

January • February • March **2022**



# AMERICAL JOURNAL

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



(From photo  
Feb 1, 1971)

Near LZ Young, with M-79 + Medical bag

"DOC" Mike

Riley, Medic "Alpha one"

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS



**Adjutant's Notes**

By Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant

I begin this adjutant report with a sincere wish for a Happy New Year for all members and Americal Division veterans. Hopefully, the year 2022 will be an overall improvement for our lives in terms of interaction with friends and family and that the pandemic that plagues our lives will be eradicated.

The Association roster picked up a good number of new members for this reporting period. We added twelve new annual pay members and nine new members joining for life. Several new annual pay members signed up at the Indianapolis reunion. These are listed with Chuck Holdaway, 2021 reunion chairman, as the sponsor. Once again, we added a sizable number of new life members who upgraded their membership status from annual pay to life membership. A total of sixty-five current members paid the new Life member rate to upgrade. Three former members re-instated their annual membership.

Editor-In-Chief Gary Noller is continuing his initiative to contact potential ADVA members who express a membership interest through the Americal page pm Facebook. We are seeing some success with that effort. In November 2021, Gary mailed invitations to just under 100 former members with an offer to rejoin the Association under the lower life member rates. Our expectation is the new lower life member rates will encourage many of these former members to rejoin ADVA. If you are an annual pay member now, you can upgrade to Life at any time. Simply mail your check or money order, payable to ADVA, to Assistant Finance Officer Ronald Ellis.

Note there are some changes on the reporting format for new members. First time new member categories listed now are New Members – Annual Pay and New Members – Joined As Life. Annual pay members upgrading to life membership are now listed under the New Life Members heading.

As we start this new year, it is a good time to recruit an Americal Division veteran or a buddy you served with for membership in ADVA. Likely there are many Americal Division veterans in our midst who do not know about the Association or have let their membership lapse. Membership benefits include this high-quality quarterly publication and an opportunity for children or grandchildren to apply for Americal Legacy Foundation scholarship grants. In 2021, scholarship grants totaling \$53,250.00 were awarded to sixty-63 students. The stories submitted by members for each issue are well-done memories of their Vietnam and WWII service.

Annual pay renewals for January 2022 were mailed the last week of December 2021. If your renewal date is January 2022 and you have not received a dues renewal notice, contact me and I will mail another. Your annual pay due date is on the back cover (beside your name). Please take some time to check your renewal date on this issue and mail your dues payment if necessary. Sometimes we may miss getting a dues payment posted to the ADVA roster. If you did pay and your dues renewal date is not correct, contact me and I will research it. Some readers may have sent in a recent life membership upgrade payment and your renewal date does not reflect your life member status. Again, contact me if you believe this to be the case.

Thanks to all members who notify me on a timely basis when they move. Sometimes, due to timing necessary to furnish the Journal mailing list to the mail house, your new address may not get updated for the mailing. If you do not receive a Journal at your new address in about 12 to 14 weeks from your previous mailing, contact me and I will mail one to your new address. If your move is seasonal (i.e., Snowbirds) please confirm you are changing address temporarily. The mailing address for address changes is on the back cover. Emailing or texting your address change is preferred. My email address is [REDACTED]

**New Members Annual Pay**

**Joe Bonanni**  
E/4/21st Inf  
Shelby Township, MI  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Kenneth H. Fritz**  
176th AHC 14th CAB  
Sacramento, CA  
★ Self

**John W. Hickey**  
B/4/31st Inf  
Avon, IN  
★ Lyle Peterson

**Louis Hubbard**  
B/5/46th Inf  
Virginia Beach, VA  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Edward Lime**  
4/3rd Inf  
Brownsburg, IN  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Stephen Peterzak**  
D/4/3rd Inf  
Spring Green, WI  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Jim Reardon**  
23rd MP Co  
Plymouth, MA  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Skip Sherman**  
No Unit Listed  
Sioux Falls, SD  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Hank Ugolini**  
4/21st Inf  
Deerfield, IL  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**Ron Van Sant**  
178th ASHC  
Davenport, IA  
★ Lyle Peterson

**Clifford Van Winkle**  
4/21st Inf  
Bethalto, IL  
★ Chuck Holdaway

**New Members Joined as Life**

**Robert H. Craig, Jr.**  
Div HDQ HHC  
Richmond, VA  
★ Self

**Larry S. Farley**  
1/46th Inf  
Greenville, TX  
★ Self

**Timothy K. McNulty**  
1/46th Inf  
Elgin, IL  
★ PNC Dutch DeGroot

**Donald Niesen**  
196th LIB E Co (Recon)  
Iron River, WI  
★ Self

**Robert L. Ormond, Sr.**  
23rd Admin Co  
Longs, SC  
★ Samuel L. Cox

**George R. Sargis, III**  
23rd Admin Co  
N Tonawanda, NY  
★ Samuel L. Cox

**John W. Saunders**  
23rd Admin Co  
Acworth, CA  
★ Samuel L. Cox

**Walter E. Smith, Jr.**  
A/2/1st Inf  
Bristol, RI  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Brian Tucker**  
A/4/31st Inf  
Burnsville, MN  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**New Life Members**

**Bruce E. Allen**  
B/1/46th Inf  
Wildwood, FL  
★ Self

**Clyde E. Arnold**

D/4/3rd Inf  
Iuka, IL  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**Gregg W. Asher**  
9th Spt Bn B Co  
Mankato, MN  
★ Bill Maddox

**Ralph Bateman**  
D/4/21st Inf  
Stevensville, MD  
★ Self

**Tommy R. Birch**  
C/4/3rd Inf  
Apollo Beach, FL  
★ Self

**Harry Bressler**  
569th MID  
Du Bois, PA  
★ Jim Swanson

**Thomas W. Brown**  
C/1/46th Inf  
Manhattan Beach, CA  
★ Self

**Michael G. Chandler**  
A/1/20th Inf  
McCormick, SC  
★ Louis Rios

**John G. Charnisky**  
C/5/46th Inf  
Edwardsville, IL  
★ Dave Hammond

**Glen A. Grady**  
E/1/6th Inf  
Crandall, TX  
★ Don Ballou

**Jack D. Cloud**  
198th LIB HHC  
St George, UT  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Jaime Daniel**  
3/16th Arty A Btry  
Chicago, IL  
★ Self

**Roger Dufresne**  
3/16th Arty  
Derry, NH  
★ Self

**John Dyer**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Huber Heights, OH  
★ Larry Swank

**Don Ehlike**  
A/5/46th Inf  
West Bend, WI  
★ PNC Rollie Castranova

**Craig C. Fring**  
5/46th Inf  
Morrisville, PA  
★ Dale Melton

**Al Gaidys**  
1st/1st Cav C Trp  
Porter, TX  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**Edward C. Gittens**  
A/1/46th Inf  
Brownsville, MN  
★ Bill Schneider

**Robert J. Goettert**  
23rd Admin Co  
Romeoville, IL  
★ PNC Dutch DeGroot

**Jay R. Goudey**  
Div HDQ AG  
Salem, OR  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**John G. Charnisky**  
C/5/46th Inf  
Edwardsville, IL  
★ Dave Hammond

**Keith Kolozie**  
B/1/20th Inf  
N Aurora, IL  
★ Self

**Kenton B. Kurtz**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Stewartstown, PA  
★ Rich Heroux

**Alfred E. Hegwood**  
D/5/46th Inf  
Prescott Valley, AZ  
★ Roy Abbott

**William J. Lobeck**  
C/1/6th Inf  
Viola, WI  
★ Self

**David A. Heitmeyer**  
1st Air Cav D Trp  
Cloverdale, OH  
★ John L. Schultz

**Rik Homstad**  
196th LIB Arty  
Arlington Heights, IL  
★ Self

**David L. Jones**  
C/1/6th Inf  
Middleton, TN  
★ Mark Deam

**Richard Keine**  
A/1/20th Inf  
W Sacramento, CA  
★ Ron Green

**Donald K. Kilgore**  
N/A  
New York, NY  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Cyril T. Kirkland**  
D/4/3rd Inf  
Pleasanton, CA  
★ Ron Davis

**Dennis J. Nickels**  
4/3rd Inf  
Chicago, IL  
★ Brian Mulcrone

**Gary V. Nordmeyer**  
3/21st Inf  
Lake Benton, MN  
★ Dan M. Gross

**Jesus R. Rios**  
E/1/46th Inf  
El Paso, TX  
★ Robert Thornton

**Karl R. Rohde**  
1/46th Inf  
Carmel, NY  
★ Robert Thornton

**Kenneth Rowland**  
B/1/6th Inf  
Minneapolis, MN  
★ Mitchell W. Samples

**James B. Murphy**  
3/16th Arty A Btry  
Greensboro, NC  
★ Ron Davis

**Mitchell W. Samples**  
B/5/46th Inf  
Charleston, WV  
★ Robert Thornton

**John Lewis**  
1/20th Inf  
Mansfield, TX  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**Shane Lawson**  
None  
Talbot, TN  
★ Louis F. Pearson

**Raleigh J. Guillory**  
D/1/52nd Inf  
Hessmer, LA  
★ Self

**Ralph Heatherington**  
A/1/20th Inf  
Wheaton, IL  
★ John McKnown

**Mike Pfetsch**

1/14th Arty Btry C  
Silver Springs, MD  
★ Don Ballou

**Robert W. Phelps**  
4/31st HHC  
Sidney, NY  
★ Don Ballou

**Nicholas V. Polizzi**  
A/1/20th Inf  
Quaker Hill, CT  
★ John McKnown

**Henry Reuscher**  
3/21st Inf  
Excelsior Springs, MO  
★ John Worrel

**Charles G. Riggs**  
C/3/1st Inf  
Hartselle, AL  
★ Self

**Jesus R. Rios**  
E/1/46th Inf  
El Paso, TX  
★ Robert Thornton

**Karl R. Rohde**  
1/46th Inf  
Carmel, NY  
★ Robert Thornton

**Kenneth Rowland**  
B/1/6th Inf  
Minneapolis, MN  
★ Mitchell W. Samples

**James H. Pearson, Jr.**  
198th LIB  
Vernon, CT  
★ Louis F. Pearson

**ADVA MEMBERSHIP**

30 November 2021

World War II	232
Vietnam	2,430
Cold War	4
Associate Members	183
<b>Total Members</b>	<b>2,849</b>

**Daniel Stephenson**  
236th Med – Dustoff  
Bellingham, WA  
★ Roger Gilmore

**Carl L. Swanson**  
D/5/46th Inf  
Hegins, PA  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**John J. Swek**  
5/46th Inf  
Redford, MI  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

**Richard G. Sytsma**  
B/1/20th Inf  
Allendale, MI  
★ Self

**Donald R. Tappin**  
23rd Admin Co  
Wallingford, CT  
★ PNC Jay Flanagan

**John S. Tomko, Jr.**  
Div HDQ HHC  
Alexandria, VA  
★ Michael Stachowiak

**Kenneth A. Townsend**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Tanner, WV  
★ PNC David Eichhorn

**James W. Vanden Hout**  
E/4/21st Inf (Recon)  
Alto, MI  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**John J. Vaughan**  
E/1/52nd Inf  
Tinton Falls, NJ  
★ PNC Rollie Castranova

**Robert E. Weatherly, Jr.**  
E/5/46th Inf  
Lebanon, OR  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Joseph D. White**  
3/16th Arty Btry A  
Swansea, MA  
★ Paul Pacheco

**Ralph M. Williams**  
A/1/20th Inf  
W Sacramento, CA  
★ Maurice Henson

**Allen F. Wilson**  
B/1/46th Inf  
Manchester, IA  
★ PNC David W. Taylor

#### Re-Instated Members

**Wayne Cherryholmes**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Sacramento, CA  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**William E. Hendricks**  
A/1/6th Inf  
Brookneal, VA  
★ Kenneth C. York

#### Vietnam Veterans

**Robert Ishmael**  
A/1/20th Inf  
Fort Meyers, FL  
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

**Ralph Bateman**  
D/4/21st Inf  
Stevensville, MD  
★ Self

**Tommy R. Birch**  
C/4/3rd Inf  
Apollo Beach, FL  
★ Self

#### New Associate Members

**Nanette M. Hall**  
Des Moines, IA  
★ Les Hines

#### TAPS LISTING; MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

#### World War II Veterans

**Arthur W. Doty**  
21st Recon Trp  
Lancaster, NH  
September 8, 2021

**Dwain Davidson**  
Co. D, 2/1 Inf, 196 LIB  
Bremond, TX  
December 3, 2021

**Calvin R. Jackson** \*  
132nd Inf Rgmt  
Rome, GA  
August 31, 2021

**William H. Tomlinson**  
246th FA Bn  
Jacksonville, FL  
August 23, 2021

**Frederick J. Grenier**  
247th FA  
Hyde Park, MA  
September 27, 2020

**Douglas Hier**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Jaffrey, NH  
November 20, 2021

**Elvin Holliday** \*  
335th Trans Bn  
Deridder, LA  
February 14, 2021

**Terry Bartlett**  
D/4/31st Inf  
Leesburg, FL  
July 10, 2021

**Eddie Johns** \*  
C/3/21st Inf  
Morven, GA  
June 20, 2020

**Donald Borton**  
176th AHC  
Unknown  
February 20, 2021

**Ricardo Castillo**  
C/1/6th Inf  
Boling, TX  
April 25, 2021

**Jack Chevalier**  
A/2/1st Inf  
Vashon, VA  
April 1, 2021

#### \* ADVA Member

**Dennis R. Crouse**  
5/46th Inf  
Matthews, IN  
January 25, 2021

**Thomas McGrath**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Pascoag, RI  
July 23, 2021

**John C. Donahue**  
174th AHC  
Unknown  
March 13, 2021

**William T. Eller** \*  
A/1/52nd Inf  
Prague, OK  
September 12, 2021

**Robert A. Fortin**  
A/4/31 Inf  
Lisbon Falls, ME  
November 24, 2021

**Clyde Rosin**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Jaffrey, NH  
November 30, 2021

**Melvin Gillenwater**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Evansville, IN  
October 24, 2021

**Thomas P. Russell** \*  
17th Cav H Trp  
Dardenne Prairie, MO  
April 17, 2021

**George C. Rogers, Jr.** \*  
HHC, 2/1 Inf.  
Lawton, OK  
April 25, 2021

**Richard J. Sebastian**  
8th Cav F Trp  
Nashville, TN  
February 14, 2021

**John Silva**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Sacramento, CA  
June 26, 2021

**Charles Kirkey**  
D/1/46th Inf  
Unknown  
August 31, 2021

**William P. Snyder**  
3/21st Inf  
Lancaster, PA  
September 12, 2021

**George Willbrandt**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Shallotte, NC  
October 27, 2021

**David Korbel**  
B/1/52nd Inf  
Faribault, MN  
September 25, 2021

**Samuel J. Maggio** \*  
C/D/1/6th Inf  
Wheaton, IL  
October 24, 2021

## Christmas Tree at The Wall Ceremony

By Terrie Sautter



Earle and I were in Washington, D.C. on December 11, 2021, to help decorate the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Holiday Tree. This is an annual event that began 25 years ago. Volunteers bring significant ornaments, commercial or hand-made. Any that are weatherproof are kept for future use.

A local Fire Department donates the live tree every year. Volunteers, family members, and members of the public, are always asked to share stories or readings reflecting on Christmases spent in Vietnam, waiting at home while loved ones were in Vietnam, how those memories impact current holidays, etc. For several years one volunteer - who happens to be American - has arranged for the Army's Brass



Quintet to perform holiday music, and a local bugler closes the ceremony by playing Taps. It's a bittersweet and happy day, and truly embodies the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Volunteer "Family" vibe.

For the past few years, I have made ornaments recognizing the guys Earle lost on July 2, 1969 - Larry Bryan and Melvin Fujita - and this year I added one acknowledging General Colin Powell.

The photos show the tree, Earle and the ornaments, as well as the ones I placed on Panel 21W, where Fuji's and Larry's names are; I put General Powell with them. If you look carefully, you can see Larry Bryan's engraved name.

## Veterans Day At The Wall

By Terrie Sautter

The American Division was represented at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC for Veterans Day 2021. The floral arrangement representing the American Division shield was on display from Thursday morning through Sunday and included a banner in recognition of General Colin Powell to honor his recent passing.

This year the American Division was recognized in the announcements of the various organizations displaying arrangements and was included in the procession to the display in front of The Wall where it remained until Thursday evening. For the remainder of the weekend, all arrangements were displayed facing The Wall.

During the weekend, American veteran and Vietnam Veterans Memorial Volunteer Earle Gleason, talked with a number of other American veterans. He gave them copies of past *American Journal* magazines (thanks, Gary Noller!) and applications for membership in the ADVA. We were able to capture a photo of several visiting American veterans and Earle along with the floral arrangement.



## Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore, Foundation President

### Foundation Web Site

In the last issue of this publication, I commented on the number of inquiries coming through the web mail portal on the Foundation web site. The Contact Us link on the web site is the link for sending an inquiry or question about Foundation's activities such as the memorialization or scholarship program. I compiled a spreadsheet file to track inquiries and classify the nature of each inquiry to better follow up on requests and questions. Since September 1, 2021, sixty inquires have come into the Foundation web mail server. Of those sixty, About 80 percent were SPAM or SCAM emails. Our portal does not have a mechanism to drop possible SPAM into a separate folder, so each inquiry must be pulled up and read to be sure it is a legitimate inquiry. We have had a few recent emails with specific questions about the Foundation scholarship program. I am generally able to respond to these scholarship inquiries without input from Scholarship Chairman Bill Bruinsma. If an inquiry is more student or school specific, I will forward the email to Bill for his response.

Some email traffic coming through the Foundation web site is address changes for the ADVA roster or inquiries about unit history. I ask that these types of inquires go through the Americal web site, [www.americal.org](http://www.americal.org).

We received four web site merchandise orders since mid-August. Each order was for the book, *Under The Southern Cross*. One order included an order for some Americal Legacy Foundation challenge coins. We have both items in plentiful supply, so place your order through the web site.

### Americal Legacy Calendar – 2022 Edition

The 2022 edition of the Americal Legacy Calendar was mailed with the 4th Quarter Americal Journal in early November 2021. If you did not receive yours please let me know and I will arrange to have one mailed to you. Donated funds from this Americal Division themed calendar support our memorialization program throughout the nation. It is vitally important we continue to receive funding for this all-important mission of the foundation. THANKS enough to all who have steadfastly supported the program throughout the years.

### Americal Monument Programs – National VA Cemeteries

In November 2020, we placed an Americal Division monument at the VA cemetery located at Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois. This area is known as the Quad Cities area. ADVA member Lyle Peterson was our local lead on this project and worked tirelessly to see the project completed. Lyle coordinated with the cemetery administration for a dedication ceremony once the pandemic restrictions were eased and onsite entrance for visitors was restored. The dedication ceremony was conducted on September 8, 2021. The program was well planned by all involved and we had a tremendous turnout of veterans and guests for the morning ceremony.

Following is the ceremony coverage story from the local Quad Cities Times newspaper.

### Rock Island Arsenal honors Americal Army Division with monument

A new monument fills a space along the Rock Island National Cemetery's Memorial Walkway, honoring an Army division deployed only three times during unique periods since its creation. Members of the Americal, or 23rd Infantry, Division came together at Rock Island Arsenal this month to witness the unveiling of the monument commemorating the division.



ADVA Historian Les Hines speaking on Americal History.



WWII Americal Veteran Walter Lehman and Lyle Peterson unveil the monument.

"Our veterans are owed all the recognition and appreciation that we have to offer — yet, when balanced in the scales, it cannot help but to fall far short of what they offered us, gave us, and willingly sacrificed for us," said Col. Heather Carlisle during a speech at the unveiling. Carlisle is assigned to the U.S. Army Sustainment Command.

Assisting in the ceremony were 97-year-old World War II veteran Walter Lehman of West Branch and 73-year-old Vietnam War veteran Lyle Peterson of Davenport, both former service members in the division. The Americal Division has been activated only three times since it banded during World War II for operations in the jungles of the Southwest Pacific. Its next deployment was in the Panama Canal Zone during the Cold War, then Vietnam. It hasn't been activated since its deactivation in November 1971, Peterson said. Fifteen of the division's members are Medal of Honor recipients.

Among the crowd of around 75 were members of Peterson's squad. Peterson, a corporal in the division, served from August 1969 to August 1970 in Vietnam. The group has kept in touch and visited over the years, but this was a special occasion.

"It's always enjoyable to visit with them," Peterson said. This event was a long time coming, Peterson said. After he heard about the Americal Legacy Foundation creating monuments to commemorate the division, he reached out to Rock Island Arsenal to see if the group could place one in the national cemetery. From there it took a year-and-a-half to get everything in order, and the monument was placed in November 2020.

It would be almost a year before it could be dedicated though, and the ceremony was held Sept. 8. Also in attendance were Davenport Mayor Mike Matson and the division's historian, Les Hines.

"I was tickled to death," Peterson said about finally holding the ceremony. "We'd been waiting and waiting and waiting. The ceremony went really well, I was pleased."

### Monuments Update

The Foundation's monuments placement program for national VA Cemeteries is slowly gaining traction throughout the nation. The site approval process is slow. Cemetery directors and their staffs are dealing with many issues and heavy workloads with daily burial requirements. Once the proposal is approved by the cemetery director, for most locations the package goes to a district office for review by that staff before being approved by the district director. In some cases, the cemetery director has final approval. ADVA member Ron Krul advises he submitted the monument placement package to the director at the Western New York National Cemetery at Corfu, New York. Ron received acknowledgment of receipt from the cemetery director and word she would be in contact with him about the package.

Our job as Americal Legacy Foundation monument program sponsors at VA cemeteries is so much easier when we have an ADVA member or Americal Division veteran who lives nearby and is willing to serve as the POC for us and the cemetery staff. I encourage any of you who live nearby a national VA cemetery or travel to one frequently and have an interest in helping move a project forward to contact myself or one of the Foundation directors with details.

Below is a recap of VA cemetery sites with comments on Fort Snelling and Fort Bliss initiative provided by Gary Noller.

### Washington Crossing National Cemetery (Newtown, PA)

Word received in late October is that the proposal still sits in the Philadelphia, PA district office in for review. The cemetery director has had no reply since the package was submitted in early June. As colder weather sets in for the next few months, it is likely the concrete base construction will be done in early spring even if approval comes down from the district office by end of year 2021.

### Riverside National Cemetery (Riverside, CA)

The placement proposal document package was emailed to the acting director the end of August. All documents are in his hands, but no word at the time this article was written on the status. In early November, we received an email from ADVA member Steve Mackey advising he is willing to serve as the Foundation liaison and work with the cemetery staff

on the placement proposal. We furnished Steve the design documents and pictures of the Americal Monument in place at two cemeteries that have the monument in place. Steve's plan is to meet with the acting director to discuss the monument placement proposal and hopefully get the project moving.

### Fort Snelling National Cemetery (Minneapolis, MN)

The placement of a monument at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery is approved at the local level and now in consideration at the national level.

### Fort Bliss National Cemetery (El Paso, TX)

Just before Thanksgiving Roger Gilmore and Gary Noller held a personal meeting with the director of the Ft. Bliss National Cemetery in El Paso, Texas. We are now approved for placement of a monument. The next step is to find a local contractor to complete the concrete foundation and set the monument.

### Americal Monument/Memorial Programs - Other Locations

#### Fort Polk, LA

The concrete base pour was completed by our contractor of choice in early October. In mid-November, I requested delivery of one monument from our inventory at the Vermont quarry. Keith Monument released a monument from the Vermont quarry the end of November with a request to expedite shipment to Fort Polk. We anticipate, the monument installation to be complete by end of 2021.

#### Fort Rucker, AL

In the 4th Quarter 2021 issue of this publication, I advised more details about a monument dedication ceremony for the Americal Division aviation monument here would be forthcoming. I do not have much more to present. I did ask my POC about ceremony time flexibility for the March 28, 2022 ceremony date, and they are good with whatever time we set. At this time, I am holding off on a set time until we know if the FB Mary Ann Memorial service will be conducted on March 28th as it has for many years. Our expectation is those attendees may want to travel to Fort Rucker from Fort Benning following the FB Mary Ann remembrance service for the dedication ceremony. Post cards will be mailed to ADVA members who live in proximity to Fort Rucker with event details if they want to attend. I will also put out a post on the Americal and Friends FB page with ceremony details when they are available. This may also tie to a planned dedication of the 196 LIB memorial at the National Infantry Museum in Columbus, Georgia on March 29.

#### Missouri National Vietnam Memorial

Perryville, Missouri is the location of an impressive Vietnam Wall memorial and Museum. Some ADVA members may be familiar with this memorial and visited the site. Director Ron Ellis and I viewed the Wall and museum and felt the memorial program fitted our mission. Foundation directors voted to place a memorial granite bench on the East Wall at the memorial. We donated \$10,000.00 in October to have a granite bench placed there. The bench text honors the Vietnam activation period for the Americal Division.

~ continued from page 2

**Looking for:** Veterans of D/1/20. I served in Delta Co., 1/20th Inf., 11th Infantry Brigade. I was in Nam 1970/1971. Search "Wolfie the Grunt" to see my tribute to last Chaplain to be killed in combat. Contact: John Wolf; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Anyone in D/3/21 Inf., 196 LIB, 1968-69. I was in Kelso platoon and my platoon leader was LT Keith Young. My nickname was Mouse. Contact: Daniel Francis Deriba; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Information about my grandfather, Howard Donald West, who served during WWII during the Cebu Campaign in March 1945. I have records stating his involvement assigned to the Americal Division in a company with 42 other riflemen to defend supply chains in the San Bernadino Straits. He was a rifleman enlisted in 25 July 1944 attached to the 182nd Infantry Regiment. He earned his Combat Infantryman Badge 13 March 1945. He was originally from Fresno, California, and enlisted in San Francisco. He left the service honorably in 1949 after demobilization orders were given. Contact: MSgt Howard Dwayne West II; [REDACTED].

**Looking for:** Anyone on Hill 65 with D Btry., 1/82d Arty., 8 inch gun. Contact: Michael Francis; [REDACTED].

**Looking for:** Information on Harold Fulk. He served in the 164th infantry division beginning in 1942. Contact: Harold Fulk; [REDACTED].

**Looking for:** To contact anyone serving rear area Headquarters Americal 1971-1972 Chu Lai Col Sadler and LT Col Hasting. Contact: Gary Dobbins; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Combat photographer with 523 Signal. WIA on 23 Sept. 1971. Contact: William Gruendler; william. [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Members of Echo Recon, 1/52, 198th LIB June-August 69 on LZ Stinson. I was platoon leader(LT Henningsen) of Echo Recon and was wounded by phosphorous grenade in ambush on 8 August 1969. Sgt Rupp was also wounded in the same ambush. I would like to talk about that short time we were together. Contact: Kim Henningsen; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** 723d Maint. Bn. unit crest. I was stationed with the 723d Maintenance Battalion on LZ Baldy and LZ Hawk during 1969 & 1970. I spent 21 years in the Army. I was assigned to 15 different units. I have been successful in collecting all the unit crests that I was assigned to while in the Army with the exception of the 723d Maint. Bn. Hopefully a 723d veteran would have crest that I could buy. Contact: Wes Montgomery; [REDACTED]



**Dear editor,**

Regarding an article in the OCT-NOV-DEC 2021 issue, "Award Sought for Dustoff Crews," i.e., Dustoff choppers began being painted white in January 1972. I left Chu Lai in October 1971. We already had white Dustoffs on base. I remember thinking, who in the hell came up with that idea? Of course, shootdown rates of white Dustoffs increased dramatically. At the time, I was with the 63rd, IPCT (Combat Trackers) at Chu Lai. Also served with the 48th, 57th, and 59th, PSD (Scout Dogs) with the Americal.

Russell Walters MAJ/RET/USA; [REDACTED]

**Dear editor,**

An article in the Jul-Aug-Sep 2021 issue states that Battery A, 3/16 Artillery, earned the award of the Valorous Unit Citation. I was in Battery A. Does this include me?

Brad Ailes; [REDACTED]

[Editor's reply. This is stated in Department of the Army General Order 39 (DAGO 39), 1970 as follows: Awarded to Battery A, 3/16 Artillery, for action of October 15, 1967 through October 31, 1967. The parent unit at that time was 3d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division.]

**Dear editor,**

I am looking for anyone that knew Cpl Terry Allen who was KIA in a friendly fire incident. He was killed along with James Richardson, Ernest Shompany, and Gary Wilkinson. I am writing a book about the young men from my hometown in Georgia that died in Vietnam. It would help me tremendously if I could communicate with someone that knew him, that knows what happened in regard to the incident, or even anyone that was involved in Operation Burlington Trail. The incident occurred on 23 June 1968 and the unit was Co. B, 1/46 Inf., 198 LIB. I will appreciate any assistance your organization can provide.

Steve Quesinberry; [REDACTED]  
Newnan, Georgia

## Delta 1/20, 11th LIB Reunion 2021 in Bowling Green

By Cliff Tholen

Veterans and family members of Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry of the Americal Division's 11th Light Infantry Brigade recently held a reunion in Bowling Green, Kentucky. The reunion dates were October 13, 2021 thru October 17, 2021. The reunion had been rescheduled and delayed a year out of precaution for the Covid-19 virus.

Some arrived early to take advantage of the ambiance of Bowling Green, but most began arriving on Wednesday, October 13th. Those attendees were treated to a complimentary dinner at the Holiday Inn University Plaza and were given access to the Delta Company hospitality room. Upon arrival, each of the Delta Company veterans was presented with a golf shirt embroidered by Sherry Barger with a depiction of the Vietnam Service Medal and a combat scene on the back. Over the left breast pocket was either an embroidered Combat Infantry Badge or a Combat Medic's Badge. One again, the Holiday Inn University Plaza provided a gracious and welcoming site for our activities.

Thursday, October 14th, was a sunny and comfortable day, perfect for the activities scheduled at the nearby National Corvette Museum. The visitors were divided into two groups with each having a tour guide show them the displays and informational features of the recently renovated museum. Emphasis was on the people and design of the Corvette, but there was an interesting simulation of the sinkhole which occurred in February 2014 and swallowed eight Corvettes. Following the tour and a lunch at the museum, the group went to the NCM Motorsports Park where "spirited" rides with a professional driver were available in the new C8 Corvettes.

The group returned to the Holiday Inn and adjourned to the hospitality room. Many long lost acquaintances were renewed and many old friends were reunited. There were several displays in the room including a memorial for those Delta Company brothers who were KIA. Dinner was at a nearby bistro called "Just Love Coffee". Following the dinner, attendees returned to the hotel to prepare for the next day's activities.

Friday, October 15, started out with inclement weather. The original venue called for a visit to Bowling Green's Aviation Heritage Park. This park has a large selection of beautifully restored military aircraft including an F-111, F-4, and a T-38 that had been flown by Neil Armstrong and every Mercury and Gemini program astronaut. Due to the rain the trip had to be canceled. As an alternative to the visit, several of the park's docent/pilots came to the Holiday Inn. Speakers included Joe Tinius, Director of the park. Joe described the selection, acquisition, and restoration process for the aircraft on display.

The second speaker was Charles Browning who was a Huey pilot in Vietnam. Mr. Browning flew dust-off missions as well as combat assaults and tactical support. Most of his missions were in the I Corps area, including Da Nang. He brought in a flag that had messages of friendship in several languages that could be used were he to be shot down (which he was three times!). He also related how the pilots used to change the pitch of the blades to create "blade slap" which could be heard from a distance by the ground troops.

The third speaker was Colonel Arnie Franklin, an F-111 pilot who was a FAC in Vietnam, serving in Phan Rang, Pleiku, and Da Nang. Col. Franklin was the command pilot of the raid on Libya in 1986. This was a response to a Libyan state sponsored bombing that killed several American soldiers who were stationed in Germany (Operation El Dorado Canyon). One of the F-111's that flew in the raid has been restored and is on display at the park. Colonel Franklin also presented several other background stories about the aircraft on display.

The last speaker of the day was Brigadier General Dan Cherry. General Cherry was a former commander of the Thunderbirds Air Force Demonstration Team. He related his story of shooting down a MiG in Vietnam and watching the pilot eject. The ejecting pilot and General Cherry's F-4 were so close that he had to take aggressive evasive action to avoid hitting him. In 2008, he had the chance to reunite with the pilot he shot down. He was invited to appear on Vietnamese national TV and became friends with the pilot he downed. The Vietnamese pilot was at the opening ceremony of the Aviation Heritage Park. This incredible story has been shown on the Discovery Channel under the title "Hell over Hanoi".

After the presentations, the group adjourned to a local restaurant called "Roosters". An extensive buffet was enjoyed by all. Since the weather had cleared, many of the attendees went to the Aviation Heritage Park to enjoy the displays.

Dinner that evening was at the Holiday Inn. The guest speaker was Colonel Rhonda McCulley, daughter of Delta Company veteran Bruce Moore, and his wife Sue. Colonel McCulley talked about her experiences in the military and informed us about a full scale replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall that is on display at her duty station in Fort Knox, Kentucky.

Saturday, October 16, was a busy day. After a buffet breakfast the business meeting was held. A financial report was presented along with the re-election of officers for the Reunion Committee. The current team of officers was retained. A discussion of when the next meeting should take place was held and it was decided to return to Bowling Green, Kentucky for a reunion with tentative dates of September 21, 2022 thru September 25, 2022.

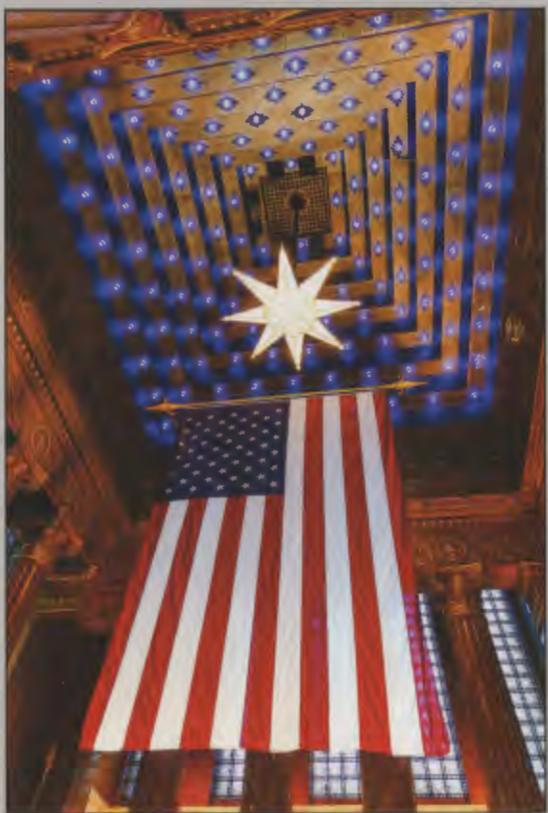
Lunch was held in the hospitality room. Following lunch, John Ewing held an auction of items brought in by the people of Delta Company. One of the most special items was a quilt that was started by Carla White, wife of Delta Company veteran Jim White. The quilt was signed by the brothers of Delta Company. Sadly, Carla passed away before the quilt was finished so one of her friends completed it. It was one of the most popular items at the reunion auction.

Dinner that evening was at the Holiday Inn. Wendell Strode was the master of ceremonies. After the dinner there was a brief program. A custom made knife and sheath created by metal craftsman Marshall Hall, son of Elmer Hall, was raffled. The lucky winner was David Martin. Cliff Tholen gave a recap of activities surrounding the attempts to locate the remains of two of our soldiers that were KIA, Body Not Recovered (Cliff Van Artsdalen and Dave Lovegren). At the next reunion Delta Company will be updated with any additional information that comes to light. The KIA/Body Not Recovered report was followed by a memorial service for both the KIAs and those who have passed since returning home. As is the tradition, Cliff Barger rang a bell each time Cliff Tholen read one of the names. This was followed by moments of silent reflection about these losses.

The memorial was culminated by an event that was created by Tom "Doc" Tierney. The group adjourned to the parking lot and 86 Japanese lanterns were illuminated and set free, one for each of our KIA. Soon the evening sky over Bowling Green was well lit with the ascending lanterns. This brought a fitting and positive closure to the memorial process.

On Sunday, October 17, we met in the hospitality room for a buffet breakfast. Cliff Barger held a brief devotional service and we all departed to make our way home. The reunion, once again, was successful. Twenty-seven Delta Company veterans attended along with thirty-six members of our extended Delta family.

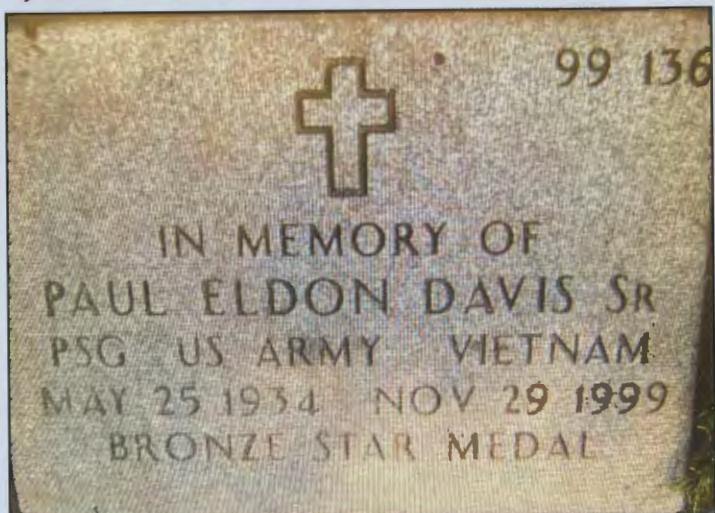
The hospitality from both the Holiday Inn and local Bowling Green businesses was outstanding. We are looking forward to our next reunion in September of 2022.



Photos by Dutch DeGroot, 23 MP Co.

## Final Toast to SFC Paul Davis

By Don Counter



I shared the story titled "Glimpse of a Unique Lifer" from the Oct-Nov-Dec 2021 issue of the *America Journal* with a local librarian. As she read the tribute to Paul Davis her facial expressions transitioned from a smile, to a chuckle, and finished with WOW! She asked "So, where is he now? What happened to him?"

I answered "I don't know, there were rumors that he had passed away, but no one seems to know with any certainty. It would be wonderful to find out that information." She asked a few more questions like when was he in Vietnam? How old was he? She put the information on a yellow post-it note no bigger than her thumb. The following morning I received a phone call from her with the exclamation, "I found your guy!"

When I returned to the library that day she presented me with information that confirmed he was buried at the Tahoma National Cemetery, Kent, King County, Washington, USA.

As my tribute, I will go into the garage and rummage through my olive-drab foot locker, retrieve the fifty-year old canteen cup. I will dust it off, prepare some coffee, add a shot of whiskey and toast SFC Paul Davis and the others we hold in high esteem that left indelible impressions on us.

Here's to eternal life...Cheers!



1LT Tom Schmitz (wearing hat) and SFC Paul Davis, 1/46 Infantry, on LZ Mildred, March 1970. Photos by Larry Pistole.

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## Well, well, well, Rangers

By Tom Schmitz

Thanks for the wonderful article in the America Journal about one of my most favorite US Army people. And characters! Loved that guy! BRAVO!!!

I recall his "Well, well, well, Rangers!" morning greeting to me. I have several photos of "Sergeant Davis" and I on Mildred, taken by Larry Pistole.

Larry Pistole was convinced that Sergeant Davis and I were both Airborne Rangers. And that Sergeant Davis was a Ranger instructor at Benning. We had some GREAT NCO instructors in Ranger School, of his "field soldier" type, so maybe so.

I know Sergeant Davis told me that he had an AK round lodged in his back touching his spine and it was inoperable. And that he could not get down when fired upon, because sometimes his back locked up and he could not get back up. Said by regulations he should not be in Vietnam. But that he had had a medical friend remove that prohibition from his records. But CPT Paul Spielberg in Co. A was concerned, and informed LTC Doyle, 1/46 commander at the time. So that is how LTC Doyle reassigned SFC Davis as operations NCO and our NCOIC on Mildred. Davis also may have been my NCOIC on one of my mini-firebases before that.



I KNOW that I sure felt much more confident when he was around! Especially the night that Mary Ann got hit, and until we got Mildred closed.

One funny story (to me): Sergeant Davis always said that his first name was "Sergeant". I remember LTC Tate on LZ Linda called him "Dave" publicly, at meetings, more than once, and clearly once too often. LTC Tate asked, "Well, Dave, what do you think?" Sergeant Davis replied, "Well, Clyde, I think ..." I practically split a gut not laughing out loud. But that ended that familiarity problem.

Sergeant Davis was a great field soldier, a work horse, not a show horse. And one of the very few SFCs in the bush in 1/46. My "field first sergeant" in Delta Company, Joe Wolfe, was a great field soldier, too. He had been a drill sergeant. He was a SSG, not an SFC. I only had two hard stripe E6s. The rest were NCOIC grads.

Wish I had better news. But your AMERICAL article certainly is a well-deserved tribute, well written and illustrated, and it made my day (week/year)!

## Appalachian Trail Adventure

By Dave Eichhorn

I did it, all 2,193 miles! I started on the approach trail at Amicalola Falls State Park, Georgia, on 28 February 2020, stopping for the night after five miles. The 7.8-mile approach trail does not count as part of the AT, Springer Mountain is the official southern start of the AT.

The AT stretches across 14 states from Springer Mountain, Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine. It's the longest hiking-only trail in the world and ranges in elevation from 6,625 feet, (Clingmans Dome, Tennessee) to 124 feet (Bear Mountain State Park, New York). The total climbing for the trail is an estimated 515,000 feet, equivalent to climbing Mount Everest 17 Times.

Technically, it was not a thru hike. To be considered a thru hike it must be done within a twelve month period. I finished before the next 29th of February, so it's a thru hike to me. This hike has been on my bucket list for 20-plus years. Finally at the age of 71, I was able to cross it off the list. Now on to the Major League Baseball parks, I have 19 down and eleven to go.

The AT was proposed by Benton MacKaye in 1921. The first section of the trail was completed in 1923 in New York. The trail was fully completed in 1937, with over 50% of it being on private land. Today roughly 0.5% of the AT is on private land. Along with the 14 states, it crosses through eight National Forests, six National Parks, six Inventory and Monitoring networks, a National Wildlife Refuge, three Tennessee Valley Authority properties, one Smithsonian Institute property, and over 280 local jurisdictions. The trail is managed in partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) and its 30 affiliated trail-maintaining clubs. This is under an extraordinary cooperative management system that provides for an annual contribution of nearly 200,000 hours by more than 5,000 volunteers.

Earl Shaffer, a WWII veteran of the South Pacific Theater, is credited with being the first person to thru hike the AT in 1948. He started in Georgia and finished in 124 days. (I was on the trail for 179 days). "I wanted to walk the war out of my system," he once said. (PTSD?)

I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in 1992, I wanted the hike to be part of my therapy. My motivation was



to honor the guys that I served with that didn't come home. I had a lot of time to talk with them and walk and think. It was a spiritual walk for me. I also meet a couple of fellow Vietnam vets and several Iraq/Afghanistan vets.

It is traditional to have a trail name when thru hiking the AT, one that fellow hikers give you, or one of your choosing. I was given the trail name of Father Time on the second day on the trail. (I was usually the oldest person around.) Some of my fellow hiker's names were Juke Box, Babyface, John Wayne, Walmart, Wizard, Smokey Bear (he smoked like a train and snored like a bear), Sassy, and many more.

The scenery was awesome, but it was the people that made it, especially the "Trail Angles" who helped hikers with food, water or transportation to towns or shelters. Along the way I visited a couple fellow chargers. Jim Simms treated me for dinner in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Ken McKenzie picked me up at Pinkham Notch, New Hampshire and put me up for the night at his house. I had a wonderful visit and toured his cabin and wild blueberry patch in the woods. Ken was a most gracious host.

The trail was a lot more rock scramble than I thought it would be. I fell at least 50 times, got knocked flat on my back by a tree that was leaning at a 45-degree angle over the trail. I had to keep my eyes looking down for rocks and roots that I would stumble on. Also got knocked down and washed down stream a little bit when crossing the Pleasant Pond Stream in Maine, the water was higher than normal after heavy rain (I lost my crocs off my feet). The Mahoosuc Notch in Maine was the roughest, I only saw two people that day. Some days I would see hundreds of people, especially at Springer Mountain, GA, Shenandoah National Park, Virginia and Mount Moosilauke, New Hampshire.

The adventure was way more than I thought it would be. I think that by not having a smartphone or GPS app added a lot to the experience besides the extra miles that I had to backtrack to get back on the trail. I quickly learned to back track to the last white blaze that I had seen. I did get off trail a few times, some places white blazes were numerous, other places not so much.

Even with the times that I was tired, cold, wet, and hungry, I never had the thought of giving up and not finishing. I did find peace in the woods.

## The Story of a World War II Veteran: Al Doig

By Michael Ferrantino and Daniel Eng

### Overview

Al Doig is one of many World War II veterans in Westwood today. He is currently eighty-four years of age, and resides on Hillview Street in Islington. Though he is retired, he has remained active in the community through his involvement in public organizations. He also takes special interest in fellow war veterans, and keeps in contact with a number of them. He has observed American involvement in several wars since the Second World War, including the Korean War, Vietnam War, and Desert Storm, and therefore has seen the impact that his own service has had on the American experience.

Doig's involvement in World War II consisted of his two-and-a-half-year service as an artilleryman against the Japanese in the southern Pacific. He took part in the Americal Division's battles for the vital islands of Guadalcanal and Bougainville. The involvement of Doig and thousands like him in the Pacific war was a direct result of the Japanese invading their Asian neighbors and attacking the American naval base of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and consisted of an island-hopping campaign with the final destination of Tokyo.

The news of Pearl Harbor spread quickly across the nation by radio, telephone, and word of mouth, and produced a variety of reactions among Americans. Many people were genuinely concerned, but many others were initially uninterested in the news. One annoyed radio listener demanded, "What's this I hear about Japan declaring war? Have you got anything on the game between the Chicago Bears and the Cardinals? Aren't you getting anything besides that war stuff?"

Furthermore, the hundreds of wives and mothers who called radio stations to discover if their husbands and sons were hurt in the attack directed their interest only toward their immediate families, and were otherwise largely unconcerned with matters of war or politics.

Nevertheless, the decision to go to war against Japan clearly pulled the people of the United States together. Foreign Affairs Committee member Charles Eaton told reporters, "I think this will unite America. If it doesn't, what will?"

He was right. According to Doig, the attitude of the general public was "exceptionally good." Almost everyone wanted to be a part of the war effort, and did his or her best to help in any way possible, whether that meant military service or support on the home front. After President Franklin D. Roosevelt's stirring speech before a deeply affected nation on December 8, 1941, the House voted 388-1 for war and the Senate voted 82-0. In entering World War II, therefore, the nation was united as it never had been before.

All of the participants in World War II have had a significant impact collectively on the development of the United States in the twentieth century. Past major wars of the United States have threatened the security and the unity of the nation, yet have always ultimately caused people to realign their thoughts and beliefs about America and the American dream.

Few wars united a people to the extent that World War II did in America, and the memory of this war serves both as a reminder and a warning to future generations. War veterans, therefore, who themselves embody such memories, are of vital importance to younger generations who have not witnessed a major war. Furthermore, today it is of special consequence that the memories and wisdom of veterans be heard, for their generation is rapidly disappearing. It is in this light that one veteran offers his story and thoughts of a war that is long past but whose implications are as real today as ever.

### Al Doig's Experiences

Al Doig was born on April 20, 1914. He grew up during the post-World War I era and the Great Depression, and his education consisted of high school and some evening college courses. Prior to his service in the army, he worked in management at the John Hancock Building in Boston. He later served in the Massachusetts National Guard; he was inducted into federal service in January, 1941. His training consisted of firing,

maneuvering, and communication. He had recently returned to Camp Edwards in Massachusetts on December 5, 1941, after three months of training in North Carolina, and his term of service was to expire shortly, when, on December 7, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and nearby airfields in Hawaii.

Doig and his fellow servicemen initially heard only a vague report of the situation, and were ordered to "go back into the barracks and sit on the bunks" until they were told additional information. The men were unaware of either the location of the bombing or the extent of the damage. A few hours later, they heard that the airfield that had been hit was Hickam Field near Honolulu. The same day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested a declaration of war on Japan.

On the eve of the war, the attitude of the troops, as well as the general population of the country, was characterized by Doig as "very favorable." Most people were "gung-ho . . . they wanted to be in the service if they were eligible." Those who were not eligible generally wanted to help the war effort in any way possible. However, as Doig points out, "until you've been in it, no one can understand what it's all about."

After December 7, all army divisions had been reorganized, from "square divisions" containing four infantry regiments to "triangular divisions" of just three, along with their supporting units. Doig's unit, excess from an old square division, was therefore reassigned on January 18, 1942, to Task Force 6814.

Their first assembly was at the New York Port of Embarkation, and their destination, though unknown to them at the time, was the island of New Caledonia in the southern Pacific. They eventually sailed through the Panama Canal, and after thirty-nine days at sea, landed at Melbourne, Australia. After parading and being billeted for six days in homes at Bendigo, a town just north of Melbourne, Doig and his fellow soldiers returned to Melbourne and sailed to New Caledonia soon after.

New Caledonia, several hundred miles east of Australia, was considered an important strategic location requiring occupation and defense against the Japanese threat of invasion from their position just to the northwest in the New Hebrides. On this island, Task Force

6814 was reorganized as the Americal Division, so named as a contraction of the phrase "Americans in New Caledonia." Doig was a battery commander in the 247th Field Artillery Battalion, supporting the 132d Infantry Regiment in the Americal Division.

In August, 1942, the United States 1st Marine Division had landed on the island of Guadalcanal in the southern Solomons, north of New Caledonia, and had taken the airfield which became known as Henderson Field. The Marines later faced sustained, bitter opposition by the Japanese. In October, the first troops of the Americal Division, the 164th Infantry Regiment and its supporting units, landed on Guadalcanal.

In November, the 182d Infantry and its supporting units landed on the island. Due to a temporary lack of shipping, Doig's unit and the 132d Infantry did not sail until Thanksgiving Day, and finally landed on Guadalcanal in December, 1942. Although the Marines only encountered a few Japanese engineers upon their landing, the Americal Division met with immediate resistance.

According to Doig, the primary concerns of the troops after landing were to "get ashore, get your troops together, get organized, get your business going, and once that's established, then you can start shooting, and once the guns are in place, then you start thinking of developing your position, and the last thing you can do is take care of yourself." Personal concerns such as bathing and eating in some cases were not met until several days after landing.

The Japanese continued to offer steady resistance in the form of frequent bombings, resulting in substantial losses of American troops. The Americal Division began infantry action, yet remained on the defensive until sufficient numbers of troops arrived. Around December 7 or 8, the last elements of the Americal replaced the 1st Marine Division on Henderson Field and began their offensive operations against the Japanese.

According to Doig, the Japanese soldiers defending Guadalcanal were "masters of camouflage." The Japanese were very good at hiding and utilized jungle warfare tactics. A single Japanese soldier could hold up an entire battalion of American troops until he was located and eliminated.

Doig saw a striking example of Japanese camouflage once when he was in an SBD dive bomber on a mission to destroy 150-mm "Pistol Petes," howitzers which the Japanese fired into the very closely packed American units. As he approached enemy territory he could see all the American infantrymen on the front lines, and could even see underwear hanging to dry on the barbed wire barriers.

After going beyond the front lines, however, Doig reports that no trace of the enemy was apparent and nothing was disturbed. The Japanese were hidden out of the range of the plane's sight. Doig once also discovered, moving further into enemy territory, an enemy bivouac area and hospitals. The bivouac area contained wires going from tree to tree which served the purpose of facilitating Japanese movement at night.

Near the end of the Japanese occupation of Guadalcanal, high-ranking Japanese commanders had lost hope and sent a large convoy of ships to evacuate their troops. Initially, the Americans on Guadalcanal believed that the convoy contained thousands of Japanese reinforcements, and, since the Americans were too spread out for adequate defense, they almost went to "Condition Black" (a situation in which the



**Major General Alexander M. Patch, Jr., commander of the United Force in New Caledonia, inspects a U.S. Tank somewhere in New Caledonia, 31 May 1942. First anniversary of the organization of the tank platoon of the above tank. U.S. Army Signal Corps photo.**

army destroys all papers, information, and weapons in case of capture). The army was relieved to find that the Japanese convoy was not for attack but for evacuation. Doig states that the Japanese "knew Guadalcanal was a lost cause." Doig believes that although the enemy tactics were formidable, the primary reason they were defeated in Guadalcanal is that they overextended their supply lines.

On April 5, 1943, soon after the end of the Guadalcanal campaign, Doig and his unit left the island. They spent almost nine months in Nandi, Fiji, to retrain and to be resupplied.

Just before Christmas, 1943, the Americal Division moved to Bougainville, an island northwest of Guadalcanal, to relieve the Marines stationed there. Both the Japanese and the Americans had built airfields on Bougainville; these fields were the primary strategic objectives.

Inside the defensive perimeter, the American troops were very crowded and therefore suffered many casualties from each Japanese shell that landed. "We didn't have enough room to have a baseball field," says Doig.

Doig points out that the goal of the Americans on Bougainville was to hold a defensive area, while on Guadalcanal they had been on the offensive. The American troops, located on the southwestern coast of Bougainville, experienced periodic attacks from the northeast. The Japanese offensive style of fighting was significantly different from that which they had used on Guadalcanal. "They screamed a lot," says Doig; ". . . you'd think sometimes they were intoxicated, you know - they were full of something-or-other."

When Japanese soldiers charged, they would simply keep charging until the end; many Japanese lost their lives in this manner. Such a method could be intimidating; however, the Japanese had to cross a range of mountains in order to reach the American position, and ambushes could be set up in the mountains to hinder Japanese attempts to advance. In addition, American patrols kept the troops well-informed, and the Americans therefore were not easily taken by surprise.

Doig was not aware of the numbers of enemy troops involved in the Bougainville campaign, but he states that his unit was never overwhelmed. "We held our own," he says. After repeated Japanese failures, American troops eventually pushed northward, clearing the Japanese from Bougainville.

Doig expresses the common soldiers' ignorance of strategy by saying, "We don't know what's going on as far as upper echelons are concerned. We've got a job to do and we have to do that job; then after we do that job, there'd be another job for us... You only know that you have orders." As it turned out, the strategy of the Americans was to island hop northward up the Solomons, with the eventual goal of invading Tokyo; and victory at Bougainville was only a matter of time.

Having attained the rank of captain, Doig returned home on rotation in the summer of 1944 after thirty months of service. He was assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to the field artillery replacement center, and once again became a battery commander in charge of training troops. He was now able to follow the status of the war by means of a map board with ribbons which indicated the locations of armies. The rest of the Americal Division went on to the Philippines in January, 1945 and were going to be among the first units to go on to Japan, but the war ended before the invasion could occur.

After the war, Doig resumed his management position at the John Hancock building. He is now retired and is involved in several clubs and organizations in Westwood. He volunteers at the Westwood High School Library during the day, and is a member of both the Senior Men's Club and the Islington Community Church. In addition, he is closely involved in veterans' activities. He is currently eighty-four years old and resides on Hillview Street in Islington.

### The Americal in the South Pacific

Doig was just one part of the bigger effort to defeat the Japanese in the Pacific. Thousands of American troops in the Army, the Air Corps, the Navy, and the Marine Corps were involved in the Pacific war. Although the United States won most of the battles, the Japanese proved to be extremely stubborn and determined fighters until the very end.

The Japanese moved swiftly southward during the early part of 1942. Their main objective was to compete with Western powers by extending their political, economic, and military power through Southeast Asia. The Japanese created a base at Rabaul on January 23, and seized Bougainville two months later. In May, they acquired the islands of Guadalcanal and nearby Tulagi.

Guadalcanal had exceptionally favorable terrain for airfields, so Japanese engineers began construction of a field in early July. This airstrip gave the Japanese the power to inflict air strikes on northern Australia, New Guinea, and the New Hebrides. Tulagi became the Japanese headquarters for the area.

The United States also occupied certain strategically important islands early in the war. On March 12, 1942, the Marines occupied New Caledonia, and construction of a major air base on the island began at Tontouta. Soon after, U.S. Army troops entered New Caledonia and the Fiji Islands to supplement the Marines. The Army force in New Caledonia consisted mostly of National Guard units, and was consolidated on May 24 as the Americal Division. The Division consisted of

three infantry regiments, the 132d, the 164th, and the 182d; four field artillery battalions; various units of reconnaissance troops, engineers, medical hands, and maintenance workers; and the Division Headquarters.

The invasion of Guadalcanal marked the first offensive operation conducted by the United States in the Pacific war. The campaign's immediate objective was to protect the American lines of communication to Australia and New Zealand, but it became part of the larger island-hopping strategy with the final goal of reaching Japan. It was accomplished under short notice and with limited means.

On August 7, 1942, the U.S. 1st Marine Division landed at Guadalcanal. They met no initial resistance except some Japanese engineers and construction workers, who immediately fled into the jungle. At the Battle of Savo Island (near Guadalcanal) on August 9, Japanese Vice-Admiral Gunichi Mikawa and the Japanese 8th Fleet inflicted the most humiliating naval defeat of the war on the American cruiser covering force, which was almost entirely wiped out. In addition, all American ships had already left the Guadalcanal area, leaving the Marines alone with inadequate supplies and no intelligence.

The Marines had, however, discovered an unfinished airfield, which was nicknamed Henderson Field, and which American engineers eventually completed and improved. Although early American operations on Guadalcanal were generally defensive in nature, soon the Marines started attacking the Japanese forces that still held parts of the island.

The first elements of the Americal Division, the 164th Infantry Regiment and supporting units, landed on Guadalcanal on October 13, 1942. The regiment was placed under the orders of the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division, and served to supplement the Marines with fresh infantrymen.

Starting in early November near the mouth of the Malimbui River, the 164th Infantry took part in the offensive toward Kokurnbona and Poha River until November 23. The 182d Infantry Regiment of the Americal Division landed on Guadalcanal on November 12. Just a few days later, along with the 164th Infantry and the 8th Marines, the regiment was to participate in renewed operations west of the Matanikau River.

The last two weeks of November were relatively quiet. Enemy activity ceased, and the Japanese ships that had been stationed near Guadalcanal withdrew northward. Thenceforth, there were no more Japanese attempts at reinforcement or reconquest of the island. American airplanes struck regularly with increasing force at enemy bases at the northwest end of Guadalcanal.

The last elements of the Americal Division, the 132d Infantry Regiment, supporting units, and Division headquarters, arrived on Guadalcanal on December 8. The next day, Major General Alexander M. Patch, Commanding General of the Americal Division, took over for General Vandegrift as commander of operations on Guadalcanal. Both sides planned major offensive actions for January, 1943, and used the month of December for preparation.

The Marines and the 132d Infantry took high ground along ridges and hills, later to engage in heavy combat at Mount Austen and Gifu Strongpoint for several weeks. On January 10, a major offensive by the XIV Corps - a consolidation of all American ground forces on Guadalcanal - began. American

troops pushed further inland than they had previously ventured, and a two-week westward sweep scattered most Japanese resistance. The last American drive toward the western coast of Guadalcanal, which started on January 22, caused all Japanese ground forces to retreat.

The Japanese had entirely evacuated by February 8, and the XIV Corps reached the villages of Verahue and Tenaru, both located on the western coast of Guadalcanal, on February 9. After nearly six months of combat, the Japanese had finally been driven from Guadalcanal, with losses of about 23,800 men dead or missing. By comparison, American forces had lost only 1,600 men.

After the final efforts of the Guadalcanal campaign, the Americal Division occupied defensive positions on the island and finally moved in echelon to the Fiji Islands from March 1 to April 10, 1943. The division's mission was to defend the islands, which served as an important communications link between the U.S. and the Pacific theater; however, since the Fijis were never directly threatened, the division used its time there mainly for rest and retraining. Recreation centers were created in Suva and Lautoka, and the troops were allowed leisure periods for the first time since they had left New Caledonia.

Troops also had to man observation posts along the coast of Fiji and to monitor offshore activity closely. Training programs became increasingly intense; infantry troops staged numerous regimental and battalion jungle situations, while artillery troops practiced at the artillery ranges. One veteran-historian asserts that "the tactical and technical skills of the combined arms and services of the Americal were being sharpened to a degree never before attained."

One major problem arose on Fiji: malaria, which had first infiltrated the troops on Guadalcanal, caused the military hospitals to become crowded to capacity. Meanwhile, in early November, 1943, the Marines were landing at Cape Torokina on the island of Bougainville, a few hundred miles to the northwest of Guadalcanal. After the initial landing difficulties of violent surf conditions, coastal swamps, and tough Japanese resistance, invading troops soon had to deal with the scorching heat, the lack of high ground, and the early departure of their eight supply transports. In spite of these problems, however, the Marines managed to establish a relatively strong lodgment on Bougainville, while crucial naval and air battles further secured their position. Early American activities consisted mostly of expanding the perimeter and patrolling constantly.

On November 6, completely undetected by the Marines, the Japanese successfully landed four destroyers and 800 men on Bougainville. Several initial battles gave way to a period of relative calm from November 15-20, in which American troops resupplied, reorganized, and secured their position.

The advance of the American perimeter began on November 21, and met with surprisingly strong resistance. By November 24, Japanese resistance died down in the front but the threat from further inland remained. The American offensive after November 24 effectively crushed any organized Japanese forces around Empress Augusta Bay. The Americans continued to expand their perimeter until, around Christmas, 1943, the 3rd Marine Division was relieved by units of the Americal Division, which was in the process of moving in from Fiji.

The Americal units sailed to Bougainville by echelon, arriving from December 19 to January 14, 1944. From then

on, Major General Oscar Griswold took over command of operations on Bougainville. In the following weeks, units in all areas worked on constructing pillboxes of earth, logs, and sandbags, and making trenches and rifle pits. Activity close to the front lines also involved both improving defenses and aggressive patrolling. Most patrols in January and February met little or no resistance, and were therefore easily able to collect information about the terrain of Bougainville.

Through early March, 1944, American troops focused on consolidating the perimeter. A large-scale Japanese counterattack did not occur until March 8, when Japanese General Hyakutake bombarded parts of the American lodgement.

Although the quantity of Japanese artillery was very great, relatively little damage was done. This attack did, however, warn the Americans that the Japanese had built up their strength in the front, and were preparing a general assault on the perimeter. From that time on, the Japanese conducted a series of fierce attacks and bombardments, but suffered heavy losses due mainly to an over-estimation of their own strength.

After a number of attacks, General Hyakutake realized the failure of his operations, and received permission from his superiors to withdraw. The remaining Japanese attacking force retreated on March 27, leaving behind a large amount of valuable equipment and weaponry, which the Americans quickly seized.

On March 28, the American front line went on the offensive once again. General Griswold fully understood, however, that Bougainville now mattered little in the South Pacific campaign, since the Japanese base at Rabaul had been isolated and therefore was no longer effective. In addition, the majority of both the Japanese navy and the Japanese air force had either withdrawn or been crippled.

After Japanese supply lines had been effectively cut off, American operations returned to continual patrolling, strengthening, and manning of the perimeter. High-level American officers had never viewed the Bougainville campaign as an attempt to take the entire island; they thought that such an endeavor would cost far too many lives, and realized the



Infantrymen inspect pillbox on Hill 260 where 570 Japanese died during the fierce counterattack by the Americal Division. Bougainville, Solomon Islands. March 1944 photo by U.S. Army Signal Corps.



**Front line of G Co., 132d Infantry Regiment, Americal Division, in foreground. Naval planes dropping incendiary bombs on Japanese pillboxes which are concealed near the tree to the rear. Bougainville. Photo by U.S. Army Signal Corps.**

relative harmlessness of the remaining Japanese on Bougainville. Therefore, both sides continued to conduct operations in a defensive manner, and did little to bother each other. In mid-July, 1944, the decision was made to substitute Australian troops for the Americans who were on Bougainville, and by December 12, all American front-line units had been replaced.

The next major campaign in the South Pacific was the recapture of the Philippines. After the great naval Battle of Leyte Gulf on October 19-20, 1944, resulting in huge Japanese losses, American troops were able to begin the invasion of Leyte Island for the liberation of the Philippines. The liberation was still under way in January, 1945, when the Americal Division moved to Leyte by echelon to relieve the 77th Infantry Division.

Americal troops began pushing westward, and achieved success soon after. The 164th Infantry stayed to mop up until March 10, when all Japanese forces were eliminated on Leyte. The division left Leyte on March 24, and, under heavy naval attack, it was forced to land on the island of Cebu. Americal troops took Cebu City the next day.

The division continued to fight in the Philippines until June, 1945, when it reassembled on Cebu to train for the invasion of Japan. Such an invasion never occurred because the Japanese surrendered in early August, after the detonation of two atomic bombs over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The use of these bombs prevented an American invasion of Japan which may have been extremely costly, in both American and Japanese lives and resources.

Living conditions in the South Pacific were generally withstandable, considering the nature of the campaigns. Major difficulties, however, did exist. For example, the weather was a persistent problem for the American troops. Temperatures often reached 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, and heavy rains were quite common. At Guadalcanal and Fiji, one of the most severe problems was malaria, which spread rapidly in low, marshy areas with stagnant water.

On Bougainville, jungle rot, a condition caused by sand rubbing against skin in the heat and wetness, became a major problem. Insects and spiders were ever-present and became nuisances. Diarrhea, a problem related to poor diet and water, also appeared on Bougainville. Many of these difficulties were caused in part by

poor sanitation. Doig characterizes the conditions as "deplorable" - the food was usually not very good, and once he had to eat only Spam for several days.

There was no chance to bathe, no entertainment, and no place to go. In addition, there was no electricity, and, according to Doig, at night men just climbed into their foxholes and stayed there. However, the troops learned not to expect much. "It isn't nine to five, you know," comments Doig with a chuckle. When you're in war, he says, "you don't ask for much. . . You know you're not going to get it, so why ask for it?"

Victory in the Pacific completed the defeat of the Axis powers in the Second World War. The Pacific front was only one of the major fronts of the war, but it was the only one in which America played the primary role in the defeat of the Axis. The result in the Pacific was the last piece of the puzzle in the defeat of the Axis; victory in Europe had already been achieved several months earlier. Therefore, the defeat of Japan ensured the total victory of the Allies.

### Conclusion

It is widely held that the Allies in World War II represented a crusade for justice. The Germans and the Japanese both attempted to control their respective continents by imperial means. The Germans sought to move eastward through Poland and Czechoslovakia and westward through France, imposing their fascist political system on the conquered peoples. Unlike the Germans, who had a general plan for conquest, the Japanese had a well-defined and bold scheme.

After the crippling of the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Japan had envisioned the conquest of Thailand, Burma, Malaya, Singapore, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies. Their objective was to compete with Western powers by extending their political, economic, and military power through Southeast Asia. This specific program was agreed upon at a Japanese Supreme War Council in September, 1941. In the Allied defense against these unwarranted advances, the United States played a major role.

Following World War II, the United States grew tremendously, becoming one of the world's two great superpowers.

The American economy had boomed like it never had before; the people had been unified behind the crusade for justice and had worked together to build the nation. Politically, FDR had transformed presidential power and had furthered American dominance on the world stage. America was becoming ready for the nuclear age which it had created.

The post-World War II era lasted for over forty years and is known as the Cold War. This period was characterized by a shifting struggle for power between the Western bloc and the Communist bloc. The Western bloc, led by the United States, represented capitalist democracy, while the Communist bloc, led by the U.S.S.R., advocated the spread of Marxist revolutions against capitalism. The stakes involved were the issue of nuclear war and the question of which political and economic system would establish dominance.

Wars during this era have had hardly the drive for justice or the unity of popular support that World War II had. Vietnam, the most significant war for the United States since 1945, certainly did not draw unanimous support from the people. Doig, who lost his youngest son in the Vietnam War, comments that, as far as he could tell, there were no real accomplishments made. Troops poured into combat without as clear an objective as they had had in World War II. Thus in almost no way was Vietnam a repeat of the Second World War.

If one considers the Cold War to be a postwar phenomenon, then today America may appear to be past any significant direct consequences of World War II. On the contrary, the end of the Cold War only makes the implications of the Second World War more important than ever. After it emerged victorious from World War II, the cause of democracy in the world was yet further promoted by the favorable outcome of the Cold War. In this way, the Cold War merely continued a trend that World War II had initiated.

Many historians assert the theory that history moves in a cyclical pattern, experiencing alternating conservative and liberal eras; wars often happen to fit closely to this pattern. Accepting this theory of cycles to be at least partially valid, one must realize the importance today of understanding the period in

which we live in terms of the first half of the twentieth century, and if today we have truly left the postwar era, we need once again to consider what lies ahead. To guide us we have only our memories and mistakes of the past; in this case, the distant past is half a century ago, for the great standoff between democracy and Communism lasted a long time. Therefore, more than any other single period, World War II and the time immediately before put forth issues - liberty versus tyranny, activist foreign policy, and the clash of East and West - which are all very relevant today.

Thus tomorrow is to be both the beginning of a new era and a repeat of past trends. There are two distinct possibilities for the future of the country and for the world: today could be either a part of a peaceful era or a deceptive peace which could lead us blundering into war. Each of these two possibilities has equal credibility, and, of course, nobody knows which is true. Furthermore, the generation growing up today has not witnessed war to the extent that previous generations have, and therefore can not fully understand its effects. It does have, however, at least one important source of guidance on the immediate future of the country in terms of war, and that source is the generation of World War II participants.

Doig, a special member of this generation, has offered his knowledge and experiences to posterity. Doig, like many other young American soldiers, made great sacrifices for his country. He risked both his life and those of his men, and yet lost only one man under his command to drowning. He clearly was successful in both serving the country and protecting the lives of his comrades. Unfortunately, veterans like Doig are often underappreciated and their accomplishments are overlooked. Beyond merely watching parades and hearing speeches on Veterans' Day, it is important that we come to truly understand each veteran's story and afford him the credit that he deserves.

[Editor's note: This story was written in 1998 as a high school history class project. Al Doig was a very productive member of the Americal Division Veterans Association. I am glad to have known him.]



**Americal Division, New Caledonia. Task Force 6814 engineer project at Port Des Pointes, Noumea, New Caledonia. Dock being built for loading of gasoline and supplies for the 244th Coastal Artillery Regiment located nearby. 20 June 1942. Photo by U.S. Army Signal Corps.**

## Through My Eyes: A Story of Hope

By Bob G. Whitworth (c) 2012 Ninth Of A Series  
Continued from Jul-Aug-Sep *America Journal*

### Chapter 20 Back to the Beach

It was amazing that we had made it through the ambush across the rice paddies without any casualties, but I was too worn out to think about it—or to be thankful. We still had several miles to go before reaching base camp.

When we finally arrived, we rested up for a few hours at our newly-assigned bunkers along the perimeter where we were to pull guard that night. Then we received orders that we would be heading back to the beach in the morning. After our near-miss experience in the village and our muddy 400-yard dash, I was not looking forward to going back.

Being in Charlie's backyard had many disadvantages. The VC's efforts to kill us were spoiled solely by that little girl's simple warning. The thought of going back to the beach terrified me and I felt desperate. We had become the hunted, not the hunters.

With all that had happened in barely two months, I had run out of faith that many of us would make it through another ten.

I had a little hope, but not much.

Three years before I was drafted, I had wanted to go on a youth mission to another country. After I signed up for the program, I received books to read about people who had done some great things by having faith in God. These people were Christians, and the books were based on the Bible. After studying them, I had learned there was good reason to build my faith in God and have confidence in the abilities He had given me.

I felt ready to go on the mission, but when it was time to leave, my appendix went bad. I needed an operation and wasn't able to go.

I had still gained valuable information to build on, such as, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen," "...the just shall live by faith ..." and "...we walk by faith, not by sight." I hadn't realized at the time that reading a book with good stuff in it was one thing, but living it was going to require help.

What someone really believes often becomes evident under extreme pressure. A guy from another platoon made some claims about his faith. He left me with the impression he could just tell God what he wanted, and everything would come about to his liking. But, as pressures set in on him, his behavior changed. He took to drinking and smoking, and started swearing. It seemed he had given up on his faith to the point he no longer believed it.

Now it was my turn. Everything about my faith was on trial. The pressure was on in a very deadly way. The situation looked bad and I was having a very hard time being hopeful about the future. I was running out of inner strength and needed help.

When it got dark, I pulled the first hour of my guard. Then I went inside an empty bunker where I could be alone.

Growing up, I had learned from my father that we could come to God with our requests. I had also learned from watching him that a believer's prayer was powerful. My father had grown up in rural Texas. There were 13 children in his family and he was the third youngest. He was born with his left leg one-and-a-half inches shorter than the other and wore one shoe with a built-up sole. He had a bad back because of this and was always in pain. When he was about eight, his father died. His oldest brother, even though he was blind, became head of the house and made sure everyone did their part. They were a poor family and worked as farm laborers picking cotton and other crops to survive during the Great Depression.

His mom saw to it that everyone went to church on Sundays. The family trusted in God during those hard years and the knowledge of God was instilled in my father. He had become a Christian during his early twenties, and took advantage of the power and simplicity of prayer. Growing up under his roof, I had heard his heart-felt prayers often. They were said with quiet fervor and such feeling that it made a big impression on me.

As a young boy I had accepted that Jesus was God's Son and asked Him to forgive my sins. Since then, a hunger had been growing inside me to learn more about who God was.

I enjoyed reading the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament of the Bible. It gave good instructions for how to live and make good choices. It said to get wisdom and understanding, that they were better than gold and silver. I had started praying about life and where I fit in. I wanted to do what would please God and still have a real life full of fun and adventure. But I wanted life with meaning, not religious acting.

I admired Jesus. He set an example for me with how He cared for people. He stood up and showed this care for them in many ways, like healing and forgiving them, even facing death for them on the cross and not running from it.

I knew about facing death now, and it was scary.

I was in a tough situation. I felt desperate and in need of help that I believed only God could give. I believed Jesus was who He said, but did that mean He would always hear my requests? I decided to ask, hoping that He would. It's not like I had anything to offer Him. Besides, what could God need?

I looked rough, smelled bad, and was dirty; so the only thing I could bring to the table was an honest heart and the belief He was a loving God. He knew my mistakes and there were plenty of them. He knew the pain and fear I felt, even some I'd caused and the guilt and remorse that it had produced, so there weren't any hidden secrets. I believed God was powerful enough to create this world like the Bible said, so anything was possible.

Feeling hopeless, I knelt on the dirt floor of the bunker, raised my hands above my head, and looked into the darkness.

"Jesus, I'm in bigger trouble than I've ever been before and I really need some help here. We all need Your help. Would You please protect the guys in my platoon and not let any more

of them be killed? I don't care so much if we get shot up, just no more dying, please. I will pray for each man by name every night, no matter what's going on. And, just one other little thing: do we have to go back to the beach?"

That was all I had in me. I was finished. It felt like I was talking to the sandbag ceiling and thin air. No voice answered saying everything would work out. I was simply kneeling there, saying a desperate prayer.

In the morning, we got new orders to pack up and be ready to head for the mountains.

Did I hear that right? The mountains? Had my request that we not go back to the beach been heard?

I felt renewed hope as we packed up. On our way out of the firebase, we walked past a 175mm artillery piece on tracks. After we passed it about a hundred yards, I was caught off guard when...

**BOOM!**

It fired right over our heads. It scared me half to death. The blast shook me inside and out, physically and mentally. I got the feeling that I shouldn't get over-confident, and our hard times were a long way from being over.

### Chapter 21 Orders

I had been drafted in June of 1967 and soon learned I didn't care much for the Army. Someone was always giving me orders to do things that I didn't want to do. I had never done well being ordered around. As a teenager, I had gotten myself into fistfights because other guys wanted to push their weight around and tell me I had to do what they demanded. This never went over well, especially when coming from someone who was full of himself, or in my opinion, not using his brain. To me, this meant most of the people in the Army.

In basic training at Fort Lewis, our drill sergeant had given us a spiel about buying U.S. savings bonds, but told us it wasn't required.

I was the only guy in the platoon that hadn't bought a savings bond, so the sergeant wasn't happy with me. There was some kind of incentive for him to get all of his troops to buy bonds. He woke me up several times in the middle of the night by either dumping my footlocker out on the floor or throwing everything out of my wall locker. After the third time, I'd had enough.

"Why are you doing this, Sarge?" I asked.

He ripped into me about not buying a U.S. savings bond.

"We're gonna talk about this later, soldier," he informed me. "Come to my room after chow!"

I showed up.

"Whitworth, why haven't you bought a bond?" he asked.

Then, without waiting for my reply, he proceeded to tell me why it was important for me to do so.

I was really mad about the way he had been trying to make his point. "I don't want to buy a bond, I don't have to buy a bond, and I'm not gonna buy a bond! You told us we didn't have to buy one!"

The discussion was over. I guess he'd just wanted to be sure I didn't want any bonds.

He hadn't dumped my locker again. End of subject. That was, until basic training was almost done.

One of the last exercises we had to complete was the "live-fire" course. We were marched out to the shooting range wearing full gear: our pack, entrenching tool, canteen, gas mask, and rifle. Gray smoke flowed over us as we low-crawled on the dirt under barbed-wire fences. Machine guns fired live bullets just over our heads.

After we finished the exercise, the sergeant marched us off the course and instructed us to form a single line standing about five feet apart. He ordered us to knock out a hundred push-ups, just so we wouldn't get cocky about living through the machine-gun fire. While we were pumping out the push-ups, he put someone else in charge and disappeared. I was at one end of the long line of troops and was almost done, breathing heavily. I turned my head.

Holy mackerel!

The drill sergeant was running toward me wearing a gas mask and carrying a long stick with a tear gas grenade taped to the end. He shoved the gas-spewing grenade under my face as I drew in a breath; then ran down the line of troops, tear gas flowing into our lungs as we gasped for air.

I rolled over, desperately trying to get my gas mask out of its pouch. My eyes and nose were on fire and I could feel a churning deep down in my stomach that was going to come up. I ripped the cover open and jerked out the mask. My eyes were closed in an effort to keep the gas from burning them. I jumped to my feet, trying to pull the mask over my head with all the little tangled rubber straps tugging through my hair. I pulled on the bottom of the mask and forced it against my face. I took a deep breath in an effort to seal the mask, but more gas flowed in through the unsealed sides. My stomach let loose and I barfed out the bottom of the mask as I pulled it away from my face. I tried again, jamming the mask back on my face and sucking in a stronger breath. The mask sealed this time and I began to breathe more easily.

I looked at the guy standing next to me with his mask on, but couldn't see his eyes through the big plastic lens because his mask was completely filled with puke. The soldier next to him turned and ran, but he couldn't see where he was going. He ran full speed into a large pine tree, hit his head, and fell to the ground. It was mass confusion, with most of the troops on the ground throwing up. The drill sergeant was laughing. He had gotten his final revenge.

That sounds bad, but the first time I ran into real unchecked power in the Army was after basic, during AIT in "Tiger Land" at Fort Polk. We'd spent days wandering through the swamps and slogging through muddy water while playing army games.

I don't think there was a better place to train for the jungles of Vietnam than the swamps of Louisiana. They trained us to read a compass in order to find certain locations in the night by following a compass course for a certain time and distance.

Then it was time to go through the "escape and evasion"

course. The company was called together and told where the course boundaries were. We were ordered that under no circumstances could we go outside those boundaries. We were going to be trucked out to the beginning of the course late that night and make our way through the swampy jungle to the finish line without being caught by the so-called "enemy troops." If we were captured, we were to go with them peacefully. We would be taken to the enemy's compound and coerced to give information. We were instructed not to give anything other than our name, rank, and serial number.

After dark, truckloads of us had been taken out to the start of the course and dropped off. We split up into small groups and began working our way through the course. When we were crossing a road, a truck pulled up quickly. The "enemy" jumped out and grabbed some of our guys. The now-smaller group I was in disappeared quietly into the night.

We were lost part of the time, but came across another road, figured out where we were, and proceeded. We moved through brush, trees, and vines for a while until we saw a light in front of us. As we got closer, we could hear the loud screams of men. It sounded like we were nearing the gates of hell. We moved closer yet and I heard men being tortured. That didn't sound good, so I decided it was time to cheat.

I wasn't the only one who'd come to that quick conclusion. Together we made our way to the boundary line and crossed over into "out of bounds." We ran until we saw the end of the course, ducked back inside the boundary, and crossed over to "safe" ground. I caught a truck back to my barracks and hit the sack for the night. In the morning, after breakfast, the company was brought together and seated in a large room. A sergeant stood up in front of us. "I was the commander of the enemy compound last night," he boasted.

He swaggered around as he continued. "I pried information out of everyone that was captured."

He then began to share some of his methods with us.

"I had a burlap sack put over the prisoners and then had them hung upside down and beaten. If they still wouldn't talk, I had water poured into their noses while they were hanging there. That cracked almost everyone."

He continued to swagger back and forth in front of us as he spoke.

"I made them cuss their folks and tell me juicy information about their wives or girlfriends," he laughed. "It didn't take long to make them tell me anything and everything I wanted to know!"

Finished with his bragging, he ordered three soldiers in the room to stand at attention in front of the company.

"Each of these men cracked," he bragged as he gestured toward the three. All of them had bruised and swollen cuts across their upper lips, just under their noses, and across part of their cheeks. I could tell they were in pain.

"These were the toughest of the bunch," he stated.

He pointed to one of the soldiers and said, "That one was the least tough—the easiest of these three to break." He motioned to the next soldier. "This guy was tougher, but he gave in too—after a bit more persuasion," he said with a smirk.

He put his hand on the shoulder of the third soldier. "Then there was this guy. He was a hard one to crack and lasted longer than anyone."

The commander/sergeant stepped back and motioned to the three soldiers. "I ordered these men held to the floor while a wire was stretched across their faces, under their noses, and down the sides of their cheeks." He motioned across his own face. "Then I slowly had more and more pressure applied to the wire, until it cut into them. That finally got 'em talking."

I wasn't sure what this sadist had wanted us to get from his torture lesson, but I'd drawn my own conclusion:

*Think for yourself no matter what anyone says.*

The next time I ran into the misuse of power in the Army, when the orders had been just too wrong to obey, happened in-country. Our company was working its way out of the mountains. It was going to be days before we reached our main firebase. We had been on patrol all day in the jungle.

Late in the afternoon, we came down the hill at one end of a small valley and walked along the inside edge toward its small mouth at the far end. The valley was about 900 yards long and maybe 400 yards wide. As we moved along, we could hear the NVA on the sloping sides, digging in their positions for the night. We couldn't see them in the dense jungle, but there was no mistaking who it was and that there were plenty of them.

Once my platoon reached the mouth, we began setting up for the night. First and Third Platoons were on their way to our location as well, and when they arrived, about an hour before dark, they busied themselves setting up their night defensive positions.

By this time we had received our replacement lieutenant, Lt. Dennis. He had transferred into the Army from another branch of the Armed Services. He was a very young-looking man who had no lack of confidence.

I noticed that a short distance from me, our captain, known as "Six," was brainstorming with all the platoon lieutenants. They were having a hot discussion about the orders they had been given. Those orders were that our company was to set up in the middle of the valley for the night. When the NVA attacked, artillery would be called in all around us to destroy the enemy.

There were no defensive positions in the valley; it was wide open with no cover. The NVA were on the higher ground. There would hardly be time to dig in for the night. We would be sitting ducks. If the valley opening were closed off, we could easily be surrounded, heavily mortared, overrun, and wiped out.

The officers rightly knew we wouldn't be able to make it through the night, but the upper echelon was willing to use us as bait and sacrifice us, with the hope of getting an NVA body count. The bad feeling I had about that senior officer when I'd shot him with blanks in Hawaii, had sadly proved to be true.

The order was insane! I overheard one of the lieutenants suggest to the captain that he forward the information that two of the platoons weren't going to be arriving until after

dark. I never learned what information was relayed, but our company didn't move into the open valley.

The lieutenants did, however, send out two ambushes. Third Platoon sent guys on an ambush back into the valley. Six guys in Second Platoon, including Rex and me, were chosen to go out through the mouth opening into the rice paddies and set up an ambush to protect the entrance to the valley. When it was dark, the six of us headed out about 500 yards into the paddies where we lay down behind an 18-inch dike for cover. It was hardly a hiding place to set up an ambush. I had been in some lousy sites before, but none this open. We carefully set out Claymores in front of our position. In addition to the mines, we all had grenades and M16's.

There was a full moon that night, and if we sat up or moved around, we could have been spotted. It was wide open for thousands of yards in front of us. To one side, about 20 feet away, the ground started gradually sloping up to a hill that was about 100 feet high. There was scraggly brush scattered over it. The path we were next to headed up this hill. If Charlie came from that direction, he would spot us from the high ground and our ambush would backfire.

We knew the real reason we were sent out there was to be an early warning for the company. The NVA would run into us first and it wouldn't take much to blow us off the face of the earth. We had no foxholes and no sandbags, only the small dirt berm to lie beside for cover. If anything did happen, we would be lucky if we had enough time to radio back to the company before we were dead.

Around 0100 hours, Rex came up with the idea we should just blow our Claymores and throw our grenades. Then we could radio in that we had set off our ambush and needed to come back into the company perimeter. We needed to figure out how to get out of this position, and were quick to believe his idea might work. Lying there in the darkness, knowing there was a large force of NVA nearby, made a guy think that being anywhere else had to be better than where we were.

Heck, what could go wrong?

So, tired, scared, and stupid, we blew the mines and threw our grenades.

There are times when you do what you think is a good idea, but as soon as you commit, you know you've made a mistake.

*What if they order us to stay put?*

My belly tightened. It was a little late for common sense. We had just blown off most of our defensive power, and, if anybody was watching, exposed our position for sure. Of course, like every night, I had already made my request that God would keep us from dying. But now I had the thought that He might be looking down on us, laughing at the lame-brained thing we had just done. Thankfully, I remembered that His Word says in Hebrews that He sympathizes with our weaknesses.

We radioed the company that we had blown our ambush and couldn't find any bodies so we were headed back to the perimeter.

"Negative! Stay where you are!" the order came back.

After that stupid stunt, I could do nothing but push my

face down into the dirt and try to be one with the earth. That was one long, nerve-wracking, sleepless night, but nothing else happened.

In the morning, we headed back to the company. When we got there, the other ambush patrol had also just returned and there was a big argument going on. The night before, Third Platoon had sent a six-man ambush out into the small valley. The sergeant in charge led the men to the location where the ground started up the mountain. It was the place we heard the NVA digging in earlier. He ordered the squad to head up the hillside into the dark jungle, toward the NVA's perimeter. At that point there was a consensus.

"You're an idiot, Sarge, and you can take your order and shove it where the sun don't shine!"

The whole squad agreed he was a fool and refused to follow his direct order. The ambush had been set up somewhere else. Now, within the company perimeter, the sergeant was furious and wanted Six to discipline the men. The sarge and the squad were cussing each other and ready for a knock-down drag-out fight.

I knew that sergeant. He was a short man with an inferiority complex. He didn't have any more experience than the men in his squad. He was what we called a "Lifer," but had never shown good leadership skills. He was pompous, used bad judgment, and took unnecessary risks. He had no respect for danger. Once again, it was a case of the "fool that goes where angels fear to tread."

The captain listened to both sides and had heard enough. He looked at the sergeant.

"Drop it!" he ordered.

It was over. I was relieved to see that the captain had his number. If he didn't come to his senses soon, that sergeant would find himself in more trouble than he could get out of. His ego had a tendency to get ahead of his discretion and as things turned out, that was exactly what happened.

I knew the guys who confronted the sarge and, more than once, witnessed their true grit. I was very thankful that Six and the lieutenants were looking out for us.

If they hadn't been, I'd hate to think what could have happened. I saw and understood that, with one exception, we had good leadership in the field with us.

*After our dumb stunt last night, why hadn't the enemy at least probed our perimeter or dropped in some mortar rounds on us—and why hadn't artillery been called in regardless of where we were set up?*

I knew what artillery could do and it would have put a world of hurt on the NVA forces.

Hours later we headed out, moving down to lower country. I was surprised that we had no encounters while we were in that valley. I was very happy and a little more hopeful for the future as we all walked out of there alive.

[Editor's Note: Bob Whitworth served as an infantryman in the Duc Pho-LZ Bronco area of operations. To be continued in a future edition of the *American Journal*.]

**Brother's Forever**

By Chuck Wanko, Joe Emma, and Bill Stoneman  
Continued from Oct-Nov-Dec 2021 edition

**LT Chuck Wanko**

**Story #10: An Unexpected Reunion – Late 1969 or early 1970.** Upon my return from Vietnam in October 1969 I was assigned to the BCT Committee Group at Fort Dix, NJ. There were many VN veterans on the post and the Officers Club was well supported by the returning junior officers (LTs and CPTs). One Saturday evening I was in the bar with several colleagues when a general officer walked in with his spouse and proceed into the lounge area which featured entertainment. I immediately recognized the general and his Southern Cross patch. Excusing myself from the group I approached the General's table and said hello. General Cooksey (previous Americal Division Assistant Division Commander (ADC)) looked up, saw the patch on my right shoulder and replied, "have a seat LT, what are you drinking?" After a drink and brief enjoyable conversation, I thanked him, excused myself and returned to the bar area. Needless to say, I explained to my fellow officers that being an Americal Division veteran was membership in a very exclusive club.

**SGT Joe Emma**

**Story #1: Gun Chief to Air Observer. 1968.** One of the more memorable events was when I went up with an air observer and called fire missions into our Fire Direction Control (FDC). Our battery commander at the time was CPT Keith. He had made arrangements with an Air Force colonel to have someone go up with him and call in a fire mission using our 8" howitzers. I volunteered to go. When I arrived at the air strip I was given my pre-flight briefing and just before we loaded up for the flight I was issued a survival kit. At that very moment I said to myself, "What the hell did I volunteer for?" We boarded the plane and took off for the maneuver area. We identified the target and I called in the first fire mission to our FDC. My howitzer at Dottie was the adjusting howitzer. I made one adjustment that resulted in a target hit. Even though the target hit resulted in a massive orange and black fire ball, the normal procedure is to fire all the howitzers for effect.

The pilot received a call for support from close air support aircraft. Our plane was armed with white phosphorus (WP) rockets to identify targets for high performance attack aircraft. As we would be spotting for a close air support (CAS) mission, we went down and fired WP rockets at the CAS target and pulled back up. We were able to see the planes come in under us and fire at the targets we spotted for them. What an experience. Still do not know why I volunteered to go. Guess just young and dumb looking for adventure.

**Story #2: Pizza. 1968.** I received a care package from home about once week. Sometimes it included

pepperoni and cheese. You could smell the pepperoni as the mail run drove up the access road to Dottie. Using the ingredients in the care package (and a little help from the mess sergeant), we made pizza several times. Not bad for mess hall cooking. We usually gathered in the mess hall well after the cooks had left, whipped up the pizza dough, let it rise and made the pizza. While it was not a big pizza, it was one of those things we did to remind us that there was a life waiting for us when our tour was over. I called it Dottie Pizza.

**Story #3: Pinochle. 1968.** We had a small officer NCO Club at Dottie. It was a place to go get a cold beer away from your crew and relax and exchange thoughts with other NCOs and officers. There was a card table in the middle of the club. Pinochle was the primary game played. One evening CPT Keith made me sit at the table, and learn the game. I learned how to play pinochle and turned into a pretty good player. I won a lot of games when I got home. CPT Keith taught me some tricks that helped my game out too.

**Story #4: Voices From Vietnam/Home. 1968 – 1969.** I received several letters a week from my family and wrote to them at least three times a week. My parents numbered and kept all of the letter I sent to them. My daughter Melissa has since read all of them and got to understand some of what we went through while in Vietnam. FREE MAIL was a lifeline for us in Vietnam.

I had been in country for about seven months and I was informed that I would be able to make a MARS call back to the good olde USA and a telephone number of my choice. I chose to call my parents. The weird thing was that I did it from the TA-312 telephone in my gun pit. Turns out that the guys in FDC set me up with a connection to the VHF section there on Dottie (the one next to Bill Stoneman's howitzer). Could you imagine a field phone compared to the technology we have today? Hell, our troops in Afghanistan can frequently SKYPE back home! My MARS call had to be set up to allow MARS operators to make the connection then back track to get me onto the phone. My call took place when it was about 2200 on Dottie and back home it was 1100. We had to say "over" and "out" when talking. My mom answered the phone. My dad was not home as he was working. It was so nice to make contact with family back home. Later when my mom wrote me, she said that after I got off the phone she had almost passed out when she answered the phone and heard my voice! Needless to say we both shed a few tears during the phone conversation. Now days we take such things as contact with home for granted.

**Story #5: Dining Out. 1968.** Our battery commander, CPT Keith, had made arrangements for a number of us to go down to the village below Dottie to have lunch with the village chief and a few others. Did they support the VC/NVA? The local villages did make money off of GIs doing

laundry, trinkets, ice and prostitution (Yes, that too). The best I can remember is that it was the (Chinese) New Year. We sat on the floor in a circle and were provided wooden plates and chopsticks. Needless to say, I was not very good with chopsticks. After eating, they served hot tea. CPT Keith stressed to drink the tea to help clean us out! After the My Lai incident, American infantry were moved to other areas. In their place were ARVN units with MACV advisors. Later on Bill Stoneman and I were guests of the ARVN and their Australian advisors. We brought our own forks but were also provided chopsticks.

This was Bill's first local meal. He seemed to really enjoy the rice, vegetables, fish and sauces. Yes, they provided hot tea as well. Bill commented that as good as it was, he could not handle the fish heads. The point of these two stories is that while Americans did not have the best reputation with the Vietnamese, such outings also included inviting ARVN to our mess halls and cook outs. We tried to foster good relationships with our host nation as best we could.

**Story 6: Coming Home. 1968.** Joe came home to the welcome that we all wanted to have. His family turned out in typical Italian style. I can only hope that other veterans were as fortunate to have such a warm and loving welcome home.

**SGT Bill Stoneman**

**Story #1: Green Beer. 1968.** My initial assignment in Vietnam was to A Battery, 3/18 FA, on Hill 54, just north of Chu Lai. Units were rationed beer



Welcome Home Joe

based upon unit size and how much money the unit had to buy the beer. There were times when (for whatever reason) our battery was low on Sundry Funds (?). That restricted us from buying premium beer (Budweiser, Coors, etc.) in Chu Lai for our monthly beer allocation. When we were short funds the supply sergeant would come back with pallet of cheap (Carling Black Label) beer ways referred to it as GREEN BEER. It was after we enjoyed (?) that cheap beer that we seemed to get sick. We had a lot of guys come down with diarrhea. Not sure this was common throughout the division but it was for us.

**Story #2: Vehicle Security. 1968.** On the fire base we did not lock our vehicles up as they may have to be quickly moved due to enemy activity, or are needed by someone in and around the fire base. This sets the tone for a trip from LZ Dottie to Chu Lai to conduct a parts run at 588th Ordnance, as well as the PX with shopping lists from guys at the fire base. On this one trip I was driving the 5/4 ton truck loaded with six soldiers from LZ Dottie. After dropping items off at 588th Ordnance, we were hungry so we drove to the USO at the beach to get something to eat. Something to eat at the USO consisted of a tuna fish sandwich made with sandwich spread and relish in wax paper. To wash it down was a delicious warm Fresca. Not exactly your trip to Burger King but it was food. After a delicious one star meal, we went back out to the 5/4 ton only to discover it was GONE! Another soldier told us that the MPs had confiscated it as the steering wheel was not padlocked. Honestly, it never had a lock or chain. We walked up the hill to the MP station to get my truck back. The MP desk sergeant said that since it was not locked that it had been impounded. I would have to get my commander to come into Chu Lai to pick the vehicle up. A worthless discussion ensued between two NCOs (myself and the desk sergeant). This was the problem dealing with many in the rear. Finally, I casually asked where the impound lot was as we had to get some gear out of our truck.

When we got to the impound lot the gate was open and we found the 5/4 ton. A quick check showed that the 5/4 ton had not been locked! I then conducted a "Soldier Confiscation" (I just coined that). We quickly loaded onto the 5/4 ton, drove out of the MP impound lot, out the main gate, and back South to LZ Dottie. Be assured that my battery commander (CPT Cates) and the first sergeant (1SG Ward) had been notified that I had "stolen" the vehicle from the MPs. Actually, everyone on Dottie had a real good laugh at the chain of events. Then 1SG Ward commended me for using my initiative to get the truck back to Dottie. However, I was forbidden to drive a vehicle into Chu Lai after that.

**Story #3: Close Shave. 1968.** On LZ Dottie we had a ARVN barber who was on loan from a local Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) unit. How he was loaned to us escapes me at this time. His name was SGT Boulin. He was a great barber who, no doubt, had to give his ARVN chain of command a cut of his haircut earnings. We all thought that SGT Boulin was a VC Spy; but he was a nice guy. Many guys would not use SGT Boulin unless they had someone there to watch him as he cut your hair and used a razor. At this particular point in time we had an ARVN 105mm (M101A1) towed artillery battery as well as some ARVN infantry and two old M41, Bulldog tanks armed with 76mm guns and .50 HBM2 machine guns. Not sure if SGT Boulin was part of that particular organization or not? However, during an NVA attack on Dottie one night, one of the ARVN tanks was taken out by an RPG and the crew was not to be found! SGT Boulin disregarded his own safety, climbed onto the disabled tank turret, manned the .50 HBM2 machine gun, and engaged the NVA that were conducting the ground attack. SGT Boulin killed a number of sappers in the perimeter wire as well as provided grazing fire beyond the wire at NVA forces

manning and firing RPGs. My crew and howitzer driver (SP4 Moran) turned our howitzer around in a direction (about 1800 mils) towards the NVA mortar positions that were firing from the opposite side of a not too distant hill to the southeast of Dottie.

The mortars' firing positions were identified by the muzzle flashes as they fired on Dottie. My crew prepared three M404 (8" ICM) with a time setting of 4.5 seconds, elevation of 900 mils and charge 1 (some missions you never forget). We fired three rounds with a small spread on the hill. Needless to say, the mortars stopped firing. US infantry re-conned the enemy mortar positions the next day and found three 82mm mortars and dead crewmen! Something to be said about preparing direct fire range cards for your howitzer. Some of us were allowed to accompany the infantry on their sweep of the LZ Dottie perimeter where we found a NVA RPG gunner who had fired a RPG that happened to hit a engineer stake, exploded, and killed him and some fellow NVA soldiers. I took his NVA belt and buckle and his Czechoslovakian AK-47 (with folding stock), and a pouch he was wearing. In the pouch were a rosary, a set of dirty underwear and a glass vial of, what I was told was, morphine. I gave the morphine up but kept the belt, buckle and rosary and dropped the underwear and AK-47. The buckle had dried blood on it and I kept the buckle for years.

Thirty-five years later I gave the buckle to a young Vietnamese who was a defense contractor working on a project with me at Fort Sill, OK. He had been a "boat person" and expressed an interest in seeing the buckle. I ended up giving him this piece of cultural history from his past home country. It should be noted that our battery commander, CPT Cates, submitted a commendation recommendation to battalion headquarters recommending that SGT Boulin be awarded the United States Army Bronze Star Medal for Valor. It was a long shot to say the least. That was the kind of commander CPT Cates was. The award came back but had been downgraded to a Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM). We had a award ceremony where CPT Cates



SGT Boulen and SGT Bill Stoneman

read the citation and pinned the ARCOM on SGT Boulin. Not sure what came of SGT Boulin as he was later recalled to his ARVN unit.

**Story # 4: Heros, 1969.** The ground attack in Story #3 above lasted for what seemed like four or five hours. We had been forewarned that the NVA had dug a lot of graves to our east. It was on this night that I lost my first crew member. A B-40 rocket came through a bunker roof (VC/NVA were firing RPGs at high angle to achieve better penetration on our bunkers), and killed one of my guys seeking cover under the floor. Our medic gave him CPR for almost two hours waiting for fires to slacken so that a MEDEVAC could come in and evacuate my guy. During this time frame the quad-50 crew fired constantly fired during the ground attack, moving from one location to another. The four .50 caliber barrels turned cherry red and rounds started to cook off as soon as chambered. When firing did stop, the four barrels drooped and later had to be cut off. The point this last bit is that when under attack, everyone pitches in. That unnamed medic collapsed after stopping the bleeding and doing CPR for over two hours. Everyone was a hero that night, especially our medic.

Then there was Father Ed. Father Ed was a Catholic chaplain but he served every soldier he came to meet. As my Brother Joe would tell me, Father Ed would conduct Mass/church services whenever he was on Dottie. The old adage that there are no atheists in foxholes is true. Father Ed is living proof that there is good in everyone of us. We all need loving, caring words from scriptures, regardless of religious denominations, and Father Ed served his flock well. Father Ed retired from the Army in 1988 and passed away at the age of 93 in April 2020. There is a special place in heaven reserved for such deserving people. Our medic and Father Ed will be going there.

Our country is losing its religious character. Ask a soldier, if there is a need for a chaplain in the military, I venture to say, that most will support the need to have a spiritual advisor servicing units. There are no atheists in foxholes! I have visited "The Wall" two times over the years. Each time I visited, I looked my guys up as well as some Special Forces buddies and paused to visit for a minute. Every Vietnam vet needs to visit "The Wall", it is as though Father Ed is behind us with his hand on our shoulder. We are at peace when visiting The Wall.

**Story #5: Uncle Charlie 6. 1969.** South of LZ Dottie was a Military Advisory Command Vietnam (MACV) compound (just off Highway 1). During this time frame the MACV compound was commanded by a LTC Gavin whose radio call sign was "Uncle Charlie 6". On many occasions, our FDC received fire missions from the MACV compound when they were under attack. We were GS artillery, but in some cases the only artillery capable to cover a maneuver area. We also fired for the ARVN through their MACV advisors. I have to say that when a contact fire mission



Joe and Father Ed

(friendly troops being engaged by enemy forces) was received, we dropped everything to fire supporting fires for the maneuver elements. That was/is the job of the field artillery, we took that mission very seriously.

One evening such a mission was received that lasted all night and into the early morning hours! Each howitzer had AN-GRA-39 remote speakers to allow crews to hear the the FDCs firing data. On this night LT Wanko had the FDC RTO wire the fire net to the remote speakers at the howitzers so that gun crews could follow ongoing fire missions. This was one hell of a contact mission and howitzer crews were humping 200 pound shells that had the adrenaline running at full speed. We fired for hours and hours into the next morning as Uncle Charlie 6 would adjust fires of 8"/155mm artillery on his perimeter and surrounding area. I can remember hearing Uncle Charlie 6 on the speaker saying "...where there had been a rice paddy was now a blood paddy"; or "...I would give you a body count but as soon as you kill them they drag the bodies off."

We surely exceeded the sustained rates of fires with four 8" howitzers that night. When the firing gets really hot, everyone comes out to help. Cooks fixed sandwiches for the howitzer crews and brought ice water down to the howitzers that we poured down the gun tubes in an effort to cool them down. In a couple of cases we had cooks and mechanics humping 200 pound 8" projectiles to give the howitzer crews a bit of rest. When we finished firing for Uncle Charlie 6 we pulled maintenance before we called it a day. At that time it was noticed that the inside of one 8" Howitzer's tube (barrel), at the six o'clock location, was smooth as a babies butt for about three feet past the chambers forcing cone. We had fired so many high explosive (HE), as well as improved conventional munitions (ICM), rounds to the point that battalion had to have a convoy depart Chu Lai the next

morning to resupply us. We had shot-out the rifling on a howitzer tube when we exceeded the sustained rate of fire for such a long time! That howitzer was out of action for a few additional hours as we had a replacement tube in the motor pool. We never seemed to get a good body count when we fired for Uncle Charlie 6 as he always said the VC/NVA pulled their dead back.

Fast forward a few months and a new battery commander (CPT William E. (Bill) Cates Jr). There seemed to be a general lull in fire missions and CPT Cates asked about mission histories. We brought up missions for Uncle Charlie 6 and that we had not fired for him in a couple of months! CPT Cates and LT Wanko drove south on Highway 1 to the MACV compound in hope of talking to LTC Gavin (Uncle Charlie 6). Upon CPT Cates return to LZ Dottie, he got section chiefs (gun chiefs and FDC) together to discuss his visit to the MACV compound. CPT Cates did not see the MACV commander as LTC Gavin had DEROsed. However, he and LT Wanko did talk to CPT Dale Worthen whom LT Wanko knew from ROTC summer camp at Fort Devens, MA in 1966. CPT Worthen who normally worked with the ARVN but was going home the next day. He was more than willing to talk with them. Seems that MACV would occasionally host cookouts/parties from time to time. To entertain guests, artillery fire would be called in on the area surrounding the compound. A good time was had by everyone at the parties. CPT Cates implored us to not tell our crews about this as it would not take much to "accidentally" drop a 200 pound projectile onto the MACV compound in retaliation! I am sure nothing like this ever happened anywhere else in Vietnam!



Father Ed later in life

## Tribute to Doc Riley

By Edward C. Gittens

Michael Philip Riley enlisted for three years in the US Army on November 1, 1969. He was 17 years old at the time. He trained to be a medical specialist (91B20) for ten weeks at Fort Sam Houston. Mike started his tour in Vietnam in July 1970 at the age of 18.

He was assigned to A Co., 1/46th Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, Americal Division. This unit was based in I Corps of South Viet Nam. Mike was a conscientious objector at the onset of his tour. He was then combat medic for the first platoon of Alpha Company ('Alpha One'). That is where we met and served side by side until I was wounded.

I wish to give an account of 'Doc' Riley's performance. During January and February 1971, I served as an M-60 gunner with 1st squad of 'Alpha One' at the time the following events occurred. I would like to bear witness to his bravery and competence performing under extreme duress and adverse circumstances.

To start things out, on the night of January 25, 1971, Alpha Company received small arms fire on their Night Defensive Position (NDP). Artillery was processed from nearby L.Z. Young and three 105 Howitzer rounds impacted near the perimeter, wounding two A Company grunts.

Doc had to low crawl with a lieutenant (F.O.) who had a flashlight to locate and render aid to PFC E. Severns. He was the most seriously wounded, with a sizable chunk of shrapnel in his jugular vein. "Doc" performed the necessary aid under a poncho and with the aid of a flashlight under a poncho. Both casualties were removed by jungle penetrators just over an hour after the rounds impacted! Both men survived, they were in good hands...

The following day, things went from bad to worse. At 3:45 PM, January 26, a booby trap was detonated, instantly killing SSgt George Robertson. Captain Paul Spilberg as well as privates Rodgers, Harkness and Don Counter were injured in the blast. Doc had his hands full in the greatest sense of the words.

The explosion blew SSgt Robertson to pieces, hurling him some 30 feet into deep brush. After the immediate care of the wounded, 'Doc' Riley and Lt. Bob Noonan were assigned the task of retrieving Robertson's body. The two gathered together, in a poncho, all they could of his mutilated remains. Some parts were never recovered in the dwindling light.

Our squad was involved with the retrieval and extraction of the bloody mess in the poncho that was George Robertson. Captain Spilberg carefully conducted a step-by-step withdrawal from the booby-trapped area. He and the other casualties were dusted off with 'Robbie's' remains. It was another tough day for Alpha Company, and 'Doc' Riley was in the thick of it all.

The next day the company dispersed, sending our

platoon, Alpha One, to a separate NDP. On the night of January 27 we were probed unsuccessfully by a lone sapper with a satchel charge.

On the morning of January 28, Alpha One, led by Lt. Robert Noonan, set out to reconnect with the rest of the company, now commanded by Lt. Scott Bell. Lt. Noonan told the point man, Bill Pfau, to take a well used trail skirting a manioc field at the bottom of a valley. Being near 'LT' in the point element, I questioned the sanity of his decision. "Gittens shut the fuck up! I'm running this platoon!" was his reply.

I was still fuming and 'biting my tongue' when moments later Bill Pfau stepped on a bear trap. Fortunately, his rifle stock was on his foot, and the trap shattered the stock instead of his leg. Still, it took a small crew to free Bill's leg from the bear trap. 'LT' conceded to my firm request that the rest of the platoon take cover in the meantime. Meanwhile, Lt. Noonan and Sgt. Concepcion remained in the wide open, looking over their map.

We started taking sniper fire and soon Sgt. Frank Concepcion was down with a wound through his neck and shoulder. He was paralyzed from the neck down, and unable to speak. Doc initially thought that he was already dead, but suddenly noticed his hand move, and called for help. He and Sgt. Foir pulled Frank to the meager safety of a low stone wall. Blood was gurgling in his throat, pouring into his lungs. Doc then administered and coordinated the medical end of the life saving procedures that followed. With incoming sniper rounds between his legs, Doc dressed Frank's wounds, and initiated and coordinated CPR.

I must say it was a team effort and all involved should share the pride in getting Sgt. Concepcion out alive. Frank was in deep shock, and his lungs were filling with blood, but he was in good hands. Frank remained paralyzed from the neck down for six months, but would fully recover his mobility in three years!

Lt. Noonan also took an AK47 round in his shoulder. While loading the medevac bird, one more of Alpha One's NCOs was wounded by sniper fire, Sgt. Strickland was shot in the hand. The bird departed taking rounds as it left the landing zone, and the three casualties were safely extracted.

All in all, A Company suffered 10 casualties in four days, one dead and nine injured. But I thank God that 'Doc' Michael Riley was there with us, doing his job the way he did. Too often, we dwell upon our losses and fail to see our blessings. I salute you, Doc, and all the combat medics who saved what they could from the wastelands of war. God has a special place for you. And I know for a fact that Frank Concepcion shares my sentiments!

In a postscript to these aforementioned episodes, I'd like to share the ironic events that unfolded shortly thereafter. Alpha Company spent the first few days of February, 1971, regrouping and recovering from our losses in January. During that month alone, A Company had two KIAs and 13

WIA. There were two officers and four NCOs among the casualties. Alpha One alone had seven wounded and one killed in action during this time frame.

Before we fully regrouped, we were airlifted to the Firebase Mary Ann area of operations. Our battalion made steady contact and numerous weapons were captured in early February.

Alpha One got a 'Shake n Bake' NCO as a replacement at this time. His cowardice nearly got me and my assistant gunner killed during a close encounter on February 11th. The "shook up" Shake n Bake was removed from the field shortly thereafter.

A few days later, February 14, Cpt. Spilberg ordered us to patrol the same trail. We made contact twice that day, ending with me being wounded as we fired up a small enemy element. I caught a fragment from a deflected M-79 grenade in my left shoulder. At least three inches of my shirt was twirled into my shoulder. 'Doc' Riley, who had spotted the enemy, cut my sleeve off and pulled out the embedded shirt from the wound entry. That hurt!

Doc dressed my shoulder quickly, so we could rejoin the company. We exchanged fire briefly on the last leg of our return to Alpha Company's NDP. I was medevaced from there, and after a brief stay in hospital, was assigned to battalion headquarters as a mail courier. Valentine's Day yielded me a Purple Heart and a rear job. This was my best and worst Valentine's Day.

Captain Paul Spilberg resumed command of Alpha Company in early February, 1971, after being wounded on January 26. He had deep issues with Robbies death, considering it his biggest mistake. The PTSD manifested itself in the form of terrible nightmares in the field. I was out there during an episode one night. It disturbed the whole company for the remainder of the night.

On February 22, Alpha Company was scheduled to be airlifted on a 'suicide mission', with Alpha One spearheading a combat assault on an NVA enclave. Doc Riley, Carl Cleek and Bob Osborn refused to go. "Doc Riley, you're a good soldier, you're in for the Silver Star," said Spilberg. "No, sir, I'm not going," Riley replied. Shortly thereafter, when Alpha Company made contact, the three were on the next resupply bird to rejoin their buddies in the bush, for the duration of their tour. Captain Spilberg's last action with the company was on February 26, when Sgt. Sylvester Joseph killed an NVA south of Mary Ann. Paul went on leave during the mission. LTC Doyle, battalion commander, reassigned him to headquarters when he came back.

For refusing to go on a suicide mission with an undersized, understaffed company, Doc Riley's award

was downgraded to a Bronze Star w/Vdevice. His actions definitely merited the Silver Star, from my point of view, as well as Paul Spilberg's. We were expected to achieve what the Special Forces and Marines failed to accomplish with peak troop strength and support. We were already trying to cover all bases with a fraction of the manpower.

These factors would eventually play out in the

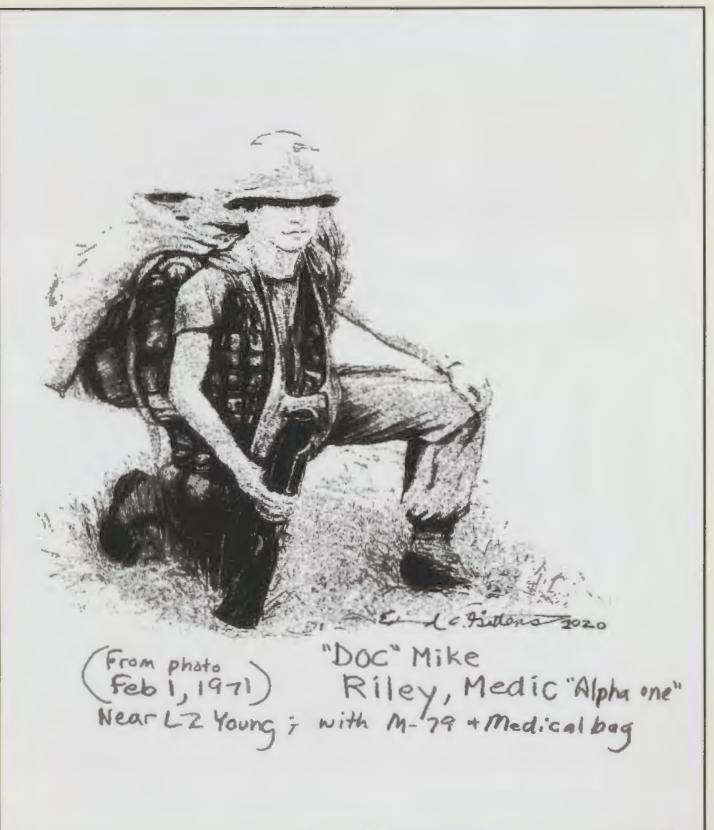
"Massacre at Firebase Mary Ann" on March 28, 1971. But that's definitely another story. One thing is for sure, all three proved to be brave soldiers. Carl Cleek earned a Bronze Star w/Vdevice when he saved Ed Voros, who hit a landmine. Carl, the squad leader, did lifesaving first aid. Ed lived, despite losing both legs, Bob Osborn was wounded on January 13, 1971. He had a sizable chunk of shrapnel lodged near his spine. He was subsequently given a rear job. When Alpha made contact in late January, Bob gave up his rear job to rejoin Alpha during four days of our heaviest contact. No coward here.

Sometimes it takes more guts to say "NO sir" or even "Fuck you, Sir" than to go along with something you KNOW AIN'T RIGHT! The real bottom line of this is that these are the kind of guys you want at your back when the shit hits the fan. When you served with people like Bob Osborn, Carl Cleek and Mike Riley, we knew we were IN GOOD HANDS.

I've had the pleasure and privilege of reuniting and staying in touch with such individuals that I had the honor to serve with. Doc Riley passed away on August 31, 2020, of Agent Orange induced lung cancer. We had our last conversation two days before he died. We discussed the content of this story, confirming details not covered.

I'm proud to count myself as his friend; and he as my loyal friend. For he was a brave soldier and devoted family man. My heart goes out to his widow Barb, son Michael and daughter Lisa, who miss him immensely. May he rest in the peace all honorable combat veterans deserve.

God Bless the Infantry



## Photo Album



Change of command ceremony. LTC Hammill (tall man) is leaving. Possible replacement was LTC Mitchell (?).



View from slick that just took off from VIP pad. Note slick on S-4 pad and 3/82d Artillery gun pits.



Slick on VIP pad. BTOC under sandbags. 292 antennas for my radios.



Sunrise on LZ West.



Generator man, SP4 Mocano, providing power for my radios.



Gun pits.



Hillyer heating some stateside chow on makeshift stove.



VFH antennas.



BTOC on LZ West. VIP is out of photo to the left.



Radio antennas for BnTOC S-3 radios.

Photos and captions by Eric Hillyer.  
Photos were taken on or around LZ West.  
Hillyer served as a radio operator in the  
Battalion Tactical Operations Center (BnTOC).

## Saint of a Chaplain

By Gary L. Noller



On June 27, 1950, President Harry S Truman ordered American military forces into the Korean War. Americans fought on the side of South Korea and saw initial success in pushing enemy forces back towards the Chinese border.

By November it appeared that Americans would be home for Christmas. But unexpectedly, a large force of Chinese soldiers entered the war on the side of North Korea.

The enemy forced American troops into a hasty retreat. Chinese and North Korean forces blocked roads and trapped large numbers of Americans behind enemy lines. The losses were extreme. Along with the intense fighting, Americans dealt with bitter winter weather and a shortage of food, ammunition, and medical supplies.

Emil Kapaun was born on April 20, 1916 in Pilsen, Kansas. He recognized his vocation for priesthood in the Roman Catholic church and was ordained in the Diocese of Wichita on June 9, 1940.

In World War II, Fr. Kapaun volunteered to be a U.S. Army chaplain and received an assignment in Burma. His official title was U.S. Army Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun. The troops knew him simply as "padre".

After the war, Fr. Kapaun pursued higher education at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He still felt his true calling was that of a chaplain. In 1948 he received permission to join the Army again.

Fr. Kapaun served in Korea with 3/8th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry

Division. On November 1-2, 1950, enemy forces opened a vicious attack near Unsan. Enemy troops eventually wore down the outnumbered Americans. The dire situation caused many Americans to evade and escape in any manner they could.

Fr. Kapaun decided to stay behind and administer aid and Last Rites to the remaining sick and dying Americans. In the final hours of the battle, he encouraged the stranded Americans to rally and to protect one another. Fr. Kapaun continually exposed himself to enemy fire and personally rescued downed Americans and brought them back to safety.

As the dismal outcome became apparent, Fr. Kapaun assisted in the negotiations for a safe surrender to the enemy. In the end, he and many other Americans became prisoners and forced to move to Prison Camp #5 at Pyoktong, North Korea.

It is estimated that as many as 5,000 Americans withstood extremely harsh



conditions in the squalor of Korean prison camps. Some reports state that close to 40% of American prisoners died while in captivity.

Food and medicine was in short supply at Camp #5. Fr. Kapaun risked severe punishment to find means to steal food and medicine from the captors. He often gave his small bit of food to other soldiers. In addition to providing food and medical care, he also administered to the spiritual needs of his fellow soldiers and encouraged them to never give up hope.

Fr. Kapaun was soon struck down by pneumonia and dysentery. He developed a blood clot in his leg. The enemy sent him to the "death house". He expired on May 23, 1951, at age 35. His comrades buried him in a common grave outside the prison camp. In August 1951, Fr.

Kapaun received the posthumous award of the Distinguished Service Cross.

The Korean War essentially ended with the signing of an armistice on July 23, 1953. Fr. Kapaun's remains and those of others in the common grave were recovered and moved to the National Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. For decades they rested there, "known but to God".

Soldiers returning from Camp #5 told of the heroism and selflessness of Fr. Kapaun. In 1993, Pope John Paul II raised Fr. Kapaun to the status of Servant of God. This is the first step in the process of determining sainthood.

For decades, Fr. Kapaun's comrades lobbied Congress to upgrade his valor award. On April 23, 2013, President Barack Obama announced the award of the Medal of Honor to Fr. Kapaun. Members of Fr. Kapaun's family and veterans he served with attended the special White House ceremony.

In March 2021, the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency identified Fr. Kapaun's remains. In September, the residents of Pilsen, Kansas, turned out in droves to see their prayers finally answered. After 70 years, Fr. Kapaun returned to St. John Nepomucene, his hometown church.

On September 21, military and religious officials conducted a formal funeral for Fr. Kapaun in Wichita, Kansas. After the ceremony, Fr. Kapaun was laid to rest in a tomb inside the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1953, I began first grade at Sacred Heart Cathedral School in Dodge City, Kansas. I really did not know much about Fr. Kapaun at that time. But I remember the nuns leading us in prayer for him every day. May he Rest in Peace. It is well deserved.



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

### Eligibility for Membership

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

World War II	1942-1945
Panama	1954-1956
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