

**TET 68 – 20th Annual Reunion Weekend**  
**Radisson Hotel - Hampton, Virginia**  
**February 2-4, 2007**

**Friday 2/2/07**

**8:00 a.m. – 4:00p.m. REGISTRATION and Pickup packages for Pre-Registered**

**BUY PRIZE TICKETS – Prize Drawings Each Evening – Benefits Scholarship Fund**

**5:00 p.m. - Doors open - Presentation of Colors 5:30 p.m. Manchester H.S.  
5:30 p.m. - POW/MIA Prayer Vigil @ – Rev. Don Denton, After services, Ball Room  
closed – Dinner on your own  
8:00 p.m. –Doors Open – DJ/Karaoke by Linda& Walt 8:30 p.m. – 11:30 p.m.  
Cash Bars - Door Prize Drawings throughout evening**

**Saturday 2/6/05**

**8:00 a.m. – Doors Open**

**Walk-up Registrations till 9:00 a.m.**

**8:30 a.m. Mayor's Proclamation and Greetings – Hon. Ross A.  
Kearney or representative  
Color Guard – Manchester High School JROTC  
Pledge of Allegiance  
Thanks and Special Recognitions of Guests  
Remarks by Billy Kirkland, President TET 68, Inc.  
History of TET68 & Scholarship Fund  
Treasurer's Report – Tonia Golden  
Terry Steer – Who makes up TET 68's Board  
Hotel Representative – Future Veterans' Events**

**9:20 a.m. Virginians At War, Virginia War Memorial – Jon Hatfield, Director  
Remarks and short presentation of recorded oral history  
Recognition of the 3 Essay Judges  
Announcement of 2006 Scholarship winners (6)  
Those making group contributions come forward – present funds**

**10:00a.m. Taylor Kiland, author, Open Doors – introduced by Paul Galanti**

**10:30 a.m Steve Maxner, The Vietnam Center – Lubbock, Texas**

**11:15a.m. Wrap up – Author Joe Galloway**

**11:45 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. Buffet Luncheon – TET guarantees a number for luncheon; please  
attend and eat – money wasted if you skip - plenty to eat  
Saturday afternoon – free time**

**Ballroom - RESERVED ticket seating Dinner from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**

**Evening 8:00 p.m. – Doors Open - SPECTRUM – Entertainment/Dance from 8:30 till 11:30  
p.m. – Cash Bars – Enjoy the music – casual dress  
Door Prizes all evening – buy tickets – funds scholarships**

**Sunday- Goodbyes and Departures – Super Bowl - t.v. watching Bears vs. Colts**

*A Twenty Year Journey Toward Honor*

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

February 2, 2007

**This is the original Ceremony of the Table. The words in red are the additions of Donald D. Denton, D. Min.**

**The table is round** - to show our everlasting concern for our men still missing. The table is half-round to show that our mission is incomplete and we remain on eternal patrol until all are accounted for.

The cane is from a past generation – to show we have support from people we do not know but who share our concern.

The cross is broken – to symbolize the broken promises of this nation to our generation of veterans.

**The cloth is white** - symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty. I combined this symbol with the symbol of the rose.

**The single red rose**, displayed in a vase, reminds us of the life of each of the missing, and their loved ones and friends who keep the faith, awaiting answers. I changed the rose to white to symbolize the continued purity of these men's motives and the purity of their family's faithfulness.

**The vase is tied with a red ribbon**, symbol of our continued determination to account for our missing. I left this symbol unchanged.

**A slice of lemon on the bread plate** is to remind us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land. I left this symbol unchanged.

**A pinch of salt** symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families and the sweat we all shed in battle and in peace.

**The Bible** represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God. I left this symbol unchanged but added the reading from 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.

**The glass is inverted** - to symbolize their inability to share this evening's toast. I returned this chalice to upright so that we could toast those returned and also one another in our continued service to this nation.

**The chairs are empty** - they are missing. I use a single chair.

Let us now raise our water glasses in a toast to honor America's POW/MIA's and to the success of our efforts to account for them. I replaced this toast with a benediction and "Taps."

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**1 Corinthians 12:12-26**

February 2, 2007

### **I**

**Twenty years ago this very night roughly 500 of us crammed into the auditorium of The Virginia War Memorial.** Thus began the reunion that we now know to be Tet 68. Thus began the weekend and the ritual that we will share one more time this evening. Just as happened tonight, after calling ‘Attention on Deck’ and thereby letting you know there was a Marine at the podium, I welcomed all of you home in the name of the Church and God’s people.

**Then I turned the podium over to Mr. Billy Kirkland.** After a few words of welcome, Billy turned and introduced General William Westmoreland. He stood to be recognized. You shook the room with chants of ‘Westy! Westy! Westy!’ He stiffened, as though he didn’t quite know what to do. So he saluted us. We returned his salute along with more chants of ‘Westy! Westy! Westy!’

**The General stepped to the podium.** Thanking us for our welcome, he acknowledged this was the first such event he had ever attended. Again we roared our approval. Then he said the words that would begin our collective journey toward healing and honor, “You did your very best and I am proud to have led you in battle.”

**No public figure had ever spoken those words to us before – collectively or individually.** The General’s words were captured by the news media present. I like to believe they were among the most significant words spoken to us, that evening or since. Others would echo his words in the ensuing twenty years. But those words, from our still-erect medallion bedecked commander, whom Senator Charles Robb would introduce the next day reverently as ‘The Old Man,’ started to replace some of the shame in our hearts with the sheen of honor.

### **II**

**It was my task to provide the structure for the rest of that first vigil.** But it was obvious there was another Spirit powerfully at work among us. The Friday night vigil ritual we began twenty years ago has provided that Spirit with a route into all of our souls, including mine. That first vigil and reunion provided a welcoming sanctuary for our hearts in the midst of a nation that at the time wanted us to do one of two things. Either simply shut up and go away or stay dressed in our battle fatigues and stand on the street corners with tears in our eyes.

**By that time as a generation we had decided among ourselves to take neither of these routes.** Although many of us still bore significant emotional scars and not a few of us struggled to walk from the wounds of war, many more of us were winning the battle against those wounds. We determined, as individuals and as a group, to be distinguished by our triumphs over adversity rather than defined by our troubles of our tragedies. We had begun families, found productive work, and formed our own veteran’s associations.

**By that time we had more than begun the pattern that has defined us as veterans.** A greater percentage of us had and would graduate from college and entered professions of public service than any generation of warriors prior to us. Including our forefathers and foremothers, members of The Greatest Generation. It is a pattern that continues to this very day as we donate our time and our talent and our treasure to welcome home and

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bring education, healing and relief to this generation's warriors who continue to bear the inexpressible burden of battle. Vietnam veterans remain in the forefront of welcoming home those sent war. Not only do our children and grandchildren provide leadership and grit in today's war, the names of our battles and heroes inspire their service as much as those of prior wars.

**I have always believed that my remarks tonight should assist us in our healing and inspire us in our service.** Because I am a Marine 3-striper first, my words here are the original 'No B. S. Zone.' I try to listen first to the real Central Master and Universal Commander before opening my mouth. Every year He's been gracious enough to keep the message static free, K-Bar sharp and brief. He's always says two sentences: 'comfort these My people' and 'put My boot in your nation's butt.'

### **First, then, some words of comfort for you, His people.**

- Become better acquainted with Me – I'm waiting to welcome you home when your days on My earth are over.
- Do not be dismayed by those who are impostaers – I also have a home for them.
- You accomplished the mission I had set for you in Vietnam – Each of you learned that true love is costly and is more about patience than passion.
- Remain faithful to and patient with the companions I have given you – The road ahead requires a steady pace and must not be traveled alone.
- You accomplished the mission I gave you here at Tet 68 - Continue My work among your own communities as I give you the necessary strength.

### **Now for His swift kick about our nation's current unpleasantness.**

- Stop the whining and turn off the fear mongers – Your nation is on deadly ground if you listen to them.
- Tell the enduring stories of your winning – Do not allow your nation's cowards to steal the valor your sons and daughters are earning.
- Send enough troops to win decisively not just enough to lose slowly – Support your comrades in arms so they can return home with genuine honor.
- Liberty's tree still requires sacrifice, sound judgment and eternal vigilance – These virtues are lacking in many of your current leaders.
- Your nation remains My last hope for humanity – Do not retreat from the challenges that will come upon you.

**The high point of these twenty years has been the personal witness of our returned POW's.** We have been privileged to have Gail Kearns, David Harker, George Coker, Dr. Hal Kushner, Fred Cherry, David Gray and Paul Galanti stand among us. They are followed closely by their families, the leadership of the Son Tay Raider Team<sup>1</sup> and Medal of Honor recipients who embody the true nature of courage in the face of adversity and humility in the presence of adoration. These men and women exemplify the warmth of courage in their awful ordeals and fidelity in their continuing contributions to this nation's peace.

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<sup>1</sup> General LeRoy Manner (USAF), SGM Joe Lopiak (USA), Marty Donahue (USAF)

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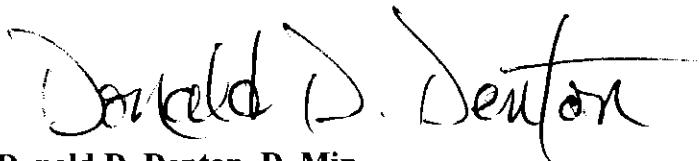
**Personally, I consider your annual trust in me as your chaplain to be the highest honor of my ministry.** When we began this part of our collective journey twenty years ago we recognized one another primarily by the fire of battle that was still undimmed in our eyes and the portions of our uniforms that still fit. We greeted one another regularly with 'Welcome Home,' because no one else had or did. We were convinced they never would welcome us home and so we cared for one another at home as we had while in battle. Now even the Marines among us are finding our uniforms shrinking from hanging in the closet. You have honored me by once a year allowing my words to become a part of your homecoming to this nation we love. We have truly been 'wounded healers' for one another. I am grateful to you for your contribution to my life. While we will not gather together in this way again, I pledge to you here and now my continued prayers for you and for us as long as the Chief Commandant blesses my body with breath.

### **III**

**We now must turn our attention for a final time to the Ceremony of the Table.** I would remind all of us that this is one of our lasting contributions to this nation. Apart from the demand of Vietnam veterans and the families of these men, there would be no continuing effort to account for each of these men and return their remains to American soil. Apart from our persistence the POW/MIA flag would still mock this unhealed wound rather than serve as the enduring connection we share with our comrades who remain on eternal patrol.

**We did not have this ceremony at our first Tet anniversary.** We added this ceremony within the first five years and, along with a balloon release and candle light vigil at the Virginia War Memorial we made spoke our determination firmly and unequivocally to this nation. I added my great-grandfather's cane to the original ceremony to symbolize the support we give one another and the support we receive from people we do not know but who share this abiding concern. Nine years ago I made some additional alterations in the ceremony to reflect our changing life experience: I added the broken cross and changed the color of the rose from red to white, for reasons I explain shortly.

**I would remind you that since the end of the Vietnam War 794 of our comrades have been returned to their families.** Let us now remember not only the other 1,789 still unaccounted but also those comrades who have passed on to the other side since our own feet trod the soil of Vietnam.



**Donald D. Denton, D. Min.**  
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