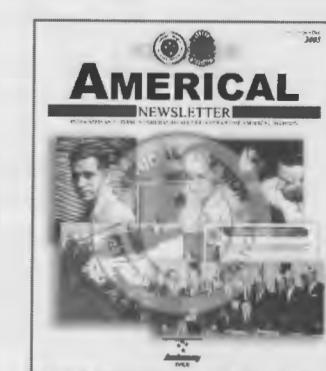


The Americal newsletter is the official publication of the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA). It is published each calendar quarter.

- **Editor-In-Chief Emeritus:** James C. Buckle
- **Editor-In-Chief:** David W. Taylor
- **Vietnam Editor:** Gary L. Noller
- **Creative Director:** John "Dutch" DeGroot
- **Chief Artist:** Michael VanHefty

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**2005, year of Milestones**

Top left: PFC David Fonseca, who named the "Americal" Division; Top right: Tech 4th/Class Leon Granacki, designer of the Americal patch. Bottom right: See story, next page.

The ADVA ---- 60 Years Young



David W. Taylor
Editor-In-Chief

Marking Milestones: Governor John Volpe of Massachusetts signs proclamation designating May 27th as "Americal Division day" in his office at the State House in Boston, in 1967. Seated in the center is Governor Volpe. Standing second from left is David Fonseca (26th Signal Company) who named the division "Americal." Fourth from right is Edward Haddad (182nd Regiment), ADVA National Commander at the time. Note the garrison hats worn with the Americal patch. (Photo courtesy of Carole Fonseca)

The year 2005 is coming to a close. And so are some key milestones, which transcend the birthdays, years of marriage, and other occasions, which we mark with traditional reverence along our human journey. This year caused us to look back on life-changing events, which formed and shaped us beyond the traditional milestones we note each year.

2005 ... 60 years since the end of World War II and the formation of the ADVA, both in 1945. It's been 30 years since the end of the Vietnam War and 10 years since the formation of our Americal website, an achievement which has meant so much to so many of us, WWII and Vietnam Vets, to reconnecting with past comrades.

Our WWII comrades created many "firsts" in the annals of history: The first Army unit to depart the U.S. after Pearl Harbor; the first Army Division ever organized outside the USA; the first Army unit (164th Regiment) to engage the enemy in WWII; the only unnumbered division in the Army's history and the only one designated a seaborne division. It is the only division commanded by an Annapolis (Naval Academy) graduate, Major General McClure; the only division decorated, in part, by the Marines and the only division to serve as long as it did overseas.

With a sense of history General William Westmoreland reactivated the Americal in Vietnam from his Task Force Oregon, since the division would be working in conjunction with Marines, just like it did in WWII. I'm sure he didn't realize it at the time how much history would repeat itself. Both times the Americal came out of a Task Force. Task Force 6814, the precursor to the Americal in WWII was described as a "military stew of units", certainly nothing that resembled a division organization of

its day. That "stew" was to be stirred up again by forming three separate brigades in Vietnam, each with an established identity, as the final Task Force (Oregon) before becoming the Americal. It began as an organizational nightmare. Each separate brigade has its separate identity and allegiance, so much so that soldiers were allowed to wear their brigade patches on their jungle fatigue pockets, while the division patch was worn on the shoulder. As the brigades meshed into a division, many soldiers were due to rotate home at the same time, requiring the process of "infusion", mixing and matching soldiers with different rotation dates, so they would hold together both in numbers and with some experience. The cost was some lost of unit cohesion.

But those who found themselves in this unique situation marched on and got the job done. Some of the heaviest fighting of the war occurred in the Americal Area of Operations, confirming Westmoreland's concern over the increasing threat in the Southern I Corps against the Marines. It was *déjà vu* from Guadalcanal and Bougainville, all over again.

To be sure, there was controversy, which marked the 60's in general. But in my opinion the division acquitted itself well, fighting a determined VC in heavily mined coastal areas and entrenched NVA in the mountains. No American soldier has ever had to endure more, fighting a determined enemy in war with a disenchanted public at home.

By late 1969 the ADVA would begin the slow process of transformation of itself, in two ways. First, many WWII members were retiring and could devote themselves to fraternal organizations, and took increased interest in the ADVA. Second, a new generation of Americal Vets was just beginning to open the door. By October

1969 ADVA membership was 759 (today we are about 3,200). Of the 759 total members, 671 were WWII Vets and 88 were Vietnam Americal. Most, in fact, were serving in Vietnam with the Americal at the time and their addresses in the October 1969 Membership Roster listed APO numbers. Most were from division headquarters or division support units. The vast majority of soldiers did not know the ADVA existed nor could they care less. I'm sure our WWII comrades were not thinking of fraternal organizations in the jungles of Bougainville.

Among the October 1969 ADVA membership was Major General Getty's who had finished command of the division in June, 1969 and was the Director of Individual Training, Officer of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, at the Pentagon. Major General Samuel Koster was on the roles with his address as Superintendent, US Military Academy, West Point. Major General Lloyd Ramsey, then CG of the Americal was registered along with a host of others, including a SP/4 Richard Merlin, 23rd MP Company at Duc Pho (now Far West Chapter Commander). Others included Captain James A. Taylor (MOH Recipient) stationed at Fort Knox, KY and Captain John Furgess Jr., Intelligence Officer serving at Fort Holabird, MD, who is presently the National Commander, VFW.

In late 1968 as a young lieutenant, I finished the airborne and ranger schools at Ft. Benning, Georgia. I certainly didn't know at the time my destiny would be linked to the ADVA. I volunteered for duty in Vietnam. On my wish list for assignments were the 101st Airborne Division, 82nd Airborne Division or 173rd Airborne Brigade. On my second day in Vietnam at Cam Ranh Bay, I received orders for the "Americal." I had never heard of it and was sure it was a rear echelon logistics unit. I stormed into the assignment office and declared, "You don't understand, I'm an infantry officer. I need to go to an infantry unit." The Assignment Officer looked at me and replied, "Ohhh ... you're going to the infantry!" Thirty-six years later I look at my 198th Brigade and Americal Division patches hanging above my desk at home, and the memories of brave comrades come to mind. They were uncomplicated people who found themselves in a very complicated time of life. They soldiered as best as they could, many times performing beyond the ordinary requirements ordained by the wearing of the uniform, but we always accomplished our missions while wearing the shield with the stars of the Southern Cross. And, during this anniversary year, that is good enough for me.



Past National Commanders Carrol, Buckle, Messina, Maddox, Doig, Ward, Castranova, DeGroot 1994

America Division Veteran Association Past National Commanders

- Thomas J. Griffin, 1945-1946
- Thomas J. Griffin, 1946-1947
- Walter T. Anzoni, 1947-1948
- Dominic J. Bianculli, 1948-1949
- Gerald E. Martel, 1949-1950
- John J. Carey, 1950-1951
- Inactive from 1951 to 1965**
- Howard V. Elliott, 1964-1965
- Thomas B. McQuade, 1965-1966
- Henry B. Morash 1966-1967
- Edward N. Haddad, 1967-1968
- James C. McHarrie 1968-1969
- William F. McGoldrick 1969-1970
- William F. McGoldrick 1970-1971
- Harold W. Goslin, 1971-1972
- Daniel G. Merlin, Jr., 1972-1973
- William L. Dunphy, 1973-1974
- Michael R. Lopardo, 1974-1975
- Hector L. D'Amato, 1975-1976
- Paul J. Jacobs, 1976-1977
- Francis L. Guerriero, 1977-1978
- Santo J. Ravagno, 1978-1979
- William T. Schmidt, 1979-1980
- Thomas B. Mulvahill, 1980-1981
- William L. Dunphy, 1981-1983, two terms
- Alfred R. Doig, 1983-1984
- James C. Buckle, 1984-1986, two terms
- Kenneth R. Turner, 1986-1987
- Bernard C. Chase, 1987-1988
- Robert N. Thornton, 1988-1989
- Bernard Carroll, 1989-1990
- Ronald L. Ward, 1990-1991
- Roland T. Castranova, 1991-1992
- Peter J. Messina, 1992-1993
- John (Dutch)DeGroot, 1993-1994
- William K. Maddox, 1994-1995
- Stephen N. Dennison, 1995-1996
- Gary L. Noller, 1996-1997
- Gary L. Noller, 1997-1998
- Edward Marsh, 1998-1999
- Edward Marsh, 1999-2000
- Begin two year terms**
- Ronald Ellis, 2000-2002
- Richard Scales, 2002-2004

americal.org Celebrates its 10th Anniversary in Cyberspace By Gary L. Noller



Americal Division Veterans Association

Dedicated as a Living Memorial to the Veterans of the Americal (23rd Infantry Division), United States Army

Home

Dedication:
The Americal Division Veterans Association is dedicated as a *living memorial* to all veterans

Everett R. Boully of Arab, AL recently posted the following note: "I am glad to find this guestbook. I thought maybe the whole world had forgot about the Americal Division."

One of the earliest locator successes occurred within the first month of americal.org. I received an e-mail from a man in Oregon telling me about the passing of his sister's husband. The deceased man was a veteran of the 164th Inf. Regt. of World War II. The man told me that his sister would like to contact anyone who had known her husband during the war.

I forwarded this message to Jay Roth as I knew he was also a veteran of the 164th Infantry. To my surprise, he quickly responded that he had found someone who knew the deceased and that contact would be made with the widow. I could not believe that americal.org had so quickly found a payoff for the hard work that had gone into its creation. To me, this one contact made everything worthwhile. Fortunately, these same circumstances have been repeated many times.

Over the years I have learned enough computer coding to help maintain many of the pages on the website. Information has been added to provide readers with a comprehensive synopsis of the history of the Americal division. There are specific pages dedicated to order of battle, awards, and casualties. An electronic directory and other links help Americal vets locate one another. A page dedicated to the ADVA provides the association by-laws and contact information for ADVA officers. Reunion information is constantly updated and links are provided to websites created by and for units comprising the division.

Those seeking membership in the ADVA can print an application form from the internet. In the past ten years hundreds of new members have joined due to the presence of the website. When you view the list of new members in the newsletter those members that list me as sponsor are in reality members who joined through the website.

The most recent additions to americal.org include the PX page and the expanded Scholarship Fund page. PNC Dutch DeGroot, a talented graphics specialist, produced an on-line catalog that now accounts for about half the product sales from the Americal PX. More than half of the applications for the scholarship fund are generated through a visit to americal.org.

There are more things that can be posted to americal.org than there is time to get them there. At some time in the near future I hope to begin adding historical files from the Les Hines Collection to americal.org. Suggestions have been made to put pages of the Americal Newsletter on the internet. I have also thought it would be nice to do a photo album of people and places important to Americal veterans.

A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the volunteer efforts of Tony Greene and Kevin Sartorius. Neither was in the Americal Division but they each have donated hundreds of hours of volunteer time to americal.org. Much has changed in their personal lives with careers and families in the past ten years, but their efforts are still valuable and very much appreciated.

The ADVA's website, www.americal.org, will celebrate its tenth anniversary on December 20, 2005. It hardly seems possible that a decade has passed since the internet first saw the presence of the Americal Division and its veterans association. So before I forget, here is the story of americal.org.

In November 1995 I took an airplane flight from Austin, TX to Washington, D.C. to attend Veterans Day activities. During the flight I leafed through the airline magazine to see if there were articles of interest. I also read the ads in the magazine and observed something common about each ad.

At that time I regularly used e-mail but I was not yet very familiar with the internet. But I noticed that each ad in the magazine displayed an internet address for the company that was advertising. An ad for Ford automobiles directed readers to www.ford.com. An ad for a hotel chain ended with www.marriott.com. Virtually every advertisement referenced a website address.

I dwelled on this new development in information exchange and wondered if this was something that could be beneficial for ADVA members. I had no idea if this was practical nor did I know how to proceed in establishing a web presence.

While in Washington I had the opportunity to discuss this idea with a fellow ADVA member. I knew Jay Roth had been in using the internet for some time. I asked him if he thought a website for the ADVA had merit. His reply was "I think you should go for it."

When I returned home I sent an e-mail to my brother Greg Noller and to my nephew Kevin Sartorius and asked them if they knew how to do a website. Both jumped on the idea and told me to begin to assemble material to be posted on the web. Greg recruited Tony Greene to join the effort and we were up and running.

I sent material to Tony and Kevin and they did the necessary coding to create the website. Greg acquired an internet service provider at no cost and applied for the domain name www.americal.org. Tony put the prototype site on his AOL account and we had something to finally see in cyberspace. On December 20 we obtained official use of [americal.org](http://www.americal.org) and the ADVA's website was officially launched.

My original idea for the website was very simple. I thought it would be like a billboard on a highway giving basic information about the association and how to make contact with key personnel. But Kevin and Tony kept asking for more material to post so I kept feeding them as much as I could find.

Jim Buckle told once told me that one of the greatest services the ADVA could provide was to help link Americal veterans to one another. In this light, Tony came up with the idea of a locator page on the website. I really did not know how this would work so I told Tony he could do it but it was his baby. Kevin volunteered to do a guestbook and this was soon up and running. It was and still is amazing to me to read what veterans post in the guestbook. Many Americal veterans, especially Vietnam veterans, believe the division is forgotten. They are excited and delighted to find the ADVA website when they "Google" the name AMERICAL.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



WWII Dear Editor,

A word to keep you informed that the New Caledonian's, the birthplace of the Americal Division, have not forgotten the Americans. To start with, a formal ceremony commemorating the end of the war with Japan was held. Members of the U.S. Embassy in the Fiji's were here to accompany the New Caledonia Administration along with the French military and Noumea City Services.

In addition, the Friends of America Club arranged a dinner for the embassy representatives and for the crew of a U.S. naval vessel. Being the oldest American Veteran on the island and having broken my ankle I was unable to attend the various functions but I had the pleasure and honor of a visit by a Colonel with the American embassy and the Captain of the U.S. Naval vessel.

Later in the month the local fire department, together with the Noumea City officials had a ceremony paying homage to the fireman lost in the 9/11 catastrophe.

Emery C. LeValley

Noumea, New Caledonia

Vietnam Dear Editor,

I wish to provide special notice to all veterans who served with the 2/1st Infantry when it was assigned to the 196th LIB in Vietnam or subsequently when it was assigned to U.S. Alaska Forces.

Our warrior and fighting legacy lives on in the current group of brave young warriors serving in Iraq with the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The 2/1st Infantry was given the assignment to replace the "Gimlets" of the 3/21st Infantry in Mosul upon the completion of the Gimlets' year-long deployment as part of the 1st Brigade, 25th Infantry Division "Lancers."

There are many items that our young warriors could benefit from receiving while away from home over the coming year. You really do not have to use your imagination. Put together a special care package to a fellow warrior and mail it in the convenient "flat rate" boxes from the post office, address it to the Command Sergeant Major of the Battalion, Hector Davila. He will ensure it is distributed to those in the front who need it most. Send it to the following address.

CSM HECTOR DAVILA
HHC 2-1 INF. 172 BDE. SBCT

You will get a very good warm fuzzy feeling in your soul after doing so.

Doc Hoe

Recon, 2/1st Inf., 196th LIB, 1967/68.

Dear Editor,

I have been trying to locate the "Sit-Rep's" for our unit, HHC, 3/1st Inf., 11th LIB.

I am trying to locate for period of Jan 20, 1968 to April 3, 1968. I know they are in some archives somewhere and that they are accessible. I just haven't been around our veterans of late and I have lost out.

Gene Wilson

Charlotte, N.C. 28212-6368

This letter was forwarded to the Vietnam Historian. His response follows:

Dear Mr. Wilson,

You are fortunate in that we do have Americal Division TOC reports available for this period on CD-ROM. These are available in a format that can be printed or viewed from a computer. This requires either Windows Explorer or Adobe Acrobat to view or print.

January 1968 has been transcribed so that I could e-mail you this month if you can access the information from Microsoft Word. Other information that may be of use to you would be in the division Operational Reports and Lessons Learned, 11th Bde newsletters, and other documents found in the Americal Division Historical database. CD-ROMs are available for \$15.00. You may order by making a check or money order payable to the ADVA and mailing it to me at: Leslie Hines, [REDACTED] Des Moines, IA; 50312-2609.

Les Hines, ADVA Vietnam Historian

Dear Editor,

I am the son of an U.S. Air Force NCO call sign "Wild Goose". My father was stationed at Chu Lai from February 1968 through February 1969. Over many sleepless nights he has told me about his experience in Vietnam. He will soon be retiring from the civilian workforce after serving his country in the USAF for over twenty years.

There are no words that could convey how I feel towards my father especially after he explained to me the hardships that he experienced on a day-to-day basis in Vietnam. I am hoping that there is someone who might have served with my dad.

He was originally a USAF weatherman but eventually was ordered to complete escape and evasion school and then was sent to jungle warfare school in the Philippines. Then he was rotated to Chu Lai. He has spoken of walking along the Perfume River and liberating the city of Hue and Phu Bai.

As part of his duty a platoon of Green Berets/LRRPs were attached to his squad for various duties from week to week. He has spoken of the courage and commitment exhibited by Americal and MAG unit servicemen far and beyond that of his own. I know it would allow an old soldier to rest easier if just one fellow veteran who served along side him could tell him that they made it out and lived a long and happy life. My father's name is TSGT Earl R. Bielefeldt, USAF RET.

Mr. Kelly Bielefeldt, [REDACTED]
Greenville, WI

Dear Editor,

My father was SGT Robert James Mussin. I never had the chance to know him. He was killed in the Vietnam War on April 15, 1970 while assigned to Co. C, 4/21st Inf., 11th LIB. He was from Detroit, MI and entered Vietnam on January 21, 1970. He was killed by an explosive device, probably a mine or booby-trap.

He was killed I was only about six months old. I just recently learned he was my father. I was my father's and mother's secret, nobody knew of me except them. They were supposed to be married when he returned from the war. He never made it back. So my mom kept the secret from his parents and they never got to know me.

When my mom told me about my father she said that it was too hard to talk about. She still doesn't talk about him. I would love to know about everything he did and was. He is my hero, he is my dad.

Everything that I have found out about him I did all by myself. If anybody remembers him please get in contact with me. I'd like to know his medical records for my health and to know where I came from. I do have a few pictures of him if anybody would like to see them I will send them. To those who made it back- you are my heroes. Thanks for everything you did for me.

Julie Gauld, [REDACTED]
Maple Heights, OH

Dear Editor,

I was with the 11th LIB at LZ Thunder with the 4.2" mortar section. I would like to see if anyone is able to help me with information about an incident that happened to me. For a variety of reasons I am fuzzy on the details but I would like to know what happened.

I was one of two company truck drivers. In May 1968 I was driving another GI to LZ Bronco so he could return to the United States. We didn't make it.

We left Thunder at about 4:30 PM. Along the way there was a landmine explosion and I was knocked unconscious. A recon team found us and called in a Dustoff to get me to Bronco until the sun came up. I did not wake up until the next day in the hospital in Chu Lai. I asked about the guy who was with me but no one knew anything. Any information on this is greatly appreciated.

Willie Waymire, [REDACTED]

ADJUTANT'S NOTES

ADVA National Adjutant Notes

Holiday greetings to all ADVA members! May your Christmas or Hanukkah be filled with joy and fellowship.

After a steady growth in new membership during the middle part of this year, our new membership growth is beginning to level off. During the August - October period, we added thirty-three new members to the roster. Of these new members, two are Paid Life members. We increased our Paid Life membership by six from the existing annual pay member base.

In the Adjutant's section, seven members listed as reinstated. We want to see this number as small as possible, so I encourage all annual pay members to keep dues current.

A small percentage of our annual pay members become delinquent on dues payments each renewal period. The ADVA staff strives to keep delinquent members on the roster as long as possible before removing non-paying members. ADVA relies on member dues payments to provide the financial support needed to maintain the association at the high level you expect and to finance the newsletter and many other association functions.

For annual pay members, be sure to check your renewal date in the address block on the back cover of this newsletter. The first line in the address block, under the postal bar coding, contains your membership renewal date. And remember, the new annual dues rate for Vietnam Vets is \$15.00.

If the date shown on your newsletter is Sep05 or earlier, please send your dues payment to PNC Ron Ellis, Assistant Finance Officer. Ron's mailing address is listed on the outside back cover as part of the membership application form.

As always, if you have questions about your dues status, have an address change or have a notification of the death of an ADVA member or former Americal veteran, please contact me with that information.

Please send written correspondence to the ADVA National Adjutant P.O. box in Richardson, TX. The full address is listed inside the front cover at the bottom right corner of the page.

Remember - contact that buddy and encourage him to join ADVA today!

Recently, I was able to reunite with one of my fellow platoon leaders from the 11th Brigade, and look for him to join the association very soon.

Roger Gilmore

National Adjutant

TAPS

World War II Veterans

132nd Inf

LTC Charles E. McCrary

M Co.

Raleigh, NC

September 18, 2005

132nd Inf

COL Henry Ricci, MD

Reg. HQ

San Angelo, TX

August 4, 2005

180th FA

Mr. James R. Hartis

Indian Trail, NC

August 14, 2005

182nd Inf

Mr. Paul Hastedt

Saginaw, MI

April 16, 2005

221st FA

Mr. John J. Laffey

Weymouth, MA

August 2005

221st FA

Mr. Robert E. Galpin

Silver Springs, MD

August 24, 2004

Vietnam Veterans

11th LIB

Mr. Ernest E. Hull

D Co.

New Baden, IL

July 5, 2005

11th LIB

Mr. Franklin D. Shipley

1/20 Inf

Knoxville, TN

May 14, 2005

196th LIB

Mr. Ronald L. Davis

B/3/21 Inf

Fountain City, IN

October 11, 2005

130th QM

Mr. Robert W. Cigrand

Ocala, FL

August 2, 2005

LAST ROLL CALL

(Deceased Americal Veterans not members of the ADVA)

182 Inf Regt C Co.

Mr. Ernest Van Way

Clovis, CA

July 16, 2005

198th LIB E/1/46 Inf

Mr. Jack Levitz

Paauilo, HI

June 7, 2005

NEW MEMBERS

Mr. Dorman L. Baird

1/14 Arty C Btry

Boaz, AL

Paul Stiff

Mr. Rex A. Beach

198th LIB B/5/46 Inf

New Albany, IN

Dave Taylor

Mr. Everett R. Bouly

11th LIB 1/20 Inf

Arab, AL

PNC Gary Noller

Mr. Bob Breedlove

198th LIB D/5/46 Inf

Indianapolis, IN

Dave Taylor

Mr. Thomas W. Chellis

11th LIB D/4/21 Inf

El Paso, TX

Dave Taylor

Mr. George W. Delahoussa

23rd S & T Co. B

Sugar Land, TX

Jim Buckle

Mr. Fred F. Drew
164th Inf 1st Med. Co.
San Jose, CA
Don Shebasta

Mr. Pearly Dupuis
11th LIB A/1/20 Inf
Cecilia, LA
John McNown

Mr. James Dykes
23rd Div. Hdqtrs
Media, PA
George Jacobs

Mr. William C. Eglet
23rd MP
Chardon, OH
Ed Haag

Mr. Phillip D. Grau, Sr.
198th LIB B/1/6 Inf
St. Helens, OR
Dave Hammond

Mr. Cary Hall
11th LIB B/4/21 Inf
Greenville, SC
Self

Mr. Michael Harmon
196th LIB D/3/21 Inf
Rattan, OK
Felix Dees

Mr. Winter S. Hess
23rd Div HHC
Palm Beach Gardens, FL
George Jacobs

Mr. Walter S. Hillenbrand
198th LIB D/1/46 Inf
Cross Lanes, WV
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Victor W. Howell
196th LIB D/4/31 Inf
Milledgeville, GA
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Noah O. Lindsey
196th LIB A/2/1 Inf
Winston-Salem, NC
Don Ballou

Mr. Michael McCaw
1st Signal Bde 37th Bn C
Co.
Twin Falls, ID
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Elton L. Wall
198th LIB C/5/46 Inf
Macon, GA
Dave Taylor

Mr. Leon J. Merrill
198th LIB A/1/52 Inf
Hamden, NY
Dan R. Young

Mr. William E. Murphy
11th LIB
Charlotte, NC
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Michael J. O'Connor
11th LIB D/4/3 Inf
San Pedro, CA
Leslie Hines

Mr. Ellis E. Perdue
132nd Inf Rgmt Co. G
Roanoke, VA
Tim Vail

Mr. Brian D. Reynolds
198th LIB
Oak Lawn, IL
Dave Taylor

Mr. John R. Schoenberger
198th LIB C/1/46 Inf
Webster, NY
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. James E. Scott
198th LIB 1/14 Arty A Btry
Kerrville, TX
John W. Anderson

Mr. Harold E. Sincerney
198th LIB D/5/46 Inf
Hewitt, TX
Dave Taylor

Mr. Paul R. Snow
11th LIB 4/21 Inf
Otsego, MI
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. John R. Waldeck
11th LIB 4/3 Inf
Verona, WI
Terry Babler

Mr. Elton L. Wall
198th LIB C/5/46 Inf
Macon, GA
Dave Taylor

NEW PAID LIFE MEMBERS

Mr. Kenneth W. Hooten
198th LIB B/1/52 Inf
Jacksonville, TX
Dan R. Young

Mr. William A. Manley
196th LIB HHC/3/21 Inf
Gladewater, TX
PNC Ronald R. Ellis

Mr. Thomas R. Briggs
11th LIB
Theresa, NY
Self

Mr. Herman B. Carter, Jr.
196th LIB B/2/1 Inf
Columbus, OH
Jessie Mendoza

Mr. Donald K. Kilgore
New York, NY
PNC Gary L. Noller

Ms. Nancy Murphy
Milton, MA
Self

Mr. Charles Brawley
723rd Maint Co.
Wasilla, AK
PNC Gary L. Noller

Mr. Dennis R. Murphy
198th LIB 1/46 Inf
Hanoi, Vietnam
Self

Mr. Roger D. Crocker
11th LIB A/1/20 Inf
Jefferson City, MO
R. Thornton

Mr. David W. Navy
23rd MPs
St. Louis, MO
Rich Merlin

Mr. Pablo Flores, Jr.
196th LIB
Harlingen, TX
Doss Kornegay

Mr. Frederick J. Ragland
11th LIB A/1/20 Inf
Tacoma, WA
John McNown

Mr. George P. Jacobs
23rd Div Hdq
Folsom, NJ
Self

CORRECTIONS

Mark D. Callahan
11th LIB C/3/1 Inf
Bill Noe
198th LIB A/1/52 Inf

Scholarship Availability

Each June, the ADVA Scholarship Foundation awards college and vocational scholarships to children and grandchildren, including those by adoption, of current and deceased ADVA members, provided the deceased member held good membership standing at the time of death, and to any child of an Americal Division soldier who was killed in action or died while on active duty with the Division.

Application forms are available on the ADVA website or may be obtained by contacting the scholarship fund chairman at the following address:

Bob Short

3859 Old Savannah Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Completed application forms and all required attachments must reach the fund chairman at the above address by May 1 to receive consideration.

In 2005, scholarships totaling \$30,000 were awarded

Donations of More Than \$10 to the ADVA Scholarship Fund

Lionel Grant
Dudley Farquhar



Memorial Contributions to the Scholarship Fund

David & Denise Oppenheimer in memory of William Gold
PNC Peter & Julia Messina in memory of William Gold
Linda McIntosh & Edward Whalen in memory of William Gold
Ann & Jon Stein in memory of William Gold
Paulette & Jay Pollack in memory of William Gold
Harriet Gold in memory of William Gold
Jim & Ellen Doherty in memory of William Gold
Ruth Lipsetts in memory of William Gold
David Eichhorn in memory of William Gold
Lloyd Perry in memory of Lewis Turner

(Contributions in memory of Bill Gold have now exceeded \$1,600)

Dear Mr. Short,

I want to thank you, the scholarship selection committee and the entire Americal Division Veteran's association for your generosity and thoughtful kindness that is reflected in your association and it's commitment to financially helping college students in their pursuit of higher education. I am very appreciative and honored to have been chosen by the scholarship committee to be a recipient of this award.

I consider myself very fortunate to be a student at UCONN and to be getting such a high quality level of education. I have been doing my very best to maximize my learning experience to date and plan to continue those efforts throughout my college attendance. I assure you and your organization that my performance going forward will continue to serve to reinforce to you that my selection was worthy of your generosity. This award will certainly help me realize my dreams for a college education and the ability beyond college to put that education to good use.

Thank you again for your generosity and support of college students and to all of your members, than you for your service to our country.

Sincerely,
Kelly Matthews

Dear Mr. Short and the ADVA Scholarship Committee,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the ADVA for selecting me as a recipient of one of your scholarships this year. Your generosity is greatly appreciated and the scholarship will certainly be helpful to my family and me. I am entering my second year at Framingham State College as an English Major.

My grandfather, Leonard A. Oliver, 221st FA, C battery (WWII) and I have always been very close. He saw this as his special way of possibly being able to contribute to my education. It meant so much to me to be able to tell him I got the scholarship and to know how happy and proud it made him.

I would again like to thank all of the members of the ADVA for awarding me this scholarship.

Sincerely,
Kendall Hatch

Dear Mr. Short,

I'd like to thank you, the selection committee, and the ADVA for the scholarship I was awarded earlier this year. It was an honor to be selected and I really appreciate it. I will use these funds to further my education at the California Maritime Academy where I am now a sophomore cadet.

This summer I completed my first six-week training cruise, from California across the South Pacific to Australia and back to Hawaii. Ports of call included New Caledonia, where I've learned the Americal designation was created on 1942, and Fiji, where Americal soldiers took a much deserved R&R after the Battle of Guadalcanal.

Sincerely,
James N. Parry



Dear Mr. Short,

To be awarded the Americal Division Veterans Association scholarship is a great honor and I am truly appreciative that you selected me to be one of your recipients. I attend The Ohio State University and am planning on majoring in International Business and Marketing with a minor in French. This past summer I also studied abroad in Europe for two months which has increased my knowledge about other countries. I believe that the ADVA is a very gracious and respected association and am pleased that I was able to, in some way, be a part of this valued organization. I admire what the ADVA stands for. Since both my father and grandfather were a part of past wars, I feel that in some way I am contributing to their legacy by having written to the association. Once again, thank you for believing in me and giving me this generous scholarship.

Sincerely,
Paige Schroeder



Dear ADVA Scholarship Foundation,

I just wanted you to know how much receiving the ADVA scholarship means to me. With the help of your scholarship I can further my knowledge and training at the University of Northwestern Ohio. I am majoring in a High Performance and Diesel Engines Associates Degree. Not very many women are interested in this kind of field so you can imagine the amount of appreciation I have for all of you in helping me with my schooling. Some time in the near future I will open an off-road shop and honor every Veteran with a discount to show my appreciation for everything they have done for my country and I. I also wanted to let all the Veterans know that I am truly thankful for their bravery and sacrifices. I realize that freedom isn't free. So once again, thank you, GOD BLESS & WELCOME HOME!

Thankfully Yours,
Katie M. Andrescavage





Dear Americal Division Veterans Scholarship Committee,
I just wanted to thank you so much for awarding me a scholarship in the amount of \$500. This will really help me with many of my college expenses. I can not thank you enough!

Thanks Again!

Alison Gray



Dear Mr. Short and the Americal Division Veterans Association,

Thank you for your continued generosity in supporting college scholarships for so many veterans' children and grandchildren.

I am biology major at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, and I spent this past summer in the campus laboratory through a research fellowship. As I begin looking at graduate and medical programs, I realize that your scholarship is part of what has made these opportunities possible for me.

Both my father and grandfather were Americal Veterans, and I know they are proud to be part of an organization that has helped so many.

I am grateful for this scholarship and the honor that accompanies it.

Sincerely,

Martha A. Burch



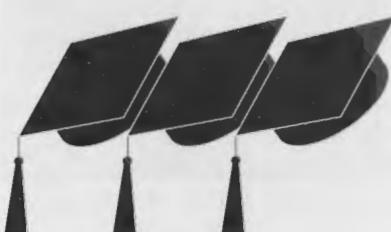
Dear Mr. Robert Short,

I am writing in gratitude for receiving the Americal Division Veterans Association scholarship.

I am thankful for this financial support that helps me to pursue my scholastic goals and dreams. I appreciate your commitment in providing scholarship funds for students who want to further their education. The Americal Division Veterans Association indeed alleviates expenses accompanying a collegiate level education. I am looking forward to attending Northern Illinois University this up-coming year and because of your contribution, I am confident that my transfer will be a success. Thank you for your sincere generosity.

Sincerely,

Krissy Stringham



Dear Mr. Short,

I am happy to let you know that I received your letter and my scholarship check in the mail. Thank you for taking the time to reward me with \$1,000. I was very excited when I saw the check and it will undoubtedly help me with my college funds. It was greatly appreciated. Thank you very much once again.

Sincerely

Michelle Laxer

Scholarship Essay's Offer Pride (Excerpts from the 2005 Scholarship Essays)

"I will never take for granted that the freedom to speak my true feelings is something that the United States will never take away from me. I will never take for granted that a person who died 300 years ago, or a soldier who just died yesterday, was loyal enough to sacrifice himself or herself for me, for the United States of America, and for the desire to preserve freedom."

Claudia Saric

"Although doing what is right is the right thing to do, it is not always easy. My father and other soldiers of the Americal Division did the right thing although it wasn't agreeable. It is easy, and right, to say war is bad and to be against war – but evil does not believe that. It thrives on aggression, feeds on fear and ultimately triumphs on apathy. It is never wrong to fight evil. The Bible states in the Book of Proverbs that, to see evil and do nothing is sin. A good soldier does what needs to be done regardless of public opinion and my dad and others in the Vietnam War did just that. I hate war – the dying, the destruction, how it scars forever the human heart and soul. But it is a necessary tool to stop unreasonable evil, and although Vietnam was considered a 'lost' war, I believe that every effort to stop evil contributes to the ultimate victory of goodness, justice and peace."

Bethany Fawkes

"My father fought with the Americal Division in the Vietnam War and I know that he still carries with him the memories of fighting overseas and how it made him feel to leave his loved ones behind. To know the strength that each soldier carries with him is amazing and something that should never be forgotten."

Paige Schroeder

"I realize that the memories my grandfather carries are not just memories of battles and soldiers, they are memories of brotherhood, honor and patriotism that younger generations can learn from."

Kendall Hatch

"I came home from college to celebrate Veterans' Day this year. As I walked through the kitchen, something on the refrigerator caught my eye. It was a grayish piece of paper from an elementary school writing tablet. The large, wobbly words had been written with great care in the format of a letter. Simply read, the letter said: 'Dear Grandpa, thank you for protecting our country and protecting me. Marissa.' To me it said so much more. The letter was from my 6-year old niece. I started thinking about what my father fought to protect her from, and all the opportunities she has as a result. She can go to school and become friends with anyone. She is free to make her own opinions and excel and whatever she desires. Marissa has an opportunity to gather knowledge and sift it out for herself. She is allowed to be unique."

Bethany Andrzejewski

"Patriotism comes from a Greek word meaning fatherland, but can be more simply defined as love and loyalty to one's country. This love and loyalty includes the willingness to support the United States and the readiness to fight for our freedoms. Abraham Lincoln said it best, 'I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. I like to see a man live so that his place will be proud of him.' Just as my grandfather did for us, and so many others have done, I think that we, as youth of our great nation, should be some of the strongest supporters of our country through our actions."

Stephanie Loeb



**23rd Vietnam Vet Reunion
Kokomo, Indiana
September 15-18, 2005
Americal Vets Meet Again**

In what is arguably the largest annual gathering of Vietnam Veterans in the country, the Kokomo Reunion once again was the gathering place for many Americal Vets. Over 70 Americal soldiers were present. Terry Babler, Great Lakes Region Chapter Adjutant and head of the 1st/1st Cav Association, formed a base camp composed of a number of campers and tents. Good food, spirits and comradely abounded throughout the weekend.



Annual Group Photo of Americal Vets at Kokomo gathering



Group Photo of 1/1 Cav Vets at Kokomo gathering



Americal Vet wives toast their husbands and other Viet Vets



Americal stalwarts Terry & Judy Babler get ready for another Event.



Americal Vets enjoy camp dining and friendship.



Brotherhood displayed during singing of "God Bless The USA"



New Memorial to Fallen Comrades Now on Permanent Display at Kokomo site.





**AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL REUNION PORTLAND, OR
JUNE 22-25, 2006**

Dave Hammond, Reunion Chairman
or email [REDACTED]

Place: Portland Marriott Downtown/Waterfront
Situated downtown in the "City of Roses," on the west bank of the scenic Willamette River.
1401 SW Naito Parkway, Portland, OR. For more hotel information www.portlandmarriott.com

Room Rates: Make reservations directly with the Portland Downtown Marriott. Specify you are with the Americal Division Veterans Association for our group rate of \$112.00 per night. [REDACTED]

Transportation: Suggested: Blue Star Shuttle Service from airport directly to the hotel. \$13.00 each way. Leaving Portland airport on the half hour from 4:00 am to midnight. Leaving hotel from 5:00 am to 5:00 pm. on the half hour. [REDACTED] www.bluestarbus.com Go to information booth outside of baggage claim area and request Blue Star downtown shuttle.

Reunion Activities & Highlights:

On Your Own Activities: (Within walking distance or short cab ride): Stroll the Portland waterfront, Saturday Market, Washington Park Rose Garden, Oregon Zoo, World Forestry Center, Classical Chinese gardens, and more.

Fishing:

Salmon & Sturgeon. Contact Dave Hammond for guide information. [REDACTED]

Golf:

Contact Steve Dant for further information. [REDACTED] or email [REDACTED]

Car tours:

Oregon Coast, 1:45 minutes from hotel. Mt. St. Helens, 1:30 minutes from hotel. Mt. Hood, 1:00 hour from hotel. Oregon wine country, and more.

Friday

DON'T MISS THIS.

Tours hosted by Grayline Tours. Portland City Tour-Oregon Coast-Columbia Gorge- Multnomah Falls and more. See registration page for more details. www.grayline.com

Friday Night

Jet boat transportation and tour of the Portland waterfront. Jet boats will shuttle us to the Oregon Museum of Science & Industry for an indoor/outdoor BBQ and dance with a guided tour of the USS Blueback Submarine.

Saturday Guest speakers and seminars:

Kim Cook, veteran and published author of "Do Bar Fights Count? How To Write Your Military Stories," will speak on the importance of writing your own personal experiences for family and history. www.warriortales.com

Charlene Edwards, photographer, writer, wife of Vietnam veteran, and author of "Voices from Vietnam;" a beautiful book about the tragedies and triumphs of Americans and the Vietnamese—two peoples forever entwined by the legacy of war. www.voicesfromvietnam.com

Saturday Night Banquet

Banquet ceremony, dinner, entertainment, and dance with live music.

**AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL REUNION REGISTRATION FORM
PORTLAND, OR JUNE 22-25, 2006**

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse or Guest Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

VN ____ WWII ____ Unit(s) _____

Registration:

Before 5/1/06:

After 5/1/06:

\$25.00 per person X # of people ()

\$30.00 per person X # of people ()

\$ _____

Friday Tours:

9:00 AM – Noon

Portland City Tour: \$37.50 X # of people () \$ _____

1:00 – 5:30 PM

Columbia Gorge & Multnomah Falls: \$47.00 X # of people () \$ _____

9:00 AM – 5:30 PM

City to the Waterfalls (Includes both tours above) \$78.00 X # of people () \$ _____

9:00 AM – 5:30 PM

Oregon Coastal Wonders: \$73.50 X # of people () \$ _____

(More tour info available at www.grayline.com)

Friday Night: Don't Miss This!

5:30 – 9:00 PM

Jet boat ride on the Willamette River to picnic dinner, dance, and private tour of the USS Blueback Submarine.

Boats begin boarding at 5:30 PM. You will be assigned a boarding time.

\$45.00 X # of people () \$ _____

Saturday Night Dinner/Dance: \$45.00 X # of people () \$ _____

Choose entrée for each person and how many:

Baked Alaskan Salmon _____ Mt. Hood Broil Grilled Flank Steak _____

Reunion T-Shirts: \$10.00 each. White. Large reunion logo on back; small ADVA logo on front.

Specify size and how many: _____ Med _____ LG _____ XL _____ XXL _____ \$ _____

Mail to:

ADVA Portland Reunion

Dave Hammond

Beaverton, OR 97005

Contact Number: [REDACTED]

TOTAL \$ _____

Make checks payable to: Dave Hammond/Reunion Chairman

You will be sent an acknowledgement of your reservations/order





Piano Man Helps Create Organization for Americal Veterans

By Gary L. Noller

Photo Al Cotta

Most veterans serving in the South Pacific in World War II could not wait to go home. But a few had reasons for wanting to stay in the warm climates of far-away lands.

Al Cotta was such a man. He was born in Boston, MA on October 11, 1918. As a young man he remembers many hard winters of shoveling snow from the sidewalk. It was not a pleasant task and he yearned for warmer weather.

The War Years

Al grew up during the tough days of the depression. He spent three years in high school and subsequently enlisted in the Massachusetts National Guard. In 1940 he was assigned to the 26th Infantry "Yankee" Division.

World War II was soon to involve the United States. In January 1941 the 26th Infantry Division was federalized. Al and his buddies trained at Camp Edwards, MA and in October-November 1941 they participated in maneuvers in the Carolinas. The 26th was subsequently reorganized with three infantry regiments instead of four. Al's unit was one of those declared "surplus".

President Roosevelt declared war with the Japanese after their attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. On January 25, 1942 elements of Task Force 6814 sailed from New York bound for the South Pacific. Al was on board, and much to his liking, he would soon see warmer weather.

Task Force 6814 landed in Australia for a short time and then moved on to New Caledonia. In mid-1942 various units were brought together and formed the Americal Division. The "Southern Cross" shoulder patch was created and the effort to defeat the Japanese began in earnest.

Al was a member of the cadre that brought the division together. He was assigned to Co. D, 121st Medical Bn. He remembers the battalion being composed of three ambulance companies and a hospital company. The hospital consisted of 40 cots divided down the middle by an aisle. It handled both surgical needs as well as medical cases. He remained with the unit until the war ended in 1945.

The ADVA is Chartered

Even though he might wish to stay in the tropical warmth of the South Pacific, Al returned to his home in Boston after his military discharge. He had formed many close friendships during his military service and he wanted to stay in touch with his buddies. Many were from the local area and were also eager to keep in contact.

The ADVA is Chartered

"Several of us in the Boston area decided to form an association just after the war ended. The Americal Division Veterans Association was born," he states. The first meetings were held in 1945 and shortly thereafter the ADVA received an official charter from the State of Massachusetts.

This small group of friends became the charter members of the ADVA and began recruiting other members. "We published a newsletter- more like a pamphlet," he says. "But it was a start."

Al and the other charter members were closely tied to the 182nd Infantry Regiment, but they actively recruited those associated with the 132nd Infantry Regiment in the Chicago area and the veterans of the 164th Infantry Regiment in North Dakota.

In the early days the ADVA had monthly meetings that were usually attended by 15-20 members. "We wanted to stay in touch", says Al. "We had become good friends and lived with one another day-to-day. We wished to encourage these friendships to remain."

California Sun Beckons

But Al still had no liking for cold weather so in 1950 he moved to Los Angeles, CA. He was hired by the U.S. Post Office as a mail clerk. Along the way he also joined the U.S. Navy Reserve and renewed his military career.

Veterans of the ADVA were busy starting careers and beginning families. The association lapsed in the early 1950s. Records indicate that no National Commanders were elected from 1951 to 1965.

But with WWII veterans getting more free time and with the Americal Division activation in Vietnam there was renewed interest in the ADVA. The association was brought back to life and flourishes to this day.

Al stayed in touch with another Americal veteran by the name of Bill Colosimo who lived in Oakland, CA. Sometime in the late 1960s Bill got in touch with Al. "One day he called me and told me about a reunion that Americal veterans had held in Oakland aboard the Crescent City. This was one of the ships that transported us.

"I was surprised with joy as I had thought the ADVA to be dissolved for good. I asked for paperwork to rejoin the group and promptly sent it in."

Al began attending reunions once again and since that time has miss only a few. He says, "I was pleased that the association was still existed and that it was growing again. Not to mention the fact of the heart-warming joy of seeing my Army buddies again, especially those of Co. D, 121st Medical Bn."

In 1991 Al was retired from the Navy Reserve and from the U.S. Postal service. He decided to move to the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH, formerly the Navy Home) in Gulfport, MS. He wanted to live somewhere warm and far away from snow.



The Piano Man

Al's main diversion since a teenager has been playing the piano. In the 1930s he received free lessons to play the piano as part of a Works Progress Administration (WPA) program. After he moved to California in 1950 he purchased a grand piano and a theater organ.

Al plays most all types of tunes on his keyboards. He plays anything from Beethoven to popular music of the 30s, 40s, and 50s. But, he says, "I cannot play Jazz."

He plays for his own entertainment and is self-conscious about playing in front of an audience. "Several times I have been asked to play in programs," he says. "But to do so I have to be sitting with my back to the audience. I cannot be aware of anyone listening to me playing or I will become distracted from what I am doing."

When he moved to the retirement home he had to sell his piano and organ as there was no room for them in his room. But as luck would have it the AFRH had a grand piano in the main lobby. Al usually spent an hour or two each day enjoying his time at the ivories.

He tried to get the staff to hire a piano tuner to keep the piano in top shape. But this never seemed to get done so he personally engaged a technician to care for the fine instrument. "If you do not keep a piano tuned it will gradually deteriorate and not be worth playing," Al says.

Veterans Uprooted by Katrina

The weather in Gulfport is usually warm and any snow that might appear quickly disappears. This is much to Al's liking. Gulfport has bad weather from time to time but always seems to bounce back from the infrequent tropical storms and hurricanes. But Hurricane Katrina changed all that.

The AFRH is located just a few hundred feet from the beach. The main building is multi-story with services located on the ground floor and lodging rooms located above. The day before Katrina hit Al was at his usual place in the lobby biding time by playing the piano.

He recalls, "The clouds were just calmly floating by." Then the storm surge hit and many of the retirement home buildings were severely damaged. The first floor of the main building was completely flooded. The grand piano was smashed and covered with seaweed. "I looked out the window and saw cars streaming by like paper canoes."

The chapel was also hard hit. Several years ago Al provided a stained glass window for the chapel to commemorate the Americal Division. He was not able to determine if the window received damage or not.

Luckily, Katrina caused no injuries to the residents of the AFRH. The day after the hurricane the residents were relocated to the AFRH in Washington, D.C. Al says, "We have everything we need. We just want to get back to Gulfport as soon as we can."

One Day at a Time

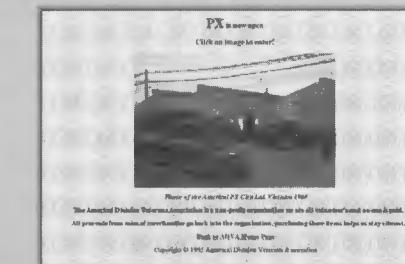
Even at the age of 87 Al still looks forward to the next ADVA reunion. "I am longing to attend the reunion in Portland in 2006. Much will depend if we Katrina refugees are moving back to Gulfport or not. I wish we could move back before cold weather hits Washington."

Al suffers from some mobility problems, but his resilient humor shows through as he says, "if I can get knee replacement surgery I should have no more problems. I could even do a triple-axle in figure skating. I am sort of like an old car. You can put new parts in, but you still have an old car."

Of the calls and letters he received after Katrina hit he says, "It is heart-warming to know that the ADVA is concerned about my safety and well-being. I appreciate that camaraderie very much."

Al can be contacted by writing him at the Armed Forces Retirement Home, [REDACTED] Washington, D.C. 20011-8400. E-mail can be sent to his attention through his friend Bob Macy at [REDACTED]

Thanks you, Al, for helping to create the Americal Division Veterans Association. Stay safe and healthy, return home soon, and get the piano fixed. We shall see you in Portland. [REDACTED]



Did you know you can order ADVA wear and items from the World Wide Web?

Go to
<http://www.americal.org/>
 Then click on PX (store)

Moving? Send us Your
 Change of Address
 Save the ADVA some
 time & \$

National Adjutant
 Roger Gilmore
 [REDACTED]
 Rowlett, TX 75089



X-Day

The Normandy of the Pacific

by Elizabeth A. Owczarzak

Editors Note: This story was the winning essay for the ADVA 2005 top scholarship award of \$3,000.

With the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II in 2005, it is prudent to honor the memory of the beginnings of the Americal Division in the Pacific Theatre of that war and to consider its assigned involvement in the largest military operation that has ever been planned. The Americal Division was patriotically born in the fighting in the Pacific, and their deployment under orders of Operation Downfall, the blueprint to invade the home islands of Japan, was in their future. Though this chapter of the division's history was never fought, it is indeed no less important to recognize the courageous and heroic role it played in securing lasting peace, freedom, and a true end to this nation's greatest foreign conflict.

By the time the United States was thrust into the war by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, European nations with interests in the Pacific were occupied in homeland struggles against Germany and Italy. France requested U.S. assistance in protecting New Caledonia, an important base of operations in the Southwest Pacific, from being devoured under the military expansion of Japan's Empire. The newly formed task force of "Americans in New Caledonia" became the Ameri-Cal Division in early 1942. In many strategic battles throughout the war, the Americal established its name and legacy as a potent and determined fighting force, as the U.S. slowly freed island after island.

While the Allied successes in Europe in 1945 proved confident that Germany would be defeated, it was different in the Pacific. Island fighting had become a slow and deadly endeavor; the Japanese fought tenaciously from dug-in cave positions and began employing waves of kamikaze air attacks against ships. The U.S. Navy lost more ships in the battles for Okinawa and Iwo Jima than at Pearl Harbor. On May 28th, the U.S. Army issued "Downfall: Strategic Plan for Operations in the Japanese Archipelago," utilizing nearly 6,000 aircraft and 3,000 ships, the largest amphibious operation ever, dwarfing even D-Day at Normandy. Still working to exhaust other options for peace, Harry S. Truman gave presidential approval to Downfall on 18 June 1945. The first objective of this plan, Operation Olympic set for X-Day, tentatively November 1, 1945, was to gain a foothold on Japan's southern island of Kyushu for airfields and ports to stage the second phase of Downfall. Operation Coronet, the invasion into Japan's heart, the Tokyo/Yokohama area, would follow in spring 1946. Americal Division orders under Operation Olympic had them deployed with the initial landing force to Ariake Bay, on southeast Kyushu. It would have been the first time the sacred grounds of Japan proper would be breached by an invading force since Kubilai Khan's Mongols failed in 1281. Entrenched national fanaticism and the Japanese military's creed

of "No Surrender," made the prospects of the planned invasion grim. There is no doubt it would have been bloody and extremely costly in human life.

Whereas about 150,000 troops are deployed in Iraq, "Downfall" involved 5 million U.S. servicemen. Still this was not an overwhelming invading force when over 3 million Japanese troops and 25 million determined Japanese civilians were fanatically ready and willing to defend their shores. They were also far more prepared than U.S. intelligence reports revealed. The April 1945 Japanese defense plan, Ketsu-Go, anticipated a late October invasion date, prioritized Kyushu as the principle landing site, and established four-line-deep defensive positions maximizing the regional topography. Scores of small suicide boats loaded with explosives drifted in bays waiting for a target; hundreds of midget subs and human-piloted torpedoes could be launched from shorelines; fuel for 5,000 kamikaze air sorties aimed at troopships were hidden away in military and industrial cave complexes stretching for miles throughout Japan. Based on contemporary Pacific battles, estimates for just the initial phase of the invasion ranged from as low as 31,000 American fatalities in one month to as high as 250,000, with conservatively over 340,000 wounded. Comparatively during all four years of WWII, the U.S. suffered 407,000 deaths with nearly 672,000 wounded. The expected devastation can be quantified somewhat by the rush-production of nearly 500,000 Purple Heart medals in anticipation of the Japan invasion. We have drawn on this surplus throughout all subsequent conflicts and a U.S. soldier wounded today in Iraq is still awarded one of these unused WWII medals, 60 years later. Today these kinds of projected losses are grossly unacceptable to military strategists and politicians.

The patriots of the Americal Division had experience in hard-fought victories at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Leyte, and Cebu; their designated landing beaches on Kyushu were in the heat of the fighting. As part of Gen. Walter Krueger's Sixth Army, the XI Corps was commanded by Maj. Gen. Charles P. Hall for the invasion, who boasted that he had "four of the best Army units in the Pacific theatre to assault Ariake Bay." The 43rd Division would land at Duisenberg and Desoto beaches to take Shibushi and drive north to Miyakonojo. The 1st Cavalry would land at Ford Beach, drive west to Kanoya and Kagoshima Bay. The Americal and the 112th Cavalry RCT would land X+2 wherever needed. The terrain of this landing area was highly defensible. Shoreline rifle and machine gun positions were interconnected by tunnels and caves. Biro Island offshore and bluffs behind the beaches on both flanks provided bunkers for heavy guns with a complete view and range of the beaches and bay entrance. Stream valleys that cut into the bluffs exited to rugged hills holding the bulk of the defensive 150mm guns. Out of range from naval gunfire, they could fire on the valleys or beaches to block any inland advance. From Ketsu-Go, the Japanese knew an "assault on Ariake Bay was the most dangerous threat to southern Kyushu" because not only would it secure areas for subsequent operations, but they determined if they lost Kyushu the war would be over. While defensive troops were stretched thin, five Japanese divisions were initially deployed in southeast

Kyushu to fight to the death without retreat and hold the Americans to the beaches, with reserve armies prepared to move within three days to counterattack the decisive landing area. This was all or nothing. The D-Day landings at Normandy were intended to end the fighting in Europe just as the X-Day invasion of Japan was to finish the war in the Pacific. Though the end of WWII prevented this patriotic chapter of the division's history, the best fight is the battle never fought, no lives lost, no casualties. The atomic bomb was not yet available when Operation Downfall was signed into action, so training and preparations were well underway to proceed with the plan. Recent overwhelming Allied victories in the Pacific had not yet persuaded the Japanese to accept terms of unconditional surrender, and they were gearing up for the final conflict on their shores. Years later, a conversation my father had with a 1945 Japanese national confirmed that mobilized civilian units of women and children armed with simple sharpened bamboo sticks fostered an unquestionably lethal weapon in their hatred toward any invader to their beloved homeland, especially Americans. Given the projected magnitude of the loss of life for participants on both sides of the battle, President Truman's method to end the war can be argued as nothing more than an attempt to save lives and bring about an honorable and speedy conclusion to hostilities. Remembering what did and could have taken place in the Pacific, there is never enough tribute paid to honor the courage and sacrifices of our nation's servicemen, or to acknowledge their contributions to the gift of freedom which millions of others enjoy. ♦

(Map: "Operation Downfall: the Invasion of Japan" was used by the author and is reproduced with permission from Tim Rice. More can be seen on his web site: bibliophilist@myway.com)



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America Trivia

Did you know that the Americal Division has never served on the shores of the United States? It is the only U.S. Army Division in the history of the country with that distinction.

Base "S" P.O.W. Camp WWII

Tabunoc-Talisay-Cebu-Philippines

August – November 1945

Photos and story by Leonard "Sack" Owczarzak



Most GI's, unless a member of an infantry unit, never planned to come in close contact with gathering and processing prisoners of war, during their time in service. This is exactly what our anti-aircraft unit, the 746th AAA Gun Battalion, was assigned when World War II ended for us on Cebu Island in the Philippines.

Because most of the Japanese Air Force had been destroyed by this time, it was decided that our very accurate 90 mm long-rifle-barreled anti-aircraft guns could be used on special cave-closing missions, which demanded pinpoint accuracy. When a large concentration of caves above Cebu City was holding up the Americal Division's advance, the 746th AAA Gun Br. was called in from Leyte to close the caves. The firing missions were very successful and the remaining Japanese fled to the northern part of Cebu Island. Then, our heavy-duty 50 caliber water-cooled machine guns became great defensive weapons on strategic road blocks across the island. Extra anti-aircraft personnel in our unit were assigned to various Americal infantry units, to assist in patrol activities.

When the Americal Division left Cebu for occupation duty in Japan, the 746th AAA Gun Bn. was then assigned the task of rounding up the six to seven thousand surrendering Japanese left on the Island and transporting them to the newly constructed Base "S" P.O.W. Camp, located several miles south of Cebu City.

The camp was constructed in the usual P.O.W. camp configuration. It consisted of one acre square, with guard towers situated at each corner. Each guard tower was armed with a search light and a 30 caliber machine gun. Phones connected each tower to the Corporal of the Guard control center, located in the guard compound. Within the P.O.W. area were large tents for the prisoners, showers, and kitchen facilities – manned by their own mess cooks. The Japanese officers had a separate living area a short distance from their enlisted men's tent area. The officers were very proud, very aloof, and they always were impeccably dressed in their former military uniforms.

The whole camp was surrounded by an eight foot high barbed wire fence, with the wire strands about one foot apart. We guards thought the fence was a joke! You could easily pass through it, although we never had any prisoner attempt to escape.



Leonard Owczarzak in front of gate to Base "S" P.O.W. Camp, Tabunoc, Cebu Island, Philippines 1945

In fact, many times we caught prisoners sneaking back under the fence in the morning, after having snuck out at night to visit their Filipino girlfriends! The prisoners were very well behaved, as they knew that they would be returning to their homes in Japan. They even had the option of working on the docks of Cebu City for a small wage, but were never forced to work.

Our part of the camp was situated right next to the prisoner compound. This guard compound was similar to the P.O.W. area, but not quite as large. We had tents for the 75 men from our unit who were acting as camp guards. We had a kitchen tent, mess hall, orderly room, a shower and officers' quarters. We had a jeep that had survived the Pearl Harbor attack, a three quarter ton weapons carrier, and a two and a half ton GI truck.



Base "S" P.O.W. camp guards and guard tower. Members of Battery D, 746th AAA Gun Battalion, Americal Division, Leonard Owczarzak bottom left. September 1945.

We had the same facilities, but with an added screen to show movies. The movie screen was located close enough to the barged-wire fence separating the two compounds, so that on show nights we might have 75 or 100 prisoners squatting on the ground next to their side of the fence, enjoying the same movie. I remember one night when a newsreel showed B-29's bombing Japan, several of the prisoners cheered!! They were so happy that the war was over, and that they would be returning home alive.

The surrenders took place in the northern part of Cebu. When the prisoners arrived on trucks they were very tired, scrawny-looking, hungry and dirty. Their first desires were to use the shower and get something to eat. They then were assigned a tent, given clean GI clothing, issued towels and blankets. The Criminal Investigation Division Major in charge of the camp then gave each prisoner a chance to identify himself, his unit, and give a brief resume of his duties and experiences while in the service. Medical attention was also available for prisoners upon request



(Left) Japanese prisoners at capture

Next Page

P.O.W.'s entering prison compound.

Japanese surrender in Northern Cebu.

One day we observed several of the Japanese officers conducting a large group of prisoners in military drill. When the C.I.D. Major saw this, he was livid with rage! He called for a jeep and I drove him out to the middle of the prisoner compound. He confronted the Japanese officers, reminding them that the war was over, and that the other prisoners would only be allowed to perform calisthenics, and no military drill! The looks on the faces of the enlisted men was really comical. They were really happy to see one of their own officers dressed down.

On another occasion, while we were lining up for chow, a group of prisoners started running toward the barbed wire fence that separated the two compounds. We all grabbed our rifles, exclaiming, "Oh, my God. The prisoners are trying to break out!" It turned out, one of the prisoners had diarrhea. They were chasing him toward the fence so he would not defecate in their area. As he neared the fence, he stopped, dropped his pants, and did his business! The group that was chasing him came up behind him, and with a shovel they were carrying, covered up his mess and then hit him on the head with the shovel, and left. The poor Japanese with diarrhea lay there quite a while before he got up, rubbed his head, and returned to his area. We were told not to interfere in any of the prisoners' disputes, and we did not!

One day a truck load of prisoners arrived. The C.I.D. Major was notified and he arrived to check them out. On the front end of the truck, next to the cab, a rather tall Japanese dressed in a private's uniform was spotted by the major and ordered to come forward and step down. This man protested vehemently in Japanese until the C.I.D. Major told him to shut up! The major was sure that this particular prisoner was the war criminal he had been searching for. From the information he had, he believed that this was the officer responsible for the deaths of several American airmen whose B-24 crashed during the bombing of Cebu City prior to the American landing. The airmen had survived the crash and were captured.

They were ordered by the Japanese to march to the city docks, kneel, where this Japanese officer ceremoniously executed them by cutting off their heads in front of local civilians! The Japanese prisoner routed

from the truck kept hollering that there must be some mistake, and that he was innocent! To check his case, the major brought in several Filipino witnesses, who recognized the prisoner as the guilty party. The interview was ended as suddenly as it had begun. The C.I.D. Major ordered our three quarter ton weapons carrier and several guards with B.A.R. rifles, loaded the prisoner in, and drove away, the prisoner never to be seen again! Frontier Justice?

Another very interesting event happened while I was corporal of the guard, checking the barbed wire fence on the back side of the P.O.W. camp. The Japanese officers were housed near this stretch of fence.

As I was passing by, a Japanese officer motioned for me to approach the fence. When I came near, he asked me in perfect English for a cigarette. I was surprised, to say the least, and I asked him where he had learned his perfect English. He

replied, "I should speak well, I attended U.C.L.A.!" A lot of prisoners were navy personnel, as Cebu had been a Japanese Naval Base. I noticed his naval belt buckle and told him I would trade a whole pack of cigarettes for the buckle; and the trade was made! He then continued the conversation, by asking me where our unit had been located while the fighting had still been in progress. I described the road-block position we had occupied in the northern part of Cebu. Without hesitation, he used a stick to draw in the dust next to his feet, the road and our former gun position next to a culvert. He then told me that we had a five-man crew, and that we patrolled every day by circling our position. My jaw almost dropped, and I asked him how he could possibly know all of this? He explained that he was on the nearby hill with a platoon of Japanese watching us!! I asked, "Why the Hell didn't you ever attack or shoot at us?!" He replied, "If you would have come up a few yards closer, we would have reacted. But we did not want to give away our position, as we still had hopes that our Navy would come and rescue us."

Base "S" P.O.W. camp was located next to the road leading into the village of Tabunoc. The barbed wire fence separated us from the road and the Filipino families that were living across the road. Many times in the afternoon, when we were off duty, we would sit next to our tents and watch the Filipinos go by. They were very friendly and grateful that the Japanese were no longer occupying their island. We interacted with them, and they with us. We really learned a lot about the country folk and how they lived. There were many sad goodbyes when we left!

By the end of November 1945, all of the Japanese P.O.W.s had been processed. We then closed down the camp and left Cebu by boarding an L.S.T. bound for Leyte. We had all earned the amount of service points needed for rotation, plus many more.

After a week in Leyte, we boarded the A.P.A. Thomas Jefferson, and headed for San Francisco and the Golden Gate! After hearing about the Abu Ghraib prison scandal in Iraq, all of us who had worked at the P.O.W. camp on Cebu were proud that we had handled our prisoners humanely. These returning Japanese prisoners would inform their friends and relatives of the decent treatment they had received by the Americans, and thus make way for an easier and safer tour of duty for those GI's still required to serve during the occupation of Japan. ♣



1970 Photo
Don Kilgore

Kilgore Was Here

Civilian Experience with the Americal

Story by Gary Noller Photos Don Kilgore

Like many young men his age, Don Kilgore spent a year of his life in Vietnam. But his role was somewhat unusual. While he served those in military uniform, he himself was not in the military.

Kilgore began his one-year tour of Vietnam on May 15, 1970. He was a civilian employee of American Express Banking Division. His duties were that of Branch Manager of the Chu Lai bank.

American Express provided basic banking services for soldiers of the Americal Division. Kilgore manned the Chu Lai office but also visited locations such as Saigon, DaNang, LZ San Juan Hill, Ba To, Nha Thahn, Gia Vuc, Tra Bong, Quang Ngai, and Phu Bai.

When asked why he went to Vietnam, Kilgore says, "I wanted to evaluate the U.S. government's rationale supporting the Vietnam War." He also remembers "the high degree of professionalism exhibited by the majority of the U.S. armed forces while faced with a most controversial and daunting military task."

He frequently carried a camera on his trips and has many photos of Chu Lai and other locales. Several of his photos are featured on these pages. He plans to donate his collection to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

Kilgore is currently the Director of International Marketing for Springfield LLC. He travels throughout the world marketing the Nomex® brand of flame resistant fabric. He and his wife Rita have been married for 34 years and live in New York City. 



South China Sea Bunker Chu Lai



1/1st Cav tracks



American Express Bank



Division Headquarters



USO - Chu Lai



Chu Lai Vietnam



Bunker Line East Chu Lai

PNC Ron Ward- First Vietnam Vet to Serve as ADVA National Commander

by PNC Gary Noller

Ron Ward was just out of high school at the age of 17 and he wanted to enlist in the U.S. Marines. But his father, a Marine veteran who fought in the Pacific Theater in World War II, would not sign the necessary papers for the Marines. But he did sign the papers allowing Ron to enlist in the U. S. Army.

Ron was trained at Ft. Leonard Wood, MO and Ft. Bliss, TX and was then stationed with a Hawk missile unit in Germany. After eight months in the missile unit Ron asked for and was granted a transfer to an infantry unit. Shortly thereafter he was sent to Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 was just over when Ron arrived and began his duties with Co. A, 1/6th Inf., 198th LIB. He was a rifleman and occasional assistant M-60 gunner.

On October 12, 1968 his platoon departed Fat City on patrol and followed a set of armored personnel carrier (APC) tracks through the ten feet tall grass. Ron was walking point when there was a sudden explosion just behind him. A booby trap or land mine had exploded and showered the area with deadly shrapnel.

Ron's rucksack helped protect his back but he had numerous wounds below the waist. More tragic, his squad leader, SGT Jim Abraham, was killed in the blast and several other soldiers were badly wounded. Ron was evacuated to Chu Lai by helicopter and then to Japan by C-130 aircraft. After a month in Japan he was transferred to a hospital in the United States where he underwent surgeries for wounds to his legs and abdomen. He was finally discharged in November 1969.

He returned to his hometown of St. Louis and served as a police officer for six years. He then began a 27-year career as a letter carrier with the U.S. Postal Service. He hunted and fished and like many Vietnam veterans he put his military service out of his mind.



Ron Ward paved the way for other Vietnam vet National Commanders such as Rolly Castranova and Dutch DeGroot.

But events in the world would not allow total isolation. The hostages held in Iran were released in January 1981 with a huge welcoming ceremony at home. In November of the following the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in Washington, D.C.

Ron was put off by the positive response given the hostages as compared to the negative response given returning Vietnam veterans. So he decided to take off work and attend the parade and dedication ceremony in Washington. "I was never so proud to be a Vietnam vet as I was during that parade," he recalls.

While at the dedication he met another Vietnam veteran who had served with the Americal Division. The vet was wearing a white garrison cap with an Americal emblem on it.

The vet told Ron that he was a member of the Americal Division Veterans Association and that his father, a World War II veteran of the Americal, was also in the ADVA.

To this day Ron does not know who the other Americal veteran was. But he did give Ron an address to join the ADVA.

The following year, 1983, Ron attended his first ADVA reunion. It was held in Hyannis, MA. "Upon arrival I was quite disappointed to find that I was the only Vietnam vet there," he says. "The World War II tigers were friendly but I felt out of place." Ron recalls that no one had a place for him at a table at the Saturday night banquet. Disgusted, he went by himself to the hotel bar. But a WWII vet soon approached him with a welcome.

"If it hadn't been for Pete Messina I probably would never have come to another reunion. But Pete saw me at the bar and invited me to sit with him."

A fishing trip kept Ron from the ADVA reunion in 1984 but he has not missed one since. "Bill Dunphy and Jim Buckle encouraged me to become active in the ADVA," he remembers. "Bill and Jim are a couple of great guys and few men have devoted so much time to further the association than they have."

Ron has served as the Vietnam Editor, Scholarship Fund Chairman, and the first Vietnam vet National Commander. He is currently serving as the chairman of the Nominating Committee for the 2006 ADVA elections.

Looking back on his 24 years of membership in the ADVA, he notes, "The ADVA has come a long way since my first reunion. Leadership is now mainly in the hands of Vietnam vets. The ADVA has founded the scholarship fund, increased membership, improved the quality of the newsletter, and had bigger and better reunions. Where else can a guy have the opportunity to spend time with so many brave men?"

As to the future, Ron says, "I hope the ADVA will continue to increase our numbers and keep the organization fiscally solid. There are many thousands of men eligible to be a part of the ADVA and I would like to see us bring them in. We have new members in our ranks that have great potential and we need to move them up the ladder."

"I remain dedicated to the organization and will always be available for any task asked of me that will better our operations."

Ron and his wife Linda recently relocated from St. Louis to their retirement cabin in the Ozark Mountains of southern Missouri. Ron expects spend time fishing and hunting near Bull Shoals Reservoir. "I have always dreamed about retiring somewhere that I could step out the door and shoot a rifle."

REACTIVATION OF THE 23rd MP COMPANY



by Dale Meisel

At 10:05 a.m., on October 21, 2005 at Ft. Bragg, NC, in a ceremony filled with military tradition, the U.S. Army breathed life once again into the 23rd Military Police Company, formerly a part of the Americal Division.

The company guidon, cased at Da Nang, RVN on June 28, 1972, was uncased in front of the company soldiers, other military guests from Ft. Bragg and twenty-one company veterans from Vietnam. Participating in the uncasing was George R. (Ron) Sunderland of Fayetteville, NC, the first company commander in Vietnam. The guidon was handed to CPT Karl A. Reuter of Houston, TX as the new commander.

CPT Reuter and ISG William T. Griffin of Miami, FL will lead the newly formed company during its startup period, as it fills to its 170-soldier complement. The company is part of the 503rd MP Battalion (ABN), 16th MP Brigade (ABN), and is itself an airborne unit--a real departure from the past.

Before the actual ceremony began, the 16th MP Brigade's Commander, COL John C. Chambliss, called the veterans out of their seats and gathered them in front of the company, which was assembled at parade rest. He welcomed the veterans, all dressed alike in 23rd MP Company hats and golf shirts, and said that the veterans were as much a part of the ceremony as the active duty soldiers. He asked the soldiers to look into the veterans' eyes and to follow the traditions blazed by them.



Al Feser Accepts Coin from CPT Reuter
(Official US Army Photo Sgt J. Springer)

scheduled deployment to Afghanistan in February 2007. He also stated that under current commitments, soldiers can look forward to alternating twelve-month tours--at home and deployed.

CPT Reuter, in his remarks, promised that his company's "actions in the future will reflect upon the fine tradition that you have left us with." CPT Reuter closed with the sentiment that "It's a great day to be a Gunslinger."

Ron Sunderland had the opportunity to speak on behalf of the veterans. He remarked that "Every time the 23rd MP Company has been assembled in formation, our nation has been at war." Ron told the soldiers that we veterans

Soldiers of the 23rd MP Co with the units new guidon. (Photo Dutch DeGroot)



Ron Sunderland helps with the guidon Ceremony flanked by COL Chambliss, CPT Reuter, and 1st Sgt Griffin
(Official US Army Photo Sgt J. Springer)

"are very proud of this guidon" and he asked them to keep the veterans posted on where it's planted.

Ron also presented a plaque from the veterans (courtesy of Al Feser) to CPT Reuter and his soldiers, as way of passing the torch to them to fight on in the Global War on Terrorism.

CPT Reuter, in his remarks, promised that his company's "actions in the future will reflect upon the fine tradition that you have left us with." CPT Reuter closed with the sentiment that "It's a great day to be a Gunslinger."

In addition to Ron Sunderland, two other former commanders were also present: Richard Timberlake, from Leland, NC and Gary Lundgren, from Tampa, FL.

Gary, the last commander, remarked, "I've been waiting 33 years to get my replacement here." Tom Packard of Columbus, OH recalled that he had been present at the last ceremony in Da Nang, when the guidon was cased.

It was a day many 23rd MP Company veterans thought they would never see. But as they looked at the determination in the eyes of these new soldiers, they knew the company--and the country--was in good hands.



R.E.M.F.s on Firebases

By James W. Gales

I spent my Vietnam tour as a member of the 81mm mortar platoon of Co. B, 2/1st Infantry, 196th Lt. Inf. Bde. We had no officers with us the whole time, so wherever we went we were always outranked. Our line platoon called us R.E.M.F.s.

Let me tell you what it was like on the firebases where I served. This included such places as Linda, Maude, Hill 151, OP 56, the ridgeline around DaNang, Tam Ky, and many others.

Everyone was awake for 100 percent alert one hour before daylight. I was the gunner so I was always in the gun pit ready to fire. We often fired predetermined defensive targets (DTs) during that hour before sunrise.

Our early morning duties included cleaning the guns, collecting any unused bags of powder charges, and policing up the gun pit area. We also cleaned our M-16 rifles and took a half-hour break to eat breakfast of eggs or C-rations.

Then we were back to work restocking ammunition. This required carrying ammo boxes from the chopper pad at the bottom of the hill to our gun pit area. When this was completed the officer in charge of the firebase assigned various work details. Those of us who were not stuck on detail were assigned to bunker guard.

Since we had only six non-commissioned officers (NCOs) we had something to do every day. We went outside the wire to check on trip flares and claymore mines. We provided a K.P. every third day. We humped water to the showers and mess hall. This required carrying water in five-gallon pails up the hill and emptying them into 55-gallon drums.

We also carried supplies from the chopper pad to the top of the hill, washed pots and pans, and had to supply personnel for field sanitation duty. That is a story in itself.

We did get a half-hour off for lunch that usually consisted of C-rations. In the afternoon we had more details or had to

fill sandbags. Anytime there was a fire mission everyone ran to the gun pits and began firing the guns.

Evening chow was at 16:30 hours. During this time we also wrote letters home. We then got ready for nighttime fire missions.

Every third day we had three men assigned to a listening post (LP). Just before dark they would go outside the wire at least 600 meters. They would stay until one hour before sunrise. Each man pulled three hours of watch that started at 2100 hours.

During the night on the firebase we had to man defensive bunkers for three hours and stand guard at the gun pit for one hour. We also fired DTs throughout the night. It seemed that just when one got to sleep a fire mission was ordered. We stayed at the guns until the mission was complete.

Most nights we fired thirty to fifty rounds of ammo. This included illumination rounds as the LP always heard movement so we had to cover for them. Our top night was firing over 400 rounds of ammo.

The 81mm ammunition came three rounds enclosed in a wooden box. Each round was wrapped in a cardboard canister. We chopped the end off the canister with a machete to remove the round.

Carrying the rounds up the hill from the chopper pad was a dilly. We carried one box on each shoulder and two more boxes balanced on our backs. This totaled twelve rounds with each round weighing about 13 pounds. The weight of the box itself along with the packaging material resulted in a very heavy load.

I personally helped construct Hill 151 one sandbag at a time. A few months later I helped tear it down one sandbag at a time.

And for this we were called R.E.M.F.s by the grunts. Everyone thought we were getting over. We were getting over. OVERWORKED, that is. My neck and biceps grew by three inches while my waist decreased by three inches.

I cherish those times to this day as I cherish those men I served with.

Nearing the End of the Line

By PNC Gary Noller



Who will be the last Americal veteran to serve as an active-duty officer?

The Americal Division was deactivated in Vietnam in November 1971. An eighteen-year-old soldier serving with the division at that time would now be 52 years old. It is fair to say that the bulk of Americal veterans are somewhat past the age of 55.

But Americal veterans are still serving on active duty and with reserve military components. The exact number of these veterans is not known but it is probably in the double digits. Active duty officers are even a smaller group, probably in the single digits.

Who will be the last Americal veteran to serve as an active duty officer? The answer is not known for sure, but Colonel Kenneth D. Rollins is certainly a prime candidate for this special honor.

Rollins was born in Hutchinson, KS in 1949 and grew up in Roswell, NM. He was drafted into the United States Army in 1970 and was assigned to Co. C, 4/21st Inf. in January 1971. The 4/21st stood down around June 1971 so Rollins was transferred to Co. E, 2/1st Inf.

Although he was trained in mortars (11C) he served as a radio-telephone operator (RTO) in a 4/21st Inf. rifle platoon. After moving to the 2/1st Inf. he worked in the 4.2 inch mortar Fire Direction Center (FDC).

He served in varying locations to include Duc Pho, LZ Debbie, San Juan Hill, China Beach, Da Nang, Hill 151, and LZ Maude. "I

remember swimming in the Song Ve River and fighting swarms of leeches at an old Special Forces camp near Ba To," he recalls.

Rollins was back home in time for Christmas 1971. He took advantage of the G.I. Bill and returned to college as a psychology major. In picking his career field, he says, "During my tour in Vietnam I witnessed several incidents in which the principles of combat psychiatry were applied. I didn't understand what was going on and I wanted to learn how to handle such problems. I decided to become a psychologist before I had ever met one."

In 1977 the U.S. Army offered him a clinical internship at Ft. Ord, CA, the same place he had received AIT in 1970. The following year he earned his Ph.D. degree from the University of New Mexico and received a direct commission from the Army. "I signed up for a three-year obligation, but by the end of my obligated tour I was having too much fun to leave," he says. "My Vietnam experience was a definite asset so I've stayed in."

Col. Rollins' current MOS is Army Clinical Psychologist. He is the Director of Human Factors for the Joint Personnel Recovery Agency at Ft. Belvoir, VA. "My special area of expertise is the handling of people who have been released from captivity, making sure they get the time and medical attention they need to become fully functional again." He is in charge of the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) psychology program at a Department of Defense (DoD) agency.

In March 2005 he had a brief temporary duty assignment in Iraq. He was assisting corps headquarters "improve their capability to report, locate, support, recover, and return DoD personnel who are being held captive in Iraq."

Colonel Rollins responded on a selection of topics that reflect upon his many years of service in the U.S. Army:

ADVA Editor Please relate the main change or changes that you have experienced in the Army from your early days in Vietnam to your current service?

Col. Rollins "I was out of the service between 1972 and 1977. When I came back in, the Army was still struggling to become an all-volunteer force. The problems with that transition took some time to resolve, but recruiting quality increased and a solid cadre of NCOs was developed. The overall change from individual to unit rotations has had a tremendous positive impact.

"In Vietnam I still felt a connection to the same group of guys that I trained with in AIT, rather than my combat unit. With the old system of individual rotations, units in the field had a hard time developing a sense of cohesion.

"The newest big change is the joint nature of today's force. All the services train and fight together. Army Corps headquarters function as a Joint Task Force (even multinational) Headquarters."

ADVA Editor Compare and/or contrast the Army in Vietnam with the Army of today fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Col. Rollins "Vietnam era draftees would be amazed at the quality and quantity of professional NCOs in today's military. When I was a draftee, almost all of the combat arms NCOs were gone, the Army in the field was nothing but draftees and ROTC lieutenants. Today the career NCOs are smart, dedicated, combat experienced, and available in every squad, platoon, and company. They lead and teach soldiers from the front. It took a few years to accomplish, but the all-volunteer professional Army is a very impressive fighting force."

ADVA Editor How do you perceive the support of the public for soldiers today with comparison of the same for when you returned from Vietnam?

Col. Rollins "I think there is a fundamental difference in reactions to the Army, most of the public today seems to be capable of supporting the troops even if they oppose the political goals of the war. I think this lesson was learned from the grief inflicted upon the Vietnam veterans. Also, the troop rotation method insures that there are public receptions, award ceremonies, and events designed to express support when the unit comes home."

Col. Rollins has two sons, three step-children, and one granddaughter. His son Luke, a journalist in the Maryland National Guard, was deployed to New Orleans with the hurricane recovery mission. Adam is a senior at Harding University in Searcy, AR, and plans to be a schoolteacher in inner city schools.

Rollins and his wife Kathy reside in Alexandria, VA. She is a psychologist with the Defense Intelligence Agency. He has signed a request to retire on 1 August 2006 which will give him just over 30 years of service.

In a closing comment he says, "Most of the soldiers who see my Americal patch today have no idea what it is, other than a patch they have not seen before. We are almost an extinct breed."



Humor ... In the Americal Uniform ... Vietnam

Wartime experiences can produce humorous moments ... memories that stay with us forever. Here are some of those moments ... as recalled from the soldiers who experienced them, for the lighter side of war.

Edited by David W. Taylor

The VC Chicken

(Rich Merlin, 1st Platoon, 23rd MP Company, Duc Pho - 11th LIB)

It was a quiet night and my turn to stand watch. I was sitting in the 2nd story of our bunker, just inside the main gate to the base camp at Duc Pho. I was carefully checking out all the shadows, to see if anyone of them was moving, when I caught some movement towards my left. There he was, slowly pecking his way though the wire, he seemed to know what he was doing and where he was going. Being a city boy from Boston I knew that normal chickens did not walk around at night, so this must be a VC chicken. It had to be. Also, being from Boston, I knew not to fire until I saw the white of its eyes.

I alerted (woke up) my MP partners, calling to them that there were "chickens in the wire". By this time the chicken had crossed through the wire and was now on the inside. We decided to "take it out". I thought about using my M-16 or M-60 but I knew if I did, that the whole bunker line would panic and open up, which would result in the LZ going on full alert. This could be a problem explaining to base defense ... so I decided to use my M-79 with a shotgun round. I fired and to my disbelief, missed! The chicken stopped, and looked around like it was saying, "what was that?" Before I could reload it went back through the wire and disappeared into the night. The next day we looked for blood trails, but could not find any. To this day I do believe we saved our base camp from a "fowl ending".

Jiffy Pop & Frisbees

(Doug Montgomery, Delta Co., 1/6, 198th LIB)

We had a guy whose Dad worked for some grocery supply warehouse that sent us a case of Jiffy Pop. We burned up all the heat tabs then broke into the

claymores to get C4 to pop popcorn. One guy sent in a Kool Aid package and \$.50 MPC for a Frisbee. They sent him a whole package of them. Our interpreters couldn't figure out how we were going to liberate their country and play catch at the same time. You had to have been there to see the absurdity in it.



The NVA Elephant

(Dave Taylor, C Co., 5/46, 198th LIB)

I was working my 2nd Platoon in the "Rocket Pocket" west of Chu Lai. The mission, as usual, was to keep the VC/NVA from firing 122mm rockets into the division base at Chu Lai. Further west lay the foothills of the Annamite Mountain Chain where my fellow platoon leader, Al, was looking for NVA. Al, like me, was an infantry OCS graduate and Airborne Ranger but had also been a Miami cop. He was as cool as they come in a firefight. I heard Al's radio crack in a frantic message to battalion, "I see an NVA elephant crossing over the mountain. We need to take it out with a gunship." The battalion CO scrambled to his helicopter on LZ Gator with the battalion surgeon and anyone

else who could hitch a ride. With wonderment I watched them fly over my position on the way to the mountains. Al was on the radio directing them, "left turn, left turn ... it is just below you!" After several turns the battalion commanders' radio came back to Al with, by that time, half the battalion monitoring the frequency. "Ah Lieutenant, all I see is a parachute from a marking round, waving in the breeze and that metal canister ... must be your elephants tusk." Shortly after our company was lifted back to Chu Lai for a brief standdown. We scurried around to find an elephant carving to present to Al. After that episode he became known as the "Great Elephant Hunter" until subsequent combat erased the humor.

Missing Weapons

(Rick La Shell, Delta Co., 5/46th, 198th LIB)

I'm not sure the government would find this story very funny. The guys would come to me as the company armorer and say they had an M-16 or whatever weapon missing and I would give them another one but told them to get me one in return. They always "found one" for me and I would deal with the serial number issue. We waited to hear a fire fight on the radio and somehow we mysteriously found that the weapon we had, had a serial number shot out of it. Usually looked like a shotgun blast ... but who knows? It's funny now but back then I was just covering for my guys. I did not want them to pay for a weapon that had been stolen from them right there at the Chow Hall on LZ Gator. There were a few Marines on top of the hill that would come in from their Combined Action Platoon (CAP) teams and I often wonder if that's where they went? Some poor slob in another company had to pay for that weapon unless his armorer was as resourceful as I. There is humor here, and also the reality of war.

Jungle Jive

(Gary Noller, Bravo Co., 1/46, 196th LIB)

Some things, you just had to be there for it to be so funny. One particular instance it was late at night, probably about midnight, and we had finally shut down the activity in the company CP. Hubert ("Sonny") Crowder would always have some kind of jive. Mind you, this was in the jungle so all of this is done in a whisper and heard only by two or three that are very close together. I know one case when he was really riding the Company Commander. He told the CO that he had better behave or else we would all get up in the middle of the night and move out and not tell him where we were going. He asked the CO how he would feel if he woke up in the morning and was all alone in the jungle? I was doubled up with squelched laughter. I knew this was all BS but I also knew the CO was probably wondering if we would really do such a thing. Is this humorous? I certainly thought so at the time but I'm not sure how it would translate today.

Hot Food & Mail Call

(Joe De Frank, Bravo Co., 1/6, 198th LIB)

It was Christmas 1967 and we got word that a "hot meal" was being choppered out to us in the field. We were elated to find that it included turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes, greens, coffee, pie and even ice cream - delivered right out there in the bush - in green Marmite containers by Huey. You could sense the apprehension of the support personnel who brought the food. They were not used to being in the field. While they were happy to serve us, they were much happier to return to a safe base camp. It was rather difficult to handle a 7-course dinner in a mess kit and I didn't want to pass up the ice cream. So I had them pile it on top of the other courses and I ate it before it melted. It was the strangest dinner I ever ate, but somehow it was awfully good. And we all had a good laugh.

Hugging Trees

(Ray Phillips, Alpha Co., 5th/46th LIB)

Alpha Company had been patrolling in the mountains for a few weeks when the incident happened. We were in a heavily wooded area and could not get choppers in for resupply. We were so low on food the leaches were starting to look tasty. The Company Commander decided that he would have all the troops get close to trees and have the choppers hover overhead, and push the C-Rations out. Our 4th Platoon Sergeant - not a popular guy, because he didn't know his craft, started running around assigning people to trees. The C's were dropped and, you guessed it, he was hit with a case of C's. So the idea of pushing out the C's out went to hell and we had to clear a place anyway to get a chopper in for our Sergeant. The Morning Report for June 30th 1968 read, "to 9th Support Hospital, bruised hip." He never returned to the company.



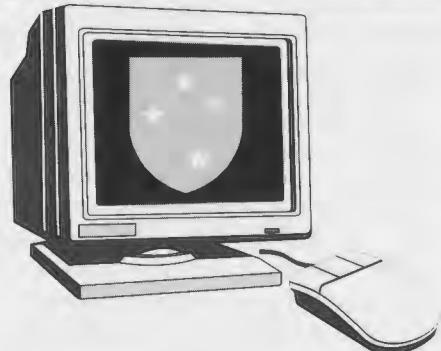
Getting Wet

(Jim Walton, Delta Co., 1st/52nd, 198th LIB)

We had humped about 13 klicks during the day and had then gone out on a night ambush. We returned to our "lager" at about midnight. We were exhausted and dug our sleeping positions as quickly and artlessly as we could. As luck would have it, my buddy John and I drew middle guard shifts. Now, he and I already had a reputation in the company for hating to get wet, and as a result our platoon sergeant dubbed us as "cats". Well, when the guy before me woke me for my guard, it had begun to rain and I was under water from my chest down to the middle of my calves. I really got pissed! I pulled my guard and decided that I might as well let the others sleep because I knew that I wouldn't be able to. I stayed up. Before long John was up too. Everything we had was wet. I finally found one dry Camel and we found dry matches somewhere. We sat and smoked what we could of our one dry cigarette taking turns under a poncho and cussed the weather, Uncle Sam, the VC and anything and anyone else we could think of.

At dawn a small group of VC opened fire on us. I lay down in the water and began returning fire. I looked over and couldn't find John. Suddenly I heard screaming from the paddy dike a few yards away. It was John standing on the dike

screaming at the VC. He was yelling, If you bastards think you are going to make me lie down in that f---ing water you are out of your f---ing minds! F---k all of you yellow ...". About that time another guy and I got over to him and dragged him down. He looked at us both and screamed, "You M--- R F---kers, I wasn't finished!" We held him down for a minute longer and he regained his composure. The forward observer called in a few artillery rounds and it was over. It's a good thing these guys were local VC instead of NVA or there would, most likely, be nothing funny about this.



Looking For: Anyone who was with **B-1/14 Arty** or **3/82 Arty** who worked in liaison on LZ Professional or LZ Maryann. Also anyone who was an F.O. or RTO with **1/46 Inf.** and stayed in the liaison hootch when they were on the hill. Contact: Dan Blevins

Looking For: All Assassins, **E-3/21 Recon**, 1968. Contact: SKIP MENARD

Looking For: Paul J. Bamond, **B Btry., 3/18th Arty.**, May 2, 1968 - April 28, 1969. Contact: Paul J. Bamond, [REDACTED], Goshen, NY 10924

Looking For: Ben Griffith. We were together in the 82nd and went **4/3 Inf.**, 11th LIB together, 69-70. Contact: Paul Burgett

Centuria, WI 54824

Looking For: Jim Guthro, 68/69, **198th LIB**. Contact: Dan Sipe

Las Vegas, NV 89109

Looking For: Lt. Moore, forward observer with C Btry., **3/82nd Arty.**, 1967. Contact: T.J. Foster

Scott Depot, WV 25560

Looking For: Anyone, **90th Chemical Det.**, 1969-1970. Contact: Ronald R. Rex

Planterville, Tx 77363

Looking For: Hansen, Arthur SGT., **Btry. A, 247th F.A.**, arrival Australia (4/10/1942), New Calendonia, Guadalcanal, Bouganville, Cebu (Arrowhead), depart Phillipines - Pacific Theatre (6/6/1945). Contact: Carl Brechter, 270 N. Chestnut, Bath, Pa 18014

Looking For: Anyone, **Co. B, 5/46th Inf.**, May 68 - Nov 68, including Plt Ldr - Lt Holden, CO - Cpt Ramsey. Robert Allen

Orange, TX 77630 (409) 883-6434

Looking For: Anyone, **C Trp., 1/1 Cav.**, May 68-Jan 69. Contact: Dennis Streeval

Looking For: Pops Reese, Dennis, **A Co., 123rd Avn Bn.**, 4/69-3/70. I was Crew Chief on Pelican 063, 721, & 272. Contact: Mike Cavanagh

Looking For: Members, **11th Sig Platoon, HHC, 11 LIB**, March 68-69. Contact: Ron 'Stue' Stuebing

Looking For: John Fisher, **American Division Headquarters** - Awards & Decorations 1968-1969. Contact: Richard Molzer

Lake Worth, FL 33467

Looking For: Information, **1/46th Inf., 196th LIB**, Aug 70 - Mar 71. Also **C Co., 523 Signal Bn.**, Mar 71 - Aug 71. Contact: Howard Weeks

[REDACTED], Harlem, GA 30814

Looking For: Gerald Kaplan, **B Co., 1/46th Inf., 198 LIB**, Oct 67 - Oct 68. Contact: Bob Ryan

[REDACTED], Attleboro, Ma 02703 [REDACTED]

Looking For: Torres, SGT Lopes, 1967-1968, **C Co., 1/20th, 11th LIB**. Contact: Joe Grimes

Looking For: Anyone, **C/5/46, 198th**, 69-70-71. Contact: Dave Hammond

[REDACTED], Beaverton, OR 97005

Looking For: Anyone who served with my grandpa, Chester Sherman Gibson, **Co. F, 164th Inf.** Contact: Robyn Wood-Millard

[REDACTED], Chesapeake, VA 23322

Looking For: Anyone, Recon, **1/20th Inf.**, June 2, 1969, knowing about SGTGEORGE ROBERT

PALERMO. Contact: Charles S. Seketa

[REDACTED], Liverpool, NY 13088

Looking For: Thomas Costos-Sean Cunningham, D Co., **39th Combat Engrs.**, Nov 67 to Nov 68. Albert Nolan Campbell

[REDACTED], Rock Island, Tn 38581

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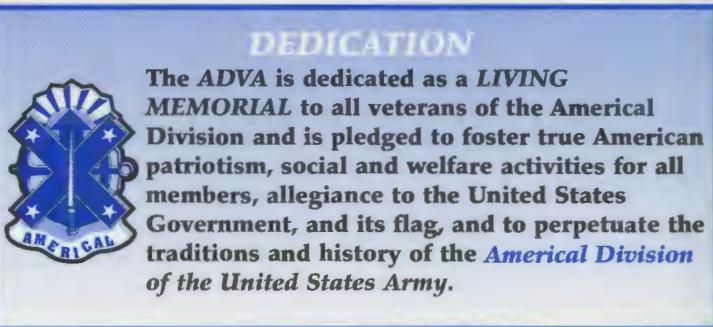
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