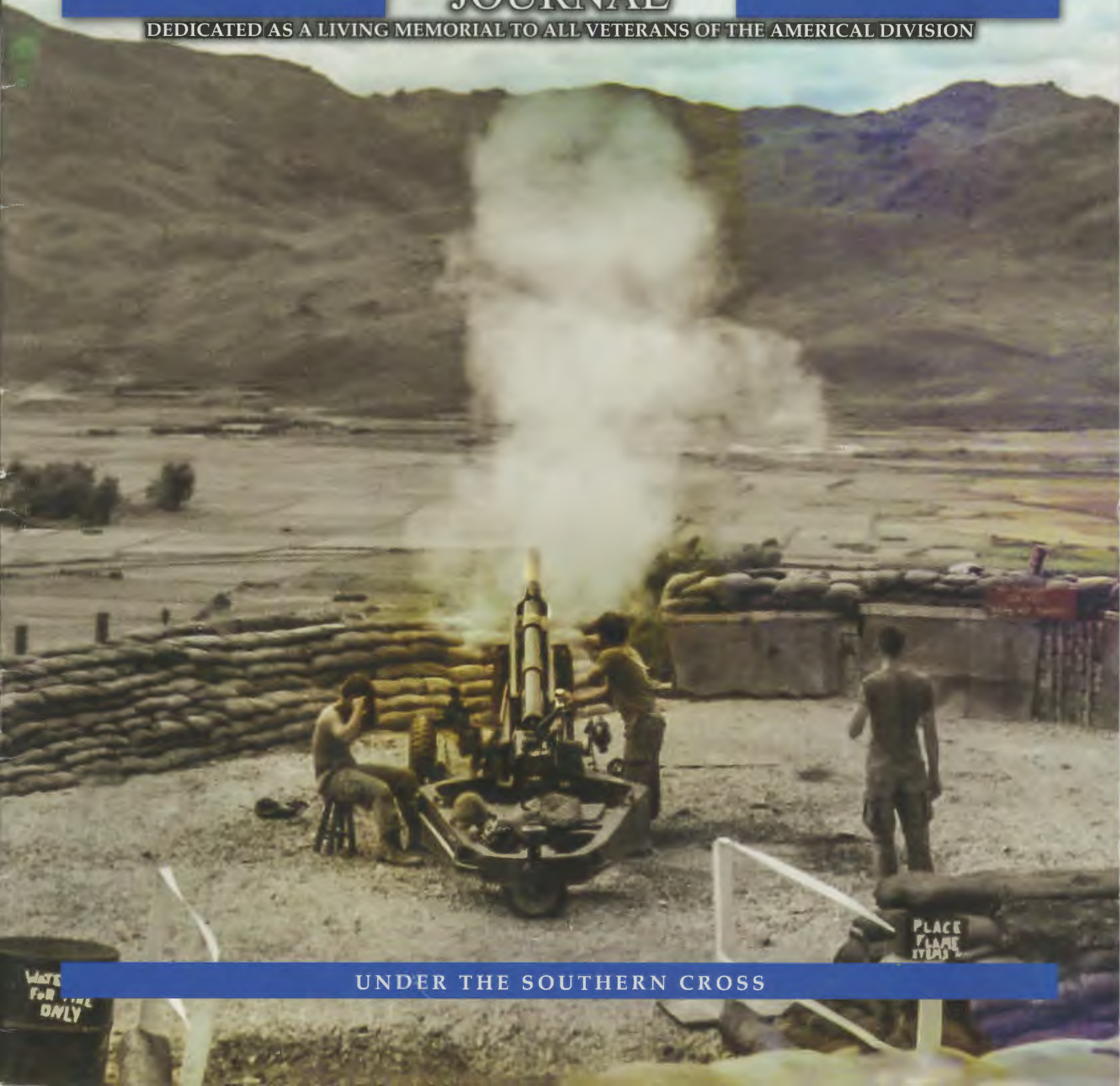




July • August • September **2019**

AMERICAL JOURNAL

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



UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Locator Requests

World War II

Looking for: Information on Amos Herman Mitchell, served in New Caledonia in 1942, believed to be in the Americal Division when it was formed. He is now 100 years old. Any information you can provide is appreciated. Contact: Ned Mitchell; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information about my grandfather, John H. Rima. He served in the Americal division during WWII. His records were lost years ago. We are looking to find out as much information about his time in service. If you can help me with anything that would be great. Contact: Matthew A. Rima; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any information on my grandfather, Staff Sergeant Gerald Bloomer. He was with the 182 Infantry and received a Bronze Star. He was MIA for several months but was finally found. His battles include: Guadalcanal, New Caledonia, New Georgia, and Bougainville. Contact: Amy Connor; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information on WWII vet. I live in Bendigo Australia. During WW2, 2 members of task force 6814 were billeted with my grandparents (Dec) at 201 Forest St, Bendigo. My understanding is that one of them was later killed on Guadalcanal. I am trying to locate relatives a soldier in a photograph that I have so that it might be returned to the family. It may mean a lot to them. I know it's a long shot but his name was 'Dick' or perhaps 'Richard'. My grandparents spoke fondly of him. Lest we forget. Contact: Steven Smith; [REDACTED]

Looking for: More information. I recently requested and received my grandfather's separation papers from the Army. He was a WWII veteran and the papers state he was assigned to the 164th. He is deceased now, and never really spoke about his service. I would love to find out some more about his time, such as when he was in the 164th, and what battalion and company. If you could help me so I can share it with my family, especially his wife, I would appreciate it. His name was PFC Edgar E. Dunning II. Contact: 1LT Samuel Dunning; [REDACTED]

Vietnam War

Correction: Looking for Cpt. Morris, 1/14 Arty, LZ Bayonet, July 69 and forward. He coordinated FO teams with 1/6 infantry. Good leader that looked out for his FO teams. Contact: Doug Burnett; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any of Thomas Eugene Miller's Army buddies that served with him in Vietnam. He did basic at Ft. Campbell in 1969. He served in the Americal Division. He passed away in November 2016. Contact: James R. Beltz; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Info on my Daddy Tommy Wayne Fleehart who served in Chu Lai about 67-69. He was stationed in Fort Leonard Wood. He was born in May 47. While protecting a brother his leg was shot off below the knee. He died at the age of 40 in 1987. I was only 7. It would be wonderful if anyone could help me. Contact: Kelly Lenard; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who knew Sgt. Charles R. Schleyer, Co. A, 2nd/1st, 196th LIB. Chuck's served as an infantry squad leader January 1970 and he was wounded in a sapper attack on February 10, 1970. He was medevaced to Japan after being stabilized in Chu Lai. He never returned to his company. Chuck passed away on March 18, 2019; he was 72 years old. If anyone would like more details, you may contact me, his brother, at [REDACTED]. I also served in the Americal a year earlier than Chuck, with F Troop, 8th Cavalry. Contact: Vern Schleyer; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Info on Allan Hoover in the 1/1st in Vietnam from 67-69? Contact: Dylan Birdwell; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone in 3/21 196th 1970 to 1971 Chu Lai. Contact: Dannie Alford; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who served with my grandfather in 1968 in Chu Lai, 198th LIB. He was wounded in action. His name is William Roth. He's still alive but he doesn't talk about it. He's my hero and all of you guys are my hero. Contact: Gary Sayers; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who served with my Dad. He was assigned to either HHT or A TRP 1/1 Cav near Chu Lai from Apr 68- Apr 69. I have a few pictures. Contact: Michael Jackson; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any information or anyone who served with my uncle, Staff Sergeant James G. Hildebrandt. He served with Co. A, 4/3 Inf., 11th LIB. He was KIA on July 18, 1968. Contact: David Adler; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who knew me. I only recall the nicknames. They were with 196th LIB, E Co., 2/1 Inf., Recon, 1969/70. Looking for Frenchy, Gatemouth, and Shaky. Contact: W. Blaschke; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone whom served in the 196th LIB from 1966-1967 and/or knew my father Richard W. Juhasz. Contact: Nancy A. Juhasz; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information and anyone knowing about me. My name is Ken Smith. I served in Vietnam in 1971 and 72. I was in both the Delta, 1/52nd, 198th LIB, and Delta, 2/1st, 196th LIB. Seeking Americal members who served during those for answers as to my time in Vietnam. Contact: Ken Smith; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Tom Scanlon, served with Americal from August 1969 to August 1970. Tom was from Minnesota. Contact: James Toth; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information on Co. A, 2/1st Infantry, 196 LIB, Kam Duc battle. My father served in Viet Nam and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Valor on his action May 12, 1968. I plan to do a documentary on his story and the story of Kam Duc battle from an enlisted soldier perspective. My father retired as a CSM with 26 years in the service. I can be reached at [REDACTED]. Contact: Debbie McClendon-Morgan; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Name of soldier. I am attempting to get his full name. He became the 16th CAG Operations Sergeant on October 17, 1969. I was a SP5 and worked for him. Contact: Jerry Smith; [REDACTED]

Command Time

By Reggie Horton, National Commander

PX Sales Director to Retire End of Year


Wayne Bryant recently announced that he and his wife Gena plan to retire from the management of the ADVA PX at the end of this year. Wayne and Gena have done outstanding work for many years and their services will be greatly missed.

When Wayne took over the PX sales it was customary to do a few hundred dollars a year in sales with ten or fifteen items available. Wayne expanded the product selection through the addition of many new products bearing the Americal and ADVA insignias. He and his wife attended every reunion and spent countless hours serving ADVA members and Americal veterans. They have our appreciation and gratitude.

With this in mind we need to determine a future for the ADVA PX. It is obvious that someone will need to step forward and volunteer to carry on with this valuable service. The PX was never intended to make profits in the manner that a for profit commercial service would expect. One of the major purposes of the PX is to provide items that promote pride and camaraderie.

We are soon pass our seventh decade and have to choose carefully how we spend our time. It may be necessary to cut back on the activity of the PX. Some ideas have been considered such as cutting back on stock, eliminating sales at reunions, eliminating mail sales, or some combination of activities. All suggestions on the future of the ADVA PX will be considered.

If you would like to offer your help please send me a message at jrhorton@esinc.net and I will be happy to discuss this with you. Wayne and Gena will be at the reunion in October. Pay them a visit, make a purchase, and give them your thanks for a job well done.



AMERICAL
JOURNAL

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

- Editor-In-Chief: Gary L. Noller
- Contributing Editor: David W. Taylor
- Creative Director: Lisa Anderson

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Webmaster Comments

By Gary L. Noller

25th Anniversary of americal.org

In December the ADVA will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the americal.org website. As the old saying goes, "Time flies when you are having fun."

I went on an airplane to Washington, D.C. for Veterans Day in November 1994. As I flipped through the airline magazine I noticed that almost all advertisers indicated a website featuring information about their business. It looked like the internet was catching on and expanding at a fantastic rate.

While in Washington, D.C. I chatted with ADVA member Jay Roth. He served with the 164th Infantry in World War II and was an electronics and computer wizard of sorts. I asked him if it was possible for the ADVA to get a website and he said, "Sure. Just do it." A month later americal.org was up and running.

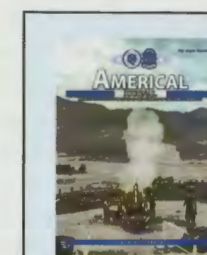
It was fortunate to have the assistance of three other individuals who had more knowledge and interest in a website than I had. My nephew Kevin Sartorius, my brother Greg Noller, and Greg's co-worker Tony Greene all jumped at the chance to try their hands at website creation. So we were off and running.

As time went on I learned how to program in the HTML language and did periodic updates to the website. After running into difficulties because of outdated methods the website management was passed to PNC Dutch DeGroot. He updated many features and added enhanced security features. Several years later Dutch handed the website back to me. The ADVA currently spends about \$500 per year in professional and other fees to keep its website in operation.

One of the most valuable services of the website is the locator service. On the page to the left you will see locator requests that have come to the ADVA through the website. It is not unusual to get half a dozen requests per week. The requests are posted to the website and listed in the magazine. The locator requests often meet with success in finding a long lost buddy or someone who has information of interest.

You can see from the locator list that we get many requests from family members seeking information about the military service of a father, grandfather, uncle, brother, or other family member. In many cases too much time has passed- not only for World War II but also for veterans of the Vietnam War.

I encourage all veterans to leave some sort of story behind so that descendants searching for information, maybe 25 or 50 years from now, can learn about the veterans service during a time of war. One way to do this is to write a story for publication in the Americal Journal. I will help you with it. I can be reached by email at gnoller@aol.com.



Cover: Firing on Charlie Ridge, LZ Rawhide (Da Nang), Hill 65, D/3/82 Arty, 1971
Photo by: Jack E. Curtis, 1971.

Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore

I trust all ADVA members had a great summer and enjoyed the outdoors as much as time and age permits. For this reporting quarter, the association fared a little better than the previous reporting period in terms of membership gains. We picked up sixteen new members. Of those sixteen, six joined as life members. One former member was reinstated to active membership during this reporting period. Six annual pay members paid the required life member dues to upgrade their membership. This is a significant drop from the number we typically see for this membership statistic. Two of our new members are WWII Americal Division veterans. New members Darold Sidmore and Jack Barnhart served in the 182nd Infantry Regiment during the division's WWII service in the Pacific Theater.

On a personal note, I welcome new member Douglas Knight. Doug and I were OCS classmates at Fort Benning during our 1969 training cycle and were assigned to the same platoon in OCS Class 2-70. Hats off to ADVA members Frank D. Morris, Bob Kapp, Michael Feltes, Ed Den Braven, SVC David Eichhorn, John Mosely and Jessie Lewis for their new member recruiting efforts this quarter.

Our membership breakdown listed below reflects the stagnant nature of our membership. As we bring in fewer new members each quarter but lose more than we gain due to member deaths and annual pay member non renewals, our total membership shrinks. Two membership recruiting campaigns are in the works at the time this article was written. A group of ADVA members, led by member Chuck Holdaway, will be attending the annual all veterans gathering in Kokomo, Indiana this September. Chuck and the group will have a table and space set up for recruiting Americal Division and Task Force Oregon veterans into the association. Chuck plans to take plenty of association material to distribute to prospective members. In August, PNCs Gary Noller and Ronald Ellis attended the 196th LIB Association reunion and distributed Americal Journal issues to encourage 196th veterans to join the association. In future issues of this publication, I'll provide feedback on these membership recruiting initiatives as I receive new member applications. If you have a name and mailing address for a potential ADVA member, please send me the information and I will mail the prospective member an application form and instructions on filling out the form.

This paragraph is information for annual pay members. Occasionally, I have to "re-balance" names in the roster for each annual pay period (January, May and September) to prevent one renewal period from having too many occurrences. I moved 40 members from the September 2019 renewal period forward to the January 2020 renewal period. This change does not affect annual membership in any way; it merely moves the renewal date forward by four months. All members affected by this change were mailed a post card in August advising their renewal date is affected by this change. All members with renewal dates September 2019 should have received their renewal notices in early September.

Your dues renewal status is listed in the address box on the back cover of this issue. If your annual pay renewal date is listed as JAN19 or MAY19 please mail your dues renewal check ASAP

The Taps listing again lists more names from the Vietnam era than WWII. Members who served in the Americal Division medical corps may recognize the name of Thomas E. Bowen in the Taps list. Bowen was a BG (Retired) who had a distinguished service career, serving as Division Surgeon and CO of the 23rd Medical Battalion. General Bowen also served at Walter Reed Army Medical Center as Assistant Chief of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery. Please inform me when you know of the passing of an Americal Division veteran or ADVA member so his name, hometown and unit information can be listed in the Taps section.

When you make an address change, whether permanent or seasonal, please inform me as soon as possible so I can update the ADVA roster. Email is the most efficient method of notifying me when you move and you incur no costs. My email address is [redacted] and is listed on

ADVA MEMBERSHIP

31 July 2019

World War II	268
Vietnam	2,481
Cold War	6
Associate Members	181
Total Members	2,936

the back cover of this publication. If you prefer to call, my cell phone number is [redacted]. The membership application form on the back cover of any Americal Journal can be used to send written notification of a change to the following address: [redacted], Richardson, Texas 75080.

New Members

Robert Austin
C/3/1st Inf
McKenzie, TN
★ Self

Leroy H. Davis
5/46th Inf
Morristown, TN
★ Frank D. Morris

Eugene P. Hardy
1/14th Arty C Btry
North Bay, NY
★ Self

Michael L. Hawkins
123rd Aero Scouts
Anderson, SC
★ Bob Kapp

Michael Hertz
E/3/21st Inf
Bluefield, WV
★ Self

Clifford Lauderdale
196th LIB
Shorewood, IL
★ Michael Feltes

Albert R. Minton
196th LIB
Moore, OK
★ Ed Den Braven

Darold D. Sidmore
182nd Inf Rgmt
Hampton, IA
★ Self

Raymond Smith
Div HDQ
Paden City, WV
★ SVC David Eichhorn

Gale Wilson
57th IPSP
Rockingham, VA
★ Self

New Paid Life Members

Jack Barnhart
182nd Inf Rgmt Co L
Caldwell, OH
★ SVC David Eichhorn

John Edholm
B/4/21st Inf
Tonawanda, NY
★ John Mosely

Robert W. Fulmer
6/11th Arty B Btry
Fort Smith, AR
★ Jessie Lewis

Douglas P. Knight
B/1/20th Inf
Redmond, WA
★ Roger Gilmore

Roy T. Mains
D/1/52nd Inf
Falmouth, KY
★ Self

Roque Ortega-Colon
23rd Admin Co – HDQ
Monticello, NY
★ Self

Michael Aaron
23rd MP Co
Clarion, PA
★ Self

Donnie Black
B/4/21st Inf
Pittsburg, PA
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

Lowell B. Davis
198th LIB – Avn
Medway, ME
★ Self

Robert E. Gillan
C/2/1st Inf
Natchitoches, LA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Ron Hanson
B/5/46th Inf
Columbia Heights, MN
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Dale Jeter
198th LIB
Peoria, AZ
★ Roger Gilmore

Reinstated Members

William D. Staebell
E/4/3rd Inf
Bloomington, MN
★ PNC Rollie Castronova

TAPS LISTING;
MAY THEY REST IN
PEACE

World War II Veterans

Marvin Allesee *
132nd Inf Rgmt
Chicago, IL
2007

William T. Elliott *
246th FA
Traverse City, MI
April 24, 2019

Leonard L. Johnson *
182nd Inf Rgmt Co D
Glasgow, KY
October 2, 2018

James A. Rains *
164th Inf Rgmt
Buffalo, NY
Date Unknown

William Trapanese *
245th FA
Fort Myers, FL
June 2018

Vietnam Veterans

Paul Baker *
176th ASHC
Marietta, OH
March 2018

Leo Bartnik, Jr. *
A/4/31st Inf
Hampstead, MD
April 2018

Thomas E. Bowen
Div HDQ – Chief Surg.
Apollo Beach, FL
April 15, 2019

Rick E. Clements *
523rd Sig Bn
Glenwood, IN
August 11, 2018

Cyril J. Corrigan
C/1/6th Inf
Landsdale, PA
March 23, 2019

Laverne Dean *
196th LIB HDQ S-3
Billings, MT
October 6, 2018

John M. Gaspar, Jr. *
23rd Admin Co
Carlisle, PA
May 10, 2019

Charles E. Getz
1/52nd Inf (Bn Cmdr)
West Virginia
November 22, 2018

David L. Grieger *
176th Avn Co
Salem, AL
January 2019

Charles E. Johnson *
C/2/1st Inf
Rome, GA
Date Unknown

Terry A. Morris *
A/1/52nd Inf
Hawesville, KY
July 7, 2019

Charles Schleyer *
A/2/1st Inf
City Unknown
March 18, 2019

Middletown, OH
October 14, 2018

Roy Syring *
523rd Sig Bn C Co
Mosinee, WI
April 14, 2018

* ADVA Member

NOTICE OF BI-ANNUAL ELECTIONS

Elections of offices for the Americal Division Veterans Association will be held in the first half of 2020.

Voting will also be held on any amendments to the ADVA bylaws. Proposed amendments to the bylaws must be submitted to Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant, no later than November 15, 2019. Proposed amendments will be reviewed by the Executive Council for their recommendations.

Procedures for the elections and voting are provided in ADVA bylaws. All elected positions will be open. Incumbents are limited to two two-year successive terms.

Officers to be elected are Commander, Senior Vice-Commander, and Junior Vice-Commander. Eleven positions on the nationally elected Executive Council will also be decided on the ballot.

Ballots will be mailed near the end of March 2020 and will have to be returned to the chairman of the nominating committee by early May 2020. Specific mailing instructions and deadlines will be on the ballot. Newly elected officers will take office effective July 1, 2020.

The nominating committee will be appointed by Reggie Horton, National Commander. Anyone wishing to be considered for an elected position should contact Reggie Horton, National Commander, or Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant.

Chapter officers are not elected on the national ballot. Chapters conduct the selection of chapter officers according to chapter rules and are not governed by ADVA national bylaws.

Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore, Chairman, Board of Directors

Foundation Web Site

The Foundation web site is a quick and easy way to make a donation to the Americal Legacy Foundation. Use the Donate link and click on the yellow oval image at the top left of the screen to get into the PayPal tool for making your donation. You have the option of using PayPal or your personal debit or credit card. Since November 2017, the Foundation has received just over \$3,800.00 in donations made on-line. Many of the donations are from non ADVA members. I encourage you to use this method for your next ALF donation. The entire process takes less than five minutes. The foundation website is www.americalfoundation.org.

Americal Legacy Calendar – 2020 Edition

David Taylor is working on the layout for the 2020 edition of the Americal Legacy Foundation calendar. This will be the twelfth edition of our fundraiser primarily for funds our monuments programs. Plans are to mail the 2020 calendar with the 4th Quarter edition of the Americal Journal publication. Past financial support for the Foundation's various monument and grant programs has been tremendous. We are optimistic that we will have continued financial support from all who have so faithfully supported our Legacy programs in past years. Without this support the permanent monument programs honoring the legacy of the Americal Division in its three eras of activation would not be possible.

David advised us the 2020 calendar issue will be his last. David has overseen the layout for the calendar since its inception, and has done a superb job laying out the presentation for each month. We truly appreciate his work on the calendar and will miss his fine work. Over the coming months, the Foundation directors will be discussing other options for fundraising to support programs formerly funded by calendar donations.

Americal Monument Programs – National VA Cemeteries

This is intended to be a report of where we stand with the approval process at the various national cemeteries sites we have selected for placement and submitted the required documentation. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is part of the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). We encounter some of the same obstacles encountered at other VA agencies. The NCA Commemorative Works program is headed by the Director-Office of Field Programs. The NCA recently moved from an alignment known as Memorial Service Network (MSN) to five districts, and the commemorative works program for each district is overseen by the District Director. Depending on the value of the commemorative work proposed for placement, the final approval rests with either the district director or the VA Central Office in Washington, DC. The chain of approval starts with the individual cemetery director. If he or she approves the commemorative work, the proposal goes up to the district director. If the dollar value of the commemorative work is greater than \$5,000.00 and the district director approves the proposal, the proposal goes to the Director-Office of Field Programs in Washington for

final approval. Each district seems to operate with its unique set of guidelines and certainly different priorities. Initially, we had fairly quick success in gaining monument placement approval at national VA cemetery locations in Texas and Michigan. Now we are experiencing longer waits for next level reviews and approvals at VA cemeteries where we submitted the required documentation for monument placement.

I know there have been some recent modifications to the guidelines for documents required for terms and conditions agreements and contractor certification of liability. We have done our best to meet these requirements, and will continue to stay in contact with our POCs at the various cemeteries regarding progress towards approving our proposals. Following is a recap of VA cemetery sites selected and where we stand with our placement proposals.

Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery (North Little Rock, AR)

We are ready to place an Americal Division monument at this location. Our proposal was approved in mid 2018. We are awaiting completion of a major beautification and renovation project which was supposed to be completed in late 2019 or early 2020. The North Little Rock area experienced very heavy rains this past spring which delayed much of the construction work for the renovation project. Word from the cemetery assistant director is the completion is delayed for approximately 120 days. Expected completion is now Spring 2020. Once we receive word the work is complete and we have access to the memorial area, our staff will travel to the cemetery and select a monument site and locate a local contractor to place the concrete slab for the granite monument.

Long Island National Cemetery - (Farmingdale, NY)

Lack of interest in our monument placement proposal at this cemetery seems to be an ongoing issue. In June, we responded to an April request to submit new documents for design and the cemetery's terms and conditions. I requested a waiver on the requirement to submit a cost estimate and contractor liability form for the concrete base. To date, I have not had a response to the June communication.

This site proposal may be taking a turn for the better. In July, I was informed the director at the Rock Island Arsenal National Cemetery will be taking over as director at the Long Island facility. Through ADVA member Lyle Peterson's efforts with the initial contact and proposal discussion, we submitted at Rock Island in May. Both Lyle and I have found the outgoing director at Rock Island very receptive to our program and easy to work with. I spoke with her by telephone in July about the situation at Long Island and she advises she will be looking into the proposal delay once she gets into the director position at Long Island. She knows we have a track record of Americal monument placement at VA Cemeteries, and I feel like she will get the Long Island proposal on the right track.

Camp Butler National Cemetery - (Springfield, IL)

The end of April we were advised by the cemetery director that the NCA adopted new policy requirements in December 2018. The new policy requires some additional design plans and contractor information. In mid July, I inquired if the concrete base design drawings requirement could be waived

until we received approval for placement. The response was no – the entire package of required documentation with the conceptual landscape plan, concrete base technical drawings and contractor certification of liability had to be included before being submitted to the district director. The director did furnish cemetery documents to be used for preparing a conceptual landscape design. We will use these to formulate a conceptual landscape design for our monument. Next step will be to locate a local concrete contractor for a contract proposal and the required technical drawings.

Dallas Fort Worth National Cemetery - (Dallas, TX)

A replacement granite base to support the monument stone was set and sealed the end of April. See the following picture of the completed work. A noticeable improvement in the monument presentation.



Rock Island Arsenal National Cemetery (Rock Island, IL)

In March, ADVA member Lyle Peterson contacted us about placement of an Americal Division monument at the Rock Island Arsenal National VA Cemetery. Lyle visited this location and advises they have a nice memorial walkway where our monument will be a great fit. Lyle spoke with the cemetery director about a potential placement. The director furnished us their terms and conditions and liability documents for signing. The complete placement proposal package with required documents was submitted to the director in early April. In May, the director confirmed receipt of the proposal package and it would be submitted for approval through the NCA process. She also advises the process may take several months. We are awaiting a response about the package review and decision.

Washington Crossing National Cemetery (Newtown, PA)

ADVA member John Farley proposed placement of an Americal Division monument at this location approximately 18 months ago. In mid June, I spoke with John about this location and he agreed to approach the cemetery director about our legacy program and monument placements at national VA cemeteries. John provided the cemetery director our standard monument placement proposal documents. The director requested additional information, and in my follow up phone conversation with the director he advises he will have his grounds director send me documentation on the landscape setting and a current work project underway to redo the

cemetery grounds. This information will help us prepare the addition documentation required for the proposal.

Americal Monument/Memorial Programs – Other Locations

Museum of the U.S. Army – Unit Tribute Plaque

Director Gary Noller has been in touch with the Museum staff POC for the Unit Tribute program over the past three months. Gary is attempting to get more information on details for unit listing and the process for approval of the design. The last word he received in mid May is that the renderings were being worked on and he would receive them once the document is complete. We await the rendering for the design and word on the plaque donation timeline.

Fort Polk, LA

In late April, I spoke with the chairman of Fort Polk's Memorialization Committee about placing an Americal Division monument on post at Warrior Park. He was receptive to the idea and advised me to submit a proposal package which he would submit to the Board. He also advised the garrison commander would have final approval for such a project, but felt the project would be approved. I emailed our standard placement proposal package to the chairman within a few days of our telephone conversation. Included in the email documentation was a narrative of our foundation's mission. Repeated follow-up contacts with the chairman in late July to inquire on the status of our proposal review have gone unanswered. More on this project in future issues of this publication.

Fort Rucker, AL

In June, Foundation directors approved a proposal to place a monument at Fort Rucker honoring Americal Division aviation units in Vietnam. Our initial plan was a monument design to honor Americal Division aviation units and list Vietnam aviation units at a high level on the inscription. However, our reviews of historical documentation from different sources (National Records repository in Maryland and an Americal Division organization listing prepared by former ADVA Historian Mark Durley) made us recognize it will be a daunting task to come up with a comprehensive list of aviation units that does not omit key elements. Mr. Durley's list includes the WWII Americal Division aviation units and this list is quite extensive, and would add to the complexity and cost to include WWII units on the inscription. In view of these issues listed above, our revised design plan will be to recognize the legacy of Americal Division aviation units by era.

Other Foundation Projects

The Vietnam Center and Archive

The Texas Tech Vietnam Archive Center currently contains 4,268 records in the ADVA collection. A new portal page should make the search process easier for ADVA members and veterans. The collection includes the Daily Staff Journals, newspapers, newsletters, etc. Searching is made easier by using keywords such as "journal" or "newspaper". A brief video tutorial to assist members accessing the website to search records is now in place. The new Americal portal address is <https://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/portals/americal.php>. Archive staff is happy to assist ADVA members with searching and using the Virtual Archive and can be reached via phone [REDACTED] or email at [REDACTED].

Americal Legacy Foundation 2019 Scholarship Awards

By William Bruinsma
Scholarship Chairman

It has been several years since I became chairman of the scholarship program. It has been a learning experience which I have enjoyed. Some things have changed over the last few years and some things concerning applications have stayed the same.

The first year I was chairman three English teachers judged the essays. After rating the essays two of the judges asked if the applicants were really high school seniors and college students. This was because some of the essays did not meet their standards for high school and college essays. The percentage of essays that are in this category has actually increased over the years. Presently the judges are three active high school English teachers. Quality of the essay is important.

The application form states that applications must be legible. This year forty-one out of sixty-three applications were easy to read. My wife and I were able to decipher the rest except for four. Using the attached transcripts and other items we were able to retrieve enough information to process the applications. Legibility is considered in judging.

Of the sixty-three essays received seven were in the format of an essay as determined by the judges. Twenty-nine had a title and name somewhere on the page, thirteen no name or title, eight had a title but no name, six had a name but no title. The essays without names are judged after the name is added but it does affect the judging. The correct format for an essay is important.

The address for twenty-one of the scholarship checks were obviously the schools main address. Checks sent to this type of address will take longer to be credited to the students account than if the correct address is used. In the past I have checked the address by contacting the school to send the check to the correct address and department. It may take a little digging to find the correct address but it is something the student should do. If the applicant decides to change schools it is their responsibility to inform me about it as soon as possible. The scholarship checks are usually sent by the middle of July and any changes after that have to wait until the check is returned from the first school and another check sent to the new school. This may take a considerable amount of time. The correct address is important and considered in judging.

The application for a scholarship is judged on several items, the quality of the essay and legibility are important but things such as the correct address that the scholarship check is to be sent to are also considered. From the postmark date on some applications it appears they may be last minute thoughts which usually results in an application which is not the best the applicant is capable of doing.

Elise Aaron - \$3,000

Duquesne Univ
Michael Aaron
23rd MP Co 198
1968-1969

Allen Caleb - \$500

Univ of Missouri KC
Gene Salisbury
Co C 1/6th 198
1967-1968

Nicholas Allis - \$750

Clarion University
David Allis
Co E 3/1st 11
Nov 1968-Aug 1969

Mitchell Alsbro - \$750

Univ of NW Ohio
Don Alsbro
23rd Admin Co
Dec 1970-July 1971

Liliana Astino - \$750

Clemson University
Joseph Astino
198th LIB
Feb 1968-Feb 1969

Ashley Barth - \$3,000

Univ of MO - Columbia
Gary Smith
Co E 4/21st 11th LIB
Dec 1967 - July 1969

Caroline Bowers - \$1,000

Merceer University
Alton Coleman
2/1st 196
Dec 1969-Nov 1970

Samantha Bunnell - \$500

Vallencia College
Samual Cox
Headquarters
Sept 1970-Sept 1971

Mark Costatza - \$500

Texas Lutheran Col
Charles Costanza
Co A 4/21st 11
Sept 1967-May 1968

Henry Denniston - \$500

Univ of Cincinnati
William Stull
D Bty 3/82nd Arty
Feb 1968-June 1969

Ashley Doherty - \$500

Liberty Univ
Jan Snedecor
Co A 1/20th 11
Jan 1969-Jan 1970

Alexa Eisenhower - \$500

Highland Comm Coll
Gary Eisenhower Sr
4/3rd Inf 11
Dec 1966-May 1968

Dane Ellingson - \$750

Univ of N Dakota
Bruce Hanstad
Co D 4/3rd Inf 11
Nov 1968-May 1969

Alexa Graham - \$500

Finger Lakes Com
College John
Schoenberger
1/46 Inf, 198; Oct 66-
Nov 68

Khenadi Grubb - \$500

Miami Univ of Oxford
Patrick Massie
Co A 5/46th 198
Mar 1969-Mar 1970

Ashlyn Hildreth - \$750

Boise State Univ
Richard Hildreth
3/16th Arty
July 1970-May 1971

Alexis Houser - \$500

Univ of New Haven
Elliot Houser
C 1/82nd Arty
Nov 1969-Nov 1970

Marcie Kaehn - \$500

Univ of Wisc Madison
Fredrick Comacho
A Bty 3/16th Arty
March 1968-Aug 1968

Brenna Keaty - \$500

Saint Louis Univ
John Sears
Co D 4/3rd
May 1966-Sept 1968

Della Langdon - \$500

Portland St Univ
Jack Godfrey
1/52nd 198
1967

Molly Laube - \$500

Univ of Wisc- Madison
Darold Sidmore
182nd Infantry
WW II

Myles Laube - \$750

Iowa State Univ
Darold Sidmore
182nd Infantry
WW II

Grace McKinney - \$500

Temple Univ
George Eckhardt
Co B 5/46th 198th LIB
Jan 1969-Aug 1969

Casey Merriam - \$500

Univ of Cent Florida
Darryl Merriam
HHC 14th CBT AVN BN
Sept 1968-Oct 1969

Kristen Merriam - \$500

Indiana St Univ
Darryl Merriam
HHC 14th CBT AVN BN
Sept 1968-Oct 1969

Alison Miles - \$500

Sonoma St Univ
William Miles
Co C 3/26th 196
Oct 1970-Aug 1971

Colton Miles - \$750

Univ of Calif- Davis
William Miles
Co C 3/26th 196
Oct 1970-Aug 1971

Rebecca Mularski - \$500

Univ of Wisc- Oshkosh
Philip Krause
1/52nd 198
Nov 1968-June 1969

Annalise Mullins - \$500

Kent St Univ- Trumbull
James Mullins Sr.
A Troop 1/1Cav
May 1969-Apr 1970

Hope Mullins - \$750

Moravian Coll
William Mullins
Co B 5/46th 198
Oct 1968-Oct 1969

Shoshanna Peifer - \$500

Univ of Minn- Twin Cities
Cary Bacall
Co A 523rd Sig Admin

Jacob Penrod - \$500

Drury Univ
Donald Penrod
Co B 1/6th Inf 198
Nov 1966-Feb 1970

Joseph Piekarski - \$500

Alexandria Tech & CC
Jack Hvezda
Co D 5/46th Inf 198
Sept 1969-Sept 1970

Lincoln Pritchard - \$500

Hendric Coll
Co E 1/6th Inf 198
Paul Smith
Oct 1967-Sept 1968

Kayla Pruitt - \$750

Virginia Comm Univ
Willie Pruitt
HHC 4/3rd 11
Nov 1967-Nov 1968

Eryn Riley - \$500

Ouachita Baptist Univ
Winston Fulmer
6/11th Arty
Jan 1968-Sept 1968

Olivia Rogers - \$1,000

S Dakota St Univer
Joseph Caropino
Co E 132nd Inf
May 1943-Dec 1945

Jeffery Rollins - \$500

Univ of Carolina- Char
Arthur Rollins
Co B 1/6th 198
July 1968-July 1969

Jansen Rouillard - \$750

Rockhurst Univ
Ray Griffin
Co B 5/46th 198
Apr 1970-May 1971

Rachel Roquemore - \$500

Univ of Oklahoma
Donald Wright
WW II
May 1942 - July 1945

Jon Ruble - \$500

Purdue Univ- Ft Wayne
John Schultz
4/3rd Inf 11
July 1970-March 1971

Ashlee Sandowski - \$500

Salve Regina Univ
Russel Blais
Co E 4/3rd 11

Aana Schlieff - \$500

Univ of N Dakota
Donald Stivland
Co A 3/21st 196
Dec 1967-Dec 1968

Mason Schlieff - \$500

Univ of Minn- Roch
Donald Stivland
Co A 3/21st 196
Dec 1967-Dec 1968

Taylor Schmitt - \$500

Elon University
H. Charles Wanko
D Bty 1/82nd Arty
Oct 1968-Oct 1969

Raymond Sears - \$500

York Coll of Penn
Thomas Dolan
1/20th 11
Oct 1970-Aug 1971

Nathan Seiler - \$750

Indiana Univ
Louis Seiler
23rd Ordnance
Jan 1942-Nov 1944

Annie Shipley - \$750

Towson Univ
Gerald Everett
328 Radio Research
July 1968-July 1969

Emily Shipley - \$500

St. Mary Coll of MD
Gerald Everett
328 Radio Research
July 1968-July 1969

Marrisa Smith - \$750

Purdue Univ
Larry Andrzejewski
1/52nd 198
Feb 1970-Dec 1970

Natalie Smith - \$500

Temple Univ
David Allis
Co E 3/1st Inf 11
Nov 1968-Aug 1969

Kayla Snider - \$750

Marietta Coll
David Eichorn
Co C 3/21st 196
1970-1971

Michael Starkman - \$750

Ohio State Univ
Robert Kapp
5/46th & 4/21st
Mar 1968-June 1969

Emmaline Steele - \$500

Snow College
James Gleckler
A Bty 3/16th Arty
April 1968-May 1969

Emily Sutherland - \$1,000

St Univ of NY-
Brockport
Thomas Schmitz
E & HHC 1/46th 196
June 1970-June 1971

Anneka Todd - \$750

N Carolina St Univ
Kurt Hoy
23rd Inf Div Arty
March 1970-March 1971

Jeremy VandenHout - \$750

Univ of Michigan
James VandenHout
4/21st Echo Recon
May 1968-Jan 1969

Kiara Vedovino - \$500

St Univ of NY- New
Paltz
John Murphy
B Trp 1/1st Cav
Jan 1970-March 1971

Rheanna Walther - \$500

Ball State Univ
Kenneth Howe
23rd Admin Co
July 1967-July 1968

Mary Washam - \$500

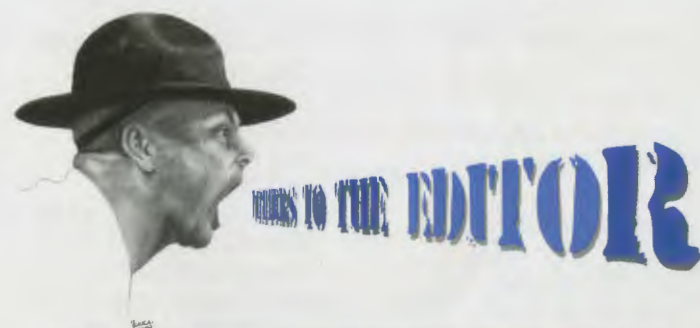
Southern Univ
Terry Washam
196th LIB
Aug 1970-Sept 1971

Marissa Watson - \$500

Lone Star Coll
Charles Watson
H Troop 17th Cav 198
Jan 1970-Dec 1070

Harrison Wilkes - \$4,000

Boston College
William Sargent
23rd MP Co
Mar 1969-Mar 1970



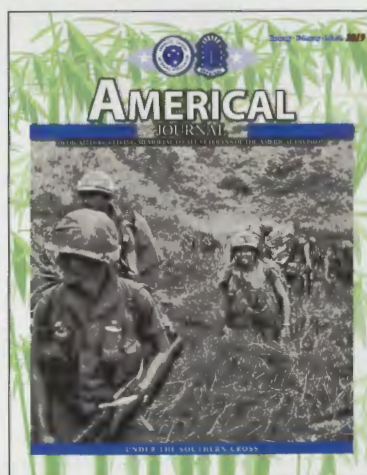
Dear editor,

I have been conducting some research on my time at Tien Phuoc. I am especially interested in details about a rocket attack that occurred during my tour (1971). With the help of two Marines I now have era correct war maps that are a big help in my research.

Tien Phuoc is in the middle of the page. It had an airfield capable of handling Caribou cargo planes. I have added some details of my own. Some are from memory and one is from a C7A Caribou pilots website. I remember seeing a wrecked aircraft southeast of the fire base. I found a page listing their losses while searching for pictures of C7A type aircraft of the type that flew in and out of the airfield.

Anyone wishing to share details may send me an email at 16cag1971@gmail.com.

Larry Barker



Dear editor,

Every time I look at the Brady photo on the January-February-March issue, one word comes to mind: brothers. Can only imagine what source of humor the soldier in the immediate foreground and the one mid-picture are sharing, but it is well communicated in their smiles. A lot of youthful brotherhood there. God bless them. Good select for the cover.

Dick Field
Americal Radio Research Company (Prov), 67-68

Dear editor,

Here is a story I have thought about writing for a long time, but was quite frankly embarrassed to write it.

Al Horner and Jim Gales were both on January 5, 1951. They both ended up in Bravo Co., 2/1st Infantry, 81mm mortar platoon in August of 1971.

For our 21st birthday we were out on fire base Maude in the mud and getting pot shots from the enemy almost daily. A few weeks later we got sent back to the rear area in DaNang for a five day R&R. We took in a floor show at the EM club and at one time we had 200 drinks on our table. Needless to say we were a little drunk. What should have been a ten minute walk back to our hootch took about an hour. We had five guys leaning on each other for support and between all of us we finally located our hootch that should tell you how drunk we were.

When we got back we were informed that there was a IG inspection the next morning and we were expected to have polished boots. I was livid! Polished boots in Nam? Who had any shoe polish?

Someone found one can and I grabbed it and said, "We will not polish our boots in Nam. We are not in the states and the enemy doesn't care if our boots are polished, they will shoot at us anyway." I said there has to be a better use for the polish. Al and Fran Hagan convinced me to use it as camouflage paint. So I proceeded to put it all over my face, neck and arms until the whole can was gone.

I was shook awake by my squad leader, Bob Hemmis. He said I had ten minutes to get the shoe polish off before the IG inspection. Soap and water did not help, nor sand mixed in with it.

As the inspecting General walked in the front door, Bob shoved me out the rear door and saved my ass. I would have been on every detail there was had they seen me. I didn't get caught and that afternoon we were loaded on to deuce and a half trucks and driven up to the ridge line around DaNang.

I don't remember how long it took for the sweat, frequent washings of soap, water mixed with sand and dirt before I was shoe polish free. I was the brunt of jokes from my platoon for weeks and got strange looks from everyone I passed. The lesson I learned was that we didn't need polished combat boots. Black shoe polish is a real great camo paint and it does not wear off fast even with the amount of sweat I always had. I vowed not to get drunk until the next R&R.

Thanks to Bob, I probably got saved from an article 15 as well as an ass chewing from the general and the captain. Is was nice of my platoon mates to take advantage of a soldier a little under the weather. In time I did pay back those involved and now we still laugh about it forty plus years later. I also learned that shoe polish on jungle boots serves no purpose.

Jim Gales

The Story of the Eagle

By Joe Kotarba

After finishing basic training at Fort Polk in 1970 I was assigned a military occupation specialty (MOS) of 13A10 (artillery). We then traveled by bus to Fort Sill, OK. I did basic artillery training on 105 mm and 155 mm howitzers. After finishing AIT at Ft. Sill I received orders to go to Vietnam after a 30 day leave.

I arrived in-country in September 1970 at Bien Hoa. After two or three days in transit I was assigned to the Americal Division in Chu Lai. Somewhere between Bien Hoa and Chu Lai my MOS was changed to Air-Defense-Artillery (ADA). I was assigned to a Quad-50 battery.

My next set of orders were to report to the Quad-50 on FSB Maryann. When I arrived on Maryann I got my first glimpse of a Quad-50. After three days of OJT the guy that trained me rotated back home. I spent 11 months in Vietnam and got out one month early in August 1971.

Since I still had seven months of active duty remaining I was sent to Germany and back to my old MOS artillery. The Army assigned me to the 3rd Armor Division. The battery commander of my new unit put me in the motor pool because of my civilian occupation as an auto mechanic.

After only three months in Germany President Nixon started to



cut troops in Europe and I got ordered home and discharged from the service. That was it just a little over 20 months of active duty. My Army days were over.

The years passed. Sometime around the year 2001 I found out that the veterans from FSB Maryann were having a reunion and memorial get together every year around March 28 at Fort Knox. I started to go to the reunion and I was reunited with our gunner on the Quad-50, Joe Barber. Joe had this really cool jacket with a Quad-50 on the back. I asked, "Where did you get that jacket?" He said from the group NDQSA (National Duster Quad Searchlight Association). I joined NDQSA and got myself one of those jackets.

At one of the Maryann reunions a veteran came up to me with an Americal Journal magazine from 2008. He said, "Hey Joe, did you see this picture of the Quad-50 firing on Maryann". I looked at the pic and replied, "Hey, that's me". He gave me the journal and I went home and joined the Americal Division Veterans Association (ADVA). I started to go to their annual reunions.

I have returned to Fort Sill twice since my days of training of AIT. The first was with NDQSA in 2003 when they dedicated a monument to the Air Defense Artillery Units (ADA) that served in Vietnam. The second was in 2018 with ADVA for their dedication of a monument to the artillery units serving under the Americal Division.

After the dedication of the ADVA

monument I had a conversation about the eagle on the ADA monument. The Americal and ADA monuments are next to each other near the Artillery History Museum. I said that the Eagle came from Marble Mt. in Vietnam. Here is a little history of how the eagle made it's way to Ft. Sill.

Luke Clark, his wife and daughter were part of a group from NDQSA that escorted three GSM (Gold Star Mothers) back to Viet Nam to visit where their son's died. While on the trip Luke saw the sculpture of the eagle in a shop. It was carved out of stone from Marble Mountain by local artisans. Luke purchased the sculpture and arranged for the shipping to his home in Louisiana.

His original idea was to create a Viet Nam Memorial in his hometown. When he got no favorable response from his local community, he offered the piece to NDQSA in order to place it at the Memorial Park at Ft. Sill. NDQSA started Operation Eagle and the rest is history. Funding for the memorial was raised from donations and the sale of bricks.

At the business meeting this year in Gettysburg, Pa where we had our annual NDQSA reunion we learned that the pedestal developed a crack. NDQSA is trying to locate a replacement block of granite. Technically the monument was gifted to the US Army so they are not sure how to proceed with the replacement at this time.



Footprints

By Michael Cunningham

I visited the village of My Lai, Viet Nam on March 16, 2018, on the 50th commemoration of the massacre. At that site 50 years ago to the day, an American infantry company from the Americal Division, led by officers Lt. Calley and Captain Medina, entered the village and massacred everyone and everything living there. A count of 504 deaths were confirmed. Pigs, chickens, water buffaloes were wasted.

Why? You ask.

Supposedly the Americans were frustrated by all the casualties they were taking without ever seeing the enemy. My Lai was to make up for their losses. The 504 innocent, helpless, defenseless, women (some pregnant), children and old men brutally massacred because the Americans were frustrated!

As I walked the grounds that were once a peaceful agricultural village along the coast of mid-South Viet Nam, many sights haunted me. Whoever recreated this devastated village as a memorial did an excellent job. Most of the hooches (slang term for Vietnamese homes) were depicted as they looked after the Americans left, burned to the ground. However, the re-creators built a hooch exactly as it looked 50 years ago, the day of the massacre. As I walked into the hooch, my mind flashed back 50 years, when I was a young 18 year old infantryman in Viet Nam.

Although I wasn't involved in the massacre, most Vietnamese hooches were built in the same fashion. Straw matted roofs held up by wooden poles,



dirt floors, walls made of either dirt or bamboo, with a few pieces of wooden furniture and clay pots strewn about. On the outside, farming utensils hung from the side of the coop holding the cattle or water buffalo – if the family was lucky enough to own one.

But of all the sounds and sights and smells I encountered, one vision haunted me the most, indelibly etched in my brain – the footprints.

The re-creator of My Lai village showed all the footprints in the muddy footpaths of the village; footprints of little children, mothers and old men as they were dragged off to their deaths by the American troops. Among the impressions of these bare feet I could see the distinctive boot marks of the soldiers.

The path along the canal was most revealing; the canal where 170 villagers were systematically gunned down. I could see the impressions of hundreds of feet in the mud, mostly small bare feet, but then there were those haunting boot marks of the American soldiers.

My eyes were riveted on these footprints – of the villagers and the soldiers. What could have been, if their lives weren't snuffed out at such a young age? What was going through their minds as they were dragged to the ditch and thrown in, to be slaughtered by such savagery? We'll never know.

But, I also thought of the soldiers. What was going through their minds as



they were committing these tragic acts? Were they just "following orders" or were they willing participants? Probably a bit of both.

But once again, Why? How could one human commit such savagery upon another?

One possible answer, training. We were taught in basic training and advanced infantry training that we were being shipped off to fight a people that were sub-human; gooks, dinks and slope heads were terms often used by our cadre. The value of their lives was not comparable to ours. By devaluing the lives of our enemy, it would be easier to kill them.

Even General William Westmoreland, Commanding General of all American troops in Viet Nam, conveys this demeaning attitude. He is quoted as saying, "The Oriental doesn't put the same high price on life as does a Westerner. Life is plentiful. Life is cheap in the Orient."

When I first heard General Westmoreland make this remark, something flashed through my mind. It was the well-publicized picture of a Vietnamese father holding the lifeless body of his child in his arms, standing beside an armored personnel carrier (APC) and looking up at the GIs atop the APC, pleading, crying for help.

Somehow this image didn't jive with General Westmoreland's rather cavalier remarks.

But is there more? What happened to our "moral compass"? Did we leave it at home?

Leadership? Obviously there wasn't any.

The tragedy of 504 lives wasted cannot be rectified. They are gone and nothing we do can bring them back. The long enduring tragedy is the impact these events had on the soldiers' lives and on society. How do you live with yourself after committing such egregious acts?

When I walked through the front gate of My Lai village on this most solemn of days, I was shocked to see so many people; mostly Vietnamese with a few westerners. Though it was a sad, reflective day, I saw many smiles and witnessed many warm greetings among the attendees.

I was no more than 100 feet past the main gate when it first happened. An elderly Vietnamese gentleman about my age approached me, grabbed my hands in his, and while looking deep into my eyes, he mumbled a few words. Even though I didn't know what he was saying, I did know. He



was thanking me for attending this sad event and he was telling me he forgave me for this senseless act of violence. As this gentleman walked away, another man grabbed my hand and squeezed tightly, again muttering a few soft words.

I stayed at My Lai for only a few hours, but I was greeted by so many kind, gentle Vietnamese. All passionately holding my hand and saying gentle, soft words.

Ironically, I was greeted by the younger generation of Vietnamese in a totally different fashion. So many young Vietnamese approached me with a big smile on their face saying "Hello." They wanted to speak English with me and have their picture taken with me. Initially, I was a little embarrassed. I didn't want attention focused on me. We were here for a somber occasion. Respect was of highest priority. But then I realized, time goes on and the young weren't even around when My Lai happened. So I attempted to blend my presence with respect, reverence and a bit of good public relations by speaking with the kids and discreetly posing for their photographs.

After several hours, I left. My Lai was behind me. But the image of the footprints kept nagging me. The poor bare feet. What pain they must have suffered. What cruelty. And the boot marks of the soldiers. Fifty years have passed but memories like these live forever. Just a few short hours of their lives will linger forever in the minds of these soldiers who left their boot marks on the village of My Lai.



Images From My Lens

The Americal Photos of
Herbert Brady

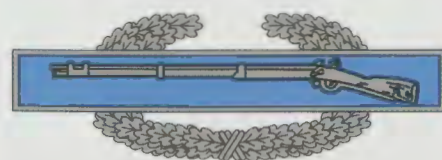


(Contributing Editor's Note)

This issue features a photo essay on "Grunts" as part of the continuing series of photos taken by Herbert Brady, Americal Division combat photographer. He recalls, "I worked with many units in the field. I enjoyed being able to do my job though I scared myself often. I tried to create a balanced image in my work that would tell a story"

Brady's work is stunning in its simplicity. His photos in this issue and the last two issues will bring back many memories to ADVA members.

Brady departed Vietnam in August 1970 but returned as an Army artist to Thailand. With some time in the Army Reserve, his total Army service was six years. He lives in California and is still heavily engaged in his art and photography.



GRUNTS



Riflemen of the 5th/46th Infantry Battalion move out from a landing zone. They are on low ground now but soon will be climbing up into the enemy-infested mountains.



5th/46th Infantrymen working on PRC-25 radios; not only do you have to hump them but when they don't work you get to fix them (in the mountains west of Chu Lai)

GRUNTS



1st/20th Infantry grunt humps radio on patrol 15 miles south of Chu Lai.



Enemy RPG rifle with three "grenades" captured on patrol in the mountains west of Chu Lai.



Spec 5 Stephen Tschannen with the 57th Scout Dog Platoon (his dog's name is Nick) moves along the edge of a bog with 5th/46th soldiers in the mountains west of Chu Lai.

GRUNTS



The landing zone wasn't a dry field, but a watery bog. FUBAR! Now the grunts have to get out as soon as possible because they are vulnerable. (in the mountains west of Chu Lai)

Soldiers of the 5th/46th Infantry wading through chest-high foliage deep in the mountains west of Chu Lai.



GRUNTS



Combat photographer Herbert Brady at his photographer's desk in Chu Lai.



On patrol on a dirt road; grunt carries a Light Anti-Tank Weapon (LAW), grenades and plenty of ammo. Only comfort item is a cigar in his hand.

Patrol momentarily stopped...grunts spread out in case of mines.



MY WAR STORY

By COL Bill Ridgely, USA Retired

I arrived in Vietnam on 17 June 1970, just 13 months after being commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in Military Intelligence branch from Engineer OCS at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. After receiving a new wardrobe and boots at the 'repo depot' at Long Binh we all pushed around the bulletin board anxiously waiting to find out where we were going to be sent. I was going to the 23rd Infantry Division (AMERICAL).

I arrived in Chu Lai with 1LT Rich Dietrich. We had gone through OCS (Officer Candidate School) and Infantry Officer Basic Course (IOBC) together and also our first assignments at Ft Bragg at CONTIC (Continental Army Intelligence Center) together. Our first billets were at the Americal Division Combat Center, where the flying cockroaches were as big as a zippo lighter. It wasn't long before we were welcomed by the Viet Cong (VC) when they lobbed four rockets in our vicinity. We were all so new we hadn't checked out the bunker outside our billets, but that's where we all headed when the siren blew after the first round impacted. It would have been nice to know in advance of the 8x8 timber holding up the center of the culvert pipe used as an expedient bunker.

Rich and I were both assigned to the division's 635th Military Intelligence Company. I was further assigned to the IPW (Interrogation of Prisoners of War) section, one of the company's five sections, and Rich was assigned to the MI team at the 198th LIB. The IPW section was adjacent to and behind the PW cage run by the 23rd MP Company.

MAJ Powell, the commander of the 635th MI Co, assigned me as interrogation officer of the section behind 1LT Martin, the assistant chief of the section, and CPT Boudoin VanPamelen, an infantry officer who was assigned as the chief after extending in country. CPT VanPamelen was on a 30 day leave when I got there and 1LT Martin was a short and actively planning on



Major Middleton, Commander, 635th MI Co. PHOTO MAJOR MIDDLETON, COMMANDER, 635TH MI COMPANY



1LT Bill Ridgely at Interrogation Section HQ, Chu Lai

going home. When he left I became assistant chief and shortly thereafter MAJ Middleton became the company commander.

The Officers' hootch was up the hill from the section headquarters and the enlisted billets. It was a small four-room tropical building with a corrugated tin roof over the sleeping quarters and a dayroom with a thatched roof. It should have been the other way around. The day room was much cooler than the quarters under the tin roof. On 25 June I recorded a temperature of 100 degrees in the building.

It was that same day that Rich and I accompanied



Officer's quarters, 635th MI Co., Chu Lai

an enlisted interrogator to the 91st Evac Hospital to interrogate a 17-year-old VC. What I remember is not the interrogation, but the young man's missing leg and bad head wound that he received before being captured.

On Sunday, 28 June, Rich and I were directed to go to the motor pool to get our military drivers licenses. The only criteria for the license was to answer the motor sergeant's question, "what color is the red sign behind me?" This was also the day that a unique batch of captured documents arrived at division HQ. Usually captured documents



Funeral of Ho Chi Minh

contained rice receipts and propaganda but little usable intelligence regarding military operations. This time was different. There was a dozen or so pictures of fairly good quality of Ho Chi Minh's funeral. The company's Image Interpretation section, one of the other five sections of a divisional MI Company, was very interested in them and was able to copy them.

The following day was my first trip out of Chu Lai. I went to LZ Bronco at Duc Pho to visit with the company's team with the 11th LIB. Little did I know that later in my tour I was to be the Officer In Charge (OIC) of this team. Each team at brigade supported the brigade intelligence officer (S2) with three intelligence functions, interrogation of prisoners of war, order of battle, and counter intelligence. The teams at each of the three brigades (11th, 196th, and 198) had an OIC, non-commissioned OIC (NCOIC) and military occupation specialty (MOS) qualified intelligence specialists in each of the three functional areas.

My MOS was as a staff intelligence officer not an interrogator, and for me working through an ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) interpreter and joining a war in progress for years before I got there I had a lot to learn. I went into one interrogation, asked a question and my interpreter and the PW talked for 15 to 20 min and he got all kinds of good information. These interpreters have done it so many times, and some of the questions and things we wanted to find out were routine and asked of all detainees. I just lent guidance to the session.

Having spent the years between 1962-1966 in college, I was plenty aware of the anti-war sentiment. But I hadn't entered the army until 1968 at age 23. As a young intelligence officer I came to believe that communism is really a more terrible thing than I knew. They display such little regard for these people's lives that I was deeply hurt as a human being that these kinds of things are being done to other people. I was more convinced than ever that our presence there was morally right which takes precedence over political or military right.

One day in July 1970, 1LT Martin and I jumped into a jeep and drove south on Highway 1 from Chu Lai to Quang Ngai. The road runs close to the coast, but the mountains inland were visible from it. We passed long stretches of rice paddies where the farmers and their water buffalo worked with wooden plows and we passed through numerous hamlets and villages. In one short trip we saw a panoply of life Vietnam style.

By 20 July CPT VanPamelen had not yet returned from leave and 1LT Martin had departed. I wrote to my parents, "I guess that I'm chief of the section now, although nobody has bothered to tell me directly." I was finally told that I was the acting chief of the Interrogation Section. It was a lot of work and a time-consuming job. I made some policy and personnel changes in hopes of streamlining the operation. I felt that I inherited a quite messed up section and the former chief was too lax in handling administrative matters. By 6 August CPT VanPamelen had returned from leave and resumed his duties as section chief and I became assistant chief of the section.

One of my additional duties as assistant chief was to be on orders as the War Trophy Screening Officer. In this capacity I had to implement Americal Division and United States Army Republic of Vietnam (USARV) regulations relating to the appropriate removal of items, mostly weapons, from Vietnam. I licensed a lot of crossbows and French rifles and pistols.

One provision of the regulations was that no piece of a crew-served weapon could be authorized for removal. I only had one instance where this became an issue. A battalion command sergeant major (CSM) appeared in my office wanting me to license a sight from a Chinese artillery piece. I refused and an angry CSM left. Not long after I had his executive officer standing before my desk demanding that I approve this same sighting device as a farewell gift to their commander who was due to rotate shortly. My answer to the major was the same and after some angry words he vowed to take the matter to my superiors. That was the last I heard of it.

On 26 July I spent the night as Officer of the Guard (OG). It's just about the same as stateside duty, but the emphasis, as explained to me, was that the main responsibility of the OG here was to see that the general's water tank is checked twice during the night and filled if necessary. Checking the bunkers and walking posts was secondary.

By the beginning of my second month in country I was explaining PAL (Postal Air Mail) and SAM (Space Available Mail) mail to my parents. The occasion was my need for underwear because the Vietnamese laundry lost a lot of mine and I always wondered how that happened. I had my suspicions but didn't get too upset about the possibility of my underwear being worn by someone in the village.

In spite of increased enemy activity, probably due to the 25th Anniversary of the Viet Minh on 19 August, our Vietnamese interpreters had a payday party and we all

were invited. They served some dish with Saigon shrimp, pickled onions (leaks) and peppers (very hot I heard so I didn't try them). I had to take a pickled onion though and because of an inherited allergy I stayed off the shrimp. Their parties inevitably turn into marathons so most of us early risers had to excuse ourselves around 11 PM. We talked about the war, Vietnam, and the U.S. It was all in all an enjoyable experience.

It was also at this time that I came down on the duty roster for guard duty again on 25 Aug. That meant another sleepless night, then on the 26th I was on orders to inventory the Americal Division Officer's Open Mess. The problem at a division headquarters in Vietnam is that a you still had all the duties of a stateside garrison Army in addition to that of being in a combat zone. There were also other problems to contend with in 1970. Equipment and personnel shortages. Almost all new jeeps, and jeeps and other vehicles of units pulling out went to the ARVN. It made no difference if your mission required you have transportation and you couldn't get the logistical support to keep it in running condition. Likewise, with personnel, you were required to put out the same quality and quantity of work even when you were woefully under-strength.

Four students were killed at Kent State University in May 1970, just before I left for Vietnam. Sterling Hall on the University of Wisconsin campus was bombed by anti-war dissidents on August 24, 1970, in an attempt to destroy the Army Mathematics Research Center (AMRC) housed on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th floors of the building. A researcher working late in the building was killed. I remember being incensed by these actions when I was in Vietnam. I remember the anger on learning of the incident in Wisconsin, my home state, when I was forced to live in quarters that almost come up to stateside slum conditions, cockroaches included, and my clothes were washed on the floor of a shower room. My indignation at such incidents showed in my letters home.

In spite of the fact that the chief was back from leave, the interrogators continued to look to me to administer the section. CPT VanPamelen and I shared an office at one end of a tropical building that was our headquarters. He let me know that he was more interested in having the



HQ, 635th MI Co., Chu Lai

troops up at 0700, having me inspect barracks to ensure bunks met Army standards, and having shined boots. As acting chief I walked through the enlisted billets for health and welfare inspections but never made an issue of tight corners on the bunks or shined jungle boots. It was upsetting to our enlisted troops and foreshadowed my future reassignment to the team at the 11th LIB.

By October the conflict between myself and CPT VanPamelen reached a point where I asked MAJ Middleton for a transfer to the intelligence office at I Corps headquarters in DA Nan. He denied my request after brief consideration and decided that I could better serve the company by going to the vacancy in MIT 1 at 11th LIB headquarters, LZ Bronco, Duc Pho. I felt I was back in the Army instead of playing at being an adult in my last assignment.

I wrote the following in a letter home after arriving at LZ Bronco. "We have had plenty of rain in the last 4 days, in fact if we were back in the world Washington would have already declared us a disaster area. As it is there's just a lot of talk about it being a hardship tour and the rest is pretty much accepted. We haven't had mail for the last three days and mail hasn't gone out either. Conditions didn't permit aircraft to fly and the floods washed out the last remaining link with logistical support, the highway.



Welcome to LZ Bronco

Food and ammo were on the verge of becoming critical (brigade level included) then the weather broke today. Resupply and mail are both expected tomorrow. I'm not really sure which I'm more anxious to get.

"I live in a bunker here at LZ Bronco (HQ for 11th Bde 'The Jungle Warriors' also known as Camp Duc Pho). It's completely underground with about six feet of concrete, sandbags, steel & timber over me. The fire support base (FSB) is smaller than Chu Lai, as you would expect a Bde HQ to be smaller than a Div HQ. But Chu Lai has been rocketed as recently as Sept, if you'll remember, and Bronco hasn't been hit for over a year (knock on wood!) I did take on some water during the rain, through the ceiling, but took some preventative measures so it doesn't happen again. The monsoon has only begun and is supposed to last unto March.

The change for me to LZ Bronco was the right one. COL John Insani, also an ADVA member, was the brigade

commander. In my first official encounter with him I had to argue my position on the classification of a detainee. We had probably classified them as an innocent civilian or civilian defendant and not a PW and the brigade intelligence officer (S2) and I had some heated discussions over some of these classifications. I expected the worst but bolstered by the



Front and back views of author's bunker at LZ Bronco

regulations and guidance from the Staff Judge Advocate I was able to successfully argue our case. I found COL Insani to be a reasonable man and a good commander.

In the middle of March 1971 I learned that the Army was authorizing early Release From Active Duty (REFRAD) for OBV-2 (Obligated Volunteer 2 years) officers. My adjusted date (from normal REFRAD of 15 May 71) became 20 April. Normal DEROS (Date Estimated Return from Overseas) is usually about 7 days before REFRAD so I expected an adjusted DEROS date of 13 April, just a month away.

This news was probably the grounds for a gathering of five lieutenants at brigade headquarters, me, 1LT Brad Dickinson, platoon leader of the 23rd MP platoon, the ASA (Army Security Agency) lieutenant who wore infantry brass and acted under color of a radio research officer, the chemical officer, and another lieutenant. The Brad and I were authorized access to the village and always secured the charcoal for the cookout, the others scrounged steaks and potatoes from the mess halls. We'd light the charcoal with C4, grill the steaks and potatoes and spend the evening undoubtedly talking about how the war could be won more quickly if only lieutenants were in charge.

Shortly after receiving the news about this one month drop, I was informed that the 11th LIB headquarters, with all tenant and support units, was to be mobilized to the DMZ at Dong Ha in support of Operation Dewey Canyon II. One of the two jeeps assigned to MIT 1 was inoperable and had been dead-lined in the brigade motor pool since my assignment there, but my NCOIC was able to pull some Army magic and get it running in time to make the convoy.

We all packed our personal gear, but my headquarters had a four-drawer safe with classified documents we couldn't take. The same safe that still contained some remnants of

the records not taken by the Army commission investigating the My Lai massacre which had occurred in our AO. MAJ Middleton told me someone from the company would take possession of the documents.

We were about 15 minutes from the convoy pulling out of LZ Bronco and I was waiting. All these safes had thermite grenades on them. These grenades can burn through steel and are used to destroy the contents of a safe in the event of potential compromise, you pull the pin and drop it in the top drawer and it burns all the way through four drawers. I had the grenade in my hand when the team from division arrived. My entire team piled into those two jeeps with trailers and convoyed to Da Nang where we boarded US Navy ships for the short haul north to the DMZ.

SP5 Fred Whitehurst was my NCOIC when I arrived at MIT 1. Years later I learned that Fred had retained and not burned, as was SOP, the diary of Dr. Đặng Thùy Trâm a 27-year-old NVA battlefield surgeon killed in Quang Ngai province, the AO of the 11th LIB, in June 1970. After retaining the diary for 35 years Whitehurst was able to locate Trâm's mother in Vietnam and returned the diary, which has now been translated into English, and adds much to the historiography of the Vietnam-American war.

I left Vietnam in April 1971 and was released from active duty at Fort Lewis Washington. My uniforms and boots were in the basement until 1973 when I returned to the Army Reserve until my retirement in 1999, after 31 years of service. Anyone who's been there will tell you that it leaves a lasting mark. It is a defining life experience. In 2012 I earned a Master of Arts degree in Military History from Norwich University.

[About the author: COL BILL RIDGELY, USA RETIRED. United States Army Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame class of 2007. Engineer Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame class of 2011]



Through My Eyes: A Story of Hope

By Bob G. Whitworth (c) 2012 – Fourth Of A Series

Chapter 8 Lessons Learned

We had been patrolling all day. We stopped for a break in the shade of some tall coconut trees, trying to get some relief from the hot sun. Guys lit up smokes or dug some old snack out of their packs, washing it down with warm water from their canteens. The days of getting cold drinks from a refrigerator seemed gone forever.

Bruce somehow ended up with a coconut off one of the trees, busted it open, and was doing his best to get the meat out of it. He had been drafted from somewhere along the Columbia River on the Washington/Oregon border. He was one of the guys I counted on to have my back. He was always generous, offering to lend a hand when it was time to carry the heavy stuff.

Lt. John walked past me with four guys. "Whitworth, come with us!" he ordered.

I followed, and we eventually ended up walking along a wide path at the bottom of the hill. The lieutenant turned to me. "Whitworth, I want you to remember this place because you are going to lead some guys back here for an ambush tonight."

That seemed strange because I had never been asked to lead anything or anybody anywhere the whole time I had been in the Army, except on the days when I walked point. Maybe he had changed his mind about me even though he had talked dirty to me for a half-hour for being lost just a few days earlier. I had managed to find our way back, which was pretty good for me, seeing as how I had such a poor sense of direction. He probably didn't really mean all those foul names he had called me.

Lt. John pointed to the exact location of our upcoming ambush. I didn't care for the site he had chosen, but he wasn't asking, he was telling. After all, he was the "boss." Officers looked at things differently than we did, but they had orders to follow just the same. As far as I knew, the Army infantry chain of command started with the lieutenant colonel in charge of the battalion. He gave orders to the captain who was in charge of our company, which consisted roughly of 140 soldiers broken into four platoons. The captain passed orders down through the four platoon lieutenants. We called some of them "90-Day Wonders" because most of them had gotten only 90 days' training at Officer Candidate School before becoming an officer. Often times, new infantry lieutenants

lasted only about three weeks in the field before they were killed because of their inexperience.

The lieutenant gave orders to the platoon sergeant, usually ranked E6 or E7, who passed those orders down to the four squad leaders, usually buck sergeants ranked E5. The squad leader then passed the orders to his seven-man squad comprised of specialist E4s and privates.

That was me, Private Bob. I was at the bottom of the chain of command. I don't think it gets any lower unless you're in jail. While we were in Hawaii, our captain had introduced us to the concept that the officers weren't running a popularity contest when giving orders. However, we lowly grunts knew we needed to read between the lines to figure out how to get the job done and not end up dead. I didn't have much experience in fighting a war, but I had learned a few things in my earlier years about finding help when none seemed available.

When I was a kid, I'd been small for my age. There had always seemed to be someone bigger or tougher than me who wanted to cause trouble. That had gotten me into several fights when I was growing up, and things always seemed to turn out differently than I had planned.

Once, a kid named Raymond and his friends had been picking on a buddy of mine. Kenny was having a tough time of it. His dad was a cool guy but had been killed in a terrible truck accident two years before. It had been my first encounter with death, and was really tough on me, so there was no telling what it was doing to Kenny. The passage of time had helped a little, but his dad's death had surely put a dent in his self-confidence. I stepped in to help with this fight, and much to my surprise, my friend had stepped back and left the fight to me.

Right off the bat, Raymond and I had come to blows, and I didn't make much headway. We were at school and the bell rang, so the fight stopped. I didn't think it was over though, because Raymond's pals were giving him a hard time about not having been able to kick my butt. I'd gotten away that day without further trouble, but I hadn't planned on being in this by myself.

This isn't over yet

I was about 11 at the time and realized I needed some advice. So I rode my bike over to my dad's gas station. After he listened to my story there was a short silence.

"Bobby," he told me, "I don't know what you should do. You need to figure it out."

I silently screamed, "No, Dad!"

I had been hoping for more of an answer, but

that was it. I was on my own. I was extremely disappointed and left the gas station right away.

I knew that Dad prayed for answers he didn't have, so I decided to give it a try. I had done this before and it hadn't seemed to work very well, but being really serious this time, I made a request.

"Jesus, I need some help. I don't know what to do, and I don't want to get my rear kicked at school. Would you please help me? Amen."

I assumed He knew all about my troubles.

The next day at school, things seemed pretty normal. But when I went to get my bike after school, Raymond and his buddies were there, waiting for me.

Well, it's time to face the music.

I discovered, to my surprise, that Raymond had no interest in tangling with me. His buddies were giving him a hard time, but he didn't care. He just wanted it to be over. As I got on my bike, I wondered if my prayer had helped.

I was slowly learning what my dad knew. He had surely sized up the problem correctly by staying out of it, and unknowingly sent me to the same place he went to for help.

In this war-torn country, as I thought about leading the guys to the ambush that night, I began to get the feeling I was going to need some of that same kind of help sooner rather than later.

After the lieutenant showed us the ambush location, he led us back to the rest of the platoon and we all headed up the hill. When we arrived at the top, we saw a wide flat place that had been cleared. It looked big enough for a chopper to land. We dropped our rucksacks and took a long break before we started setting up the nighttime perimeter. When it was dusk, Lt. John walked up to me.

"Whitworth," he said, "be ready to move out."

It was getting dark quickly, and we were ready to go, but there were 16 of us, twice as many as we needed. I went to the sergeant who had been put in charge.

"Why are so many of us going down there?" I asked.

He ignored me.

By the time we left, it was completely dark. Word was that "everybody" had mined the hill we were about to stumble down: the Japanese, the French, the Viet Cong, and the U.S.A. Well, that was almost everybody.

It was so dark it was almost impossible to see. The first guy behind me slid his hand into my pistol belt and followed me down the hill. One

after another, all 14 behind him did the same. There were lots of bushes to trip over, and the trees seemed to make it even darker. There was plenty to worry about, and fear settled in my gut.

Earlier, in the daylight, I had seen several old punji-pits whose camouflaged covers had been worn away by weather. The pits were triangular-shaped holes about three feet on each side and 18-feet deep, with two-foot-long sharp wooden stakes sticking up from the bottom. The wooden stakes were often smeared with human dung to cause infection in the wounds of whoever fell on them. In addition, the VC had learned how to put explosives at the bottom of the pits. That could give an unfortunate soldier quite a lift.

I had seen many of these pits in the area where we were headed, but the real problem I worried about was the ones I hadn't seen and couldn't see now.

We kept stumbling down the hill without setting off a mine. Somehow, we finally reached the wide path I had been shown earlier. I could barely make out where some of the old punji-pits were. What I would have given for a flashlight, but that might have meant death by giving away our position.

Once we reached the path, I turned left and we moved slowly along like a big snake. In the darkness, we tried our best not to fall over each other or into a pit. After a short time, I could tell we had arrived at the spot the lieutenant had shown me earlier in the day. We made another turn and walked up a three-foot high dirt rise, and through a small opening in the short brush growing there. Behind the brush, the ground was flat, going back toward the hill we had just come down.

We stood in a 30-foot square clearing, with taller bushes and trees growing on the other three sides of its perimeter. The hill in front of us was dense, with very tall trees and brush casting dark shadows over the path, making it virtually impossible to see if someone was there.

Planning to ambush the Viet Cong as they came along the path, the sarge ended up putting all 16 of us in the flat area. Since I was only a private, he wasn't interested in my ideas, even though I was the only one who had seen the site in daylight. The three-man machine-gun crew was set up in a corner with the gun facing the only small opening in the brush where we had entered. I was in the left corner opposite the gun crew with my Claymores facing out toward the path where we expected the VC to travel. Five guys were staring back at the hill of trees we had come down, with their backs to the path. The other six guys, including

the sarge, were huddled in a couple different groups, with nowhere specifically to shoot. The area was just too small to accommodate that many people effectively. This was chaos waiting to happen in the dark.

I lay down, holding one Claymore detonator in each hand. If I set off these mines, anyone on the path would be killed. The medic was right next to me.

"If anything happens, don't go backwards," I told him.

"Right behind us are three old punji-pits."

Meanwhile, the sarge had sent Rex, a smart fella from Pennsylvania with a California attitude, along with three others out through the small opening to set up trip-flares. They were supposed to tie the flare to a limb, or whatever they could find, run a wire from it across to the other side of the path, and tie it off. They had to do this in the dark and had been out there far too long.

Were they still out there?

Someone tripped a flare and the path lit up. The small bushes were in the way so I couldn't see clearly who it was. I heard yelling and movement in front of me on the path. I snapped the safeties off the Claymore detonators in my hands and started to squeeze.

Should I? Shouldn't I? Should I? Shouldn't I? No! That's not the VC! They couldn't have gotten here yet, could they?

I glanced to my right, where figures came running through the small opening back toward us. The machine gunner opened up on them, thinking they were VC. I saw tracer bullets flashing between the screaming shadows as they came toward the clearing. Somehow they got past the machine-gun fire without being hit, and the shooting stopped. It

was Rex and the others we had almost killed. I could hear someone hollering behind me.

"Help! Help me!"

I edged back, and knew the screams were coming from one of the old punji-pits. I moved closer and looked into the dark hole. The medic had moved backward in the commotion and fallen into the pit. He was dangling from the edge, barely hanging on to the side. I quickly grabbed his arm and hand and pulled him up and onto the ground next to me.

I left him there in the dark panting madly, trying to catch his breath, and crawled back over to my position. I found the mine detonators and flattened myself on the ground.

As I lay there in the darkness, my heart was trying to beat its way out of my chest. It was hard to be still. I had been a split second from blowing Rex and the other guys away; then we almost shot them. I realized the VC didn't have to kill us; we could do a pretty good job of that ourselves.

The stupidity of what had just happened was borderline insanity, and the severity of the situation filled me with fear and frustration.

There was so much incompetence. How could I get past it? I didn't want to accept that I might really die, but I knew it was possible, especially in the confusion of events like what had just happened. I didn't know how to accept what was going on. I was a soldier, but still thinking the way a civilian would.

Did I need to give up all my plans for going home despite my hope that I could survive?

The Book of Proverbs in the Bible says to be not afraid of sudden terror.¹ I had to take confidence in that. It was starting to sink in; I was getting a taste of how tough it was going to be to live through this year.

At home, there had been little troubles like being broke, getting in a fistfight with someone a little bigger than me, or maybe getting a speeding ticket. But here in Vietnam, things were seriously crazy.

The main word was "kill!" We were here to kill the enemy, as was drilled into us in basic training.

"What's the spirit of the bayonet, soldier?" the drill sergeant yelled.

"To kill, Sarge! To kill!" we yelled back.

Not only was death the main objective, we were forced to rely on the wisdom and ingenuity of those who were ranked higher than we were to make good decisions about our safety. This didn't come easily to me. I didn't trust a guy just because he was a lieutenant. I learned early not to assume that because someone was in leadership they would do the right thing.

As a little guy, I had learned a couple of lessons that stuck with me. The first one took place when I was about four.

Word had spread through the neighborhood that kids were meeting at the school down the street to play baseball. When the time came, Johnny, who I'd known since we'd learned how to walk, and I decided we'd like to play. We joined a group of boys around our age and a little older, who also wanted to play.

The local P.E. coach was there to make this happen. He picked two boys to be captains and told them to each take turns picking teammates. The captains kept picking kids and the group to choose

from had gotten smaller and smaller. Soon there had been only Johnny and me left.

"Okay, let's go play ball!" the coach said.

The two of us had watched as he led the chosen teams toward the field. It was obvious we hadn't been picked. What had just happened?

The coach hadn't said anything like, "Sorry, guys, but we have enough players for two teams now," or, "You two need a little more time to grow; when you're bigger I'll try to get you on a team." Nothing was said. We were simply left standing there.

Even at that young age, I had known something was wrong. I didn't understand how everything worked, but I knew about sportsmanship and fairness, and they had not been a part of what had just happened.

That experience was one of the main reasons I almost never played sports as a kid, which was my loss, because kids learn many good principles when playing sports. You learn how to set goals, make plans, do what's best for the team and yourself, be disciplined, have sportsmanship, and work together to smooth out the bumps. But I'd learned what I might expect from people—a lesson that would pay high dividends in the future.

The second lesson that stuck with me came about when I was almost five and had just started kindergarten. Things had been going well and I liked school. I'd been in my class for a few hours, and it was time to color. We formed a small line, and Randy, the boy in front of me, picked a box of crayons. Almost instantly he'd been unhappy with them and wanted a different box.

Our teacher, standing right next to us, smiled at him.

"No, Randy, keep those."

Randy went into a rage and threw the crayons on the floor.

I thought Randy might have something coming after that, but didn't expect it would happen so fast. Instantly, the teacher grabbed Randy with one hand, lifted him off the floor, and began beating the fire right out of his rear.

I'd known I was way too close to the action and, thinking I might get hit by accident, started backing away as fast as I could. The teacher dropped Randy on the floor, and after a while he'd stopped crying, gathered his box of crayons, and stood there like a good boy.

I got the message loud and clear. My kindergarten teacher had demonstrated how quickly situations could be changed by those in power. I learned that when things weren't going well, or if something didn't look right, I'd better be alert.

My experience with the P.E. teacher had taught me that just because I thought something should happen a certain way didn't mean it would, right or wrong. Both lessons had shown me that because someone was older, bigger, or in charge, did not mean they could be trusted to do what I thought was correct.

I was under the influence of powerful people in the military, some wise, some foolish; and the enemy was always around, looking for ways to take advantage of our mistakes. The lessons I had learned as a very little boy applied now more than ever. So, lying there in our ambush site, having given our position away and almost killing some of our own guys, I felt like we were sitting ducks. The sarge sat a little bit away from me. I heard him talking quietly over the radio.

"We've compromised our ambush site. Request permission to move."

"Negative," the voice on the radio replied, "hold your position."

Sarge handed the mike back to the RTO.

"We're holding this position," he told us.

I could hear information coming over the radio.

"Concentrated VC attacks in your area."

I saw flares fired from the direction of our base. They left trails of light and exploded high up in the air, causing the night sky and the ground to look as though it was daytime. I was already more scared than I had been in my life. I knew fear could take little problems and turn them into big ones, but these were already big problems.

Now what?

I was doing my best to stay under control. I wondered if the voice coming over the radio had been talking to us.

How did he know where we were? Surely he wasn't warning us, was he?

I tried to settle in for the long night ahead, praying for us to myself, and trying to trust we'd be okay.

I lay there with the two detonators in my hands, staring out into the darkness. There were always strange noises at night: snapping, crushing, and stepping sounds. Maybe it was just animals moving around, but it was enough to keep a new guy like me worried all night. Even so, we made it until morning without further incident.

[To be continued in a future edition of the Americal Journal magazine.]

LZ Jeff

By Jack Head

As darkness began to fall, we built a meager perimeter in one sector of the mountain. It was becoming evident that the situation was new to all of us. We were used to having a platoon of trained infantrymen and spiraled barbed wire defending us and not having to set up our own perimeter defense. Usually, our platoon was surrounded with one or two spiraling layers of it or razor wire to slow down an invading army.

Another concern was that we couldn't dig any defensive foxholes because the gun squads were using the picks and shovels. The battalion usually gave us a bale of sandbags as a housewarming present. Now we would have to use earth-filled ammo boxes to line the outside of the fire direction center (FDC) and foxholes.

Additional concerns, of which there were many, included being short of ammunition. We had arrived with only the M-16 ammunition in our guns plus a few extra ammo clips. That would be enough for a 15-20 minute firefight at best. The situation: No line company support, no razor wire, no foxholes, no sandbags, and no ammunition for our M-16s or four-deuce guns. We realized that we would have to make do and could only hope and pray that we would eventually receive some support for our end of the mountaintop.

After studying the topographical maps and guessing the most likely places from which the NVA might attack us, we set up our perimeter defensive positions. Those included six Claymore mines. We placed them in the ground, just above an approaching ravine, in an open and flat area. Assured that we had done everything we could to prepare for the night, we assigned watches and called it quits. Besides, it was dark by then, and we did not want to work with flashlights and give away our position. It would have been nice if we could have placed a few trip flares around our perimeter, but

we didn't have any. Having set the best perimeter we could, we set the first watch. I had the second.

My watch said it was two o'clock. I had been staring into the darkness for two hours and had two hours to go. In my right hand was a two-piece trigger mechanism attached by an electrical cord to a Claymore mine. I held the electrical cord like a fishing line keeping tension on the wire while watching for any movement in the line.

I wished that we had painted the back of the Claymore with white paint. I remembered that one instructor had advised us to do that. Where would you get white paint in Nam? During our training sessions in the Americal Relocation and Training Center, the instructor said, "You could stare at the white paint. If it disappeared, it would indicate that someone was moving the claymore and you could squeeze the trigger and blow them to bits."

He also instructed us in the fine art of booby-trapping Claymore mines. He said the VC often booby-trapped them by sliding a hand grenade under one and pulling the pin. The Claymore would hold the spoon in place until an unsuspecting GI retrieved the Claymore in the morning. The GI would be shipped home in a body bag. "So don't do that."

The next trick, he explained, was how to booby-trap under one hand grenade with another hand grenade. An inexperienced GI would find the first one, replace the pin, smile, and remove the Claymore and boom and again a body bag shipped home. The instructor warned us, "You should be a safe distance and off to one side when you yank the Claymore out of the ground by pulling on the electrical cord."

We had talked about all of that when we were trying to find a place to set the Claymore. The supports kept bending as we wanted to stick them into the rocky ground. After we finally got the supports into the earth, I had wondered how hard it was going to be to yank it out the next morning, if morning ever came.

The last thing the instructor taught us about Claymore mines was that the people we were fighting liked to lift the Claymore up, turn it around, and stick the supports back into the ground. Like a skilled fish that can strip the worm off the hook without the bobber moving, Charlie could do that with a Claymore without anybody suspecting a thing. "Once it was turned around, they move to one side, jump up, make some noise, and duck." Again, a body bag shipped home. They knew you would squeeze the firing mechanism and blow yourself to kingdom come. So I thought, "Hold tight to the line tonight, Jack, and don't be too trigger-happy. Someone might get hurt."

I was getting thirsty and hungry, but most of all I was feeling sorry for myself. I was scared and tired. How did I ever get into this God-awful situation? How did I go from being an easygoing, happy-go-lucky kid to being here, ready to kill anything that moved? I did know that I was on watch, hot, dirty, tired, thirsty, and very hungry. Around three o'clock, I realized how hungry and thirsty I was, I hadn't eaten since the night before. My last meal had been some C-rations on LZ Amy fourteen hours earlier. My stomach was a beacon for the enemy as it rumbled and growled.

In my left-leg cargo pocket, I had an unopened can of sardines in tomato sauce that my sister Penny had sent. Whether you like sardines or not, at this point you would have eaten them. My stomach continued to send loud growling noises. Which could be worse? Giving the location away with a noisy stomach or giving it away with the aroma of a freshly opened can of sardines? I fixated on the big juicy sardines floating in red tomato sauce resting against my leg.

Four o'clock came, and I woke Wes. He was the next sentry. My mind was no longer on food. I was exhausted from the day and didn't eat. I would enjoy the sardines more in daylight. I was too tired to eat them anyway. I went to bed visualizing the B-52 strikes that would take place the next morning at our old home: LZ Amy.

Assignment to Task Force Oregon

By William S (Bill) Burfield

One week after I graduated from high school in 1965, I was on a train headed for Ft Dix for basic training. My mother had raised four of us on welfare after our father had abandoned us when I was a young child. The Army was a way out for me, and a step up. After basic, and several other schools, I was considered a personnel management specialist. In May 1966, I got my orders to go to Vietnam.

We landed in Tan Son Nhut, and hundreds of us were milling around in the heat and dust, a group of mostly scared kids, wondering what was going to happen. We watched as the plane reloaded with troops going home. Some of them heckled us; others were loaded who were not so lucky.

Names were called out, and assignments given. I was assigned to the classified message center for HQ USARV. After a background check, I was given a top secret crypto clearance. We processed all messages, and got them to where they were supposed to go as quickly as possible. I was a hard worker, and dedicated soldier, and made SP4 quickly.

Near the end of my tour I was approached by my CO, Capt Oscar Gerner, about a special mission called Task Force Oregon, which was classified secret. The Americal Division was being re-formed and would be headquartered in Chu Lai. He offered me the job of NCOIC of the classified message center there. But it would mean extending my tour.

I accepted the offer and was given a free 30 day leave and round trip transportation home on Golden Continental Airline. I have absolutely no memory of what I did on that leave, all I remember is that I wanted to get back to Vietnam.

When I did return we loaded our equipment on a C130 and headed for Chu Lai. It was a Marine base, so we started from scratch to build our HQ. It was a non-stop operation, with messages coming and going constantly. The Marine Corp operated the ComCenter and decoded the messages for us for distribution. When a "Flash" message came in, usually about enemy troop movements. I had to get it to the war room ASAP.

The dates back then were just a blur because of the fast pace. But I was then approached by LTC Zahm, who was the adjutant general (AG). He said our classified courier was going home and asked if I would like that job also. I had been promoted to

SP5 with less than two years in the Army by then. Because of the nature of my job, I was in a relatively secure area. I hadn't seen a lot of the war, except when we got hit with random mortar attacks.

I accepted the job. I was picked up by chopper nearly every day to fly to our field units who had captured enemy documents. I brought the documents back to be translated. Many times small arms fire would "ping" off the chopper. Another time, we helped rescue several marines who were pinned down on a beach. One time we got hit and had to make an emergency landing in a ROK outpost in the middle of nowhere. At night, tracers would zip around us. There were many other incidents, some of which I would rather forget, but I got to see what the war was really about.

Eventually it was my turn to go home. I hadn't seen cold weather for almost two years, so, of course, we landed in Alaska! We got off the plane in short sleeve khakis. Some of the troops kissed the ground. I just ran to the terminal to get warm. We entered on the ground level, and had to go up a wide winding staircase to get to the main terminal. Along the stairway was an Army Band, playing "When Johnny Comes Marching Home", which still brings tears to my eyes when I think of it after all these years.

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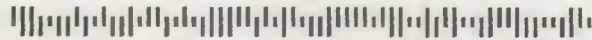
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