



October November December **2020**

# AMERICAL

## JOURNAL

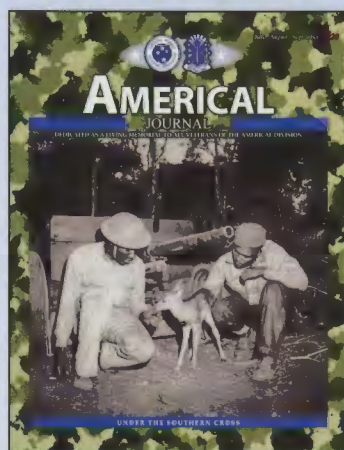
DEDICATED AS A LIVING MEMORIAL TO ALL VETERANS OF THE AMERICAL DIVISION



UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS



## 810th Engineers, World War II



Only a short caption described the cover of the third quarter 2020 edition of the Americal Journal.

The two soldiers on the cover were assigned to the 810th Aviation Engineer Battalion. An excellent description of this unit may be found on the internet at <https://www.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/109658/a-look-back-at-black-aviation-engineer-units-of-world-war-ii/>. It can also be found by a GOOGLE search for 810th Engineers World War II.

The website states the following about aviation engineer battalions: "These 800-man units constructed airfields overseas between 1940 and 1945. They were specially trained units whose mission was to construct, conceal, maintain and defend airfields in every theater. Of the 157 separate aviation engineer battalions that saw duty during the war, 48 were segregated units designated as "Colored.""

Another quote says: "The majority of black engineer units served in the Pacific or China-Burma-India theater. The 810th and 811th were the first black engineer units shipped out. The 810th, originally told they were headed for a cold climate, had a most uncomfortable five-week trip to Australia because they had packed their "suntans" and donned winter uniforms. After a brief stay in Australia, the unit moved to the French island of New Caledonia and was given responsibility for constructing Plaines des Gaiacs, which became the most important base on the island, and eventually one of the most highly developed in the entire theater. After arriving in New Caledonia, the 810th unloaded ships, often during enemy bombings, while they waited three weeks for their equipment to arrive. Once it came, they had to move it more than 100 miles over a mountainous trail to the

construction site, a task that necessitated felling trees, reinforcing bridges and fording streams."

The book *Americal Division Troop Lists & Honors* by W. Mark Durley, Jr. indicates that the 810th and 811th Aviation Engineer Battalions were assigned to Task Force 6814 and to the Americal Division in World War II.

## World War II

**Looking for:** Information about my uncle Lloyd Orville Krueger. He was in Company C, 132nd Infantry in 1943-45. When I was in high school he would talk about his experiences -he never mentioned the battles he was in. I do know he was on some island battles plus the Philippines - later Japan. His discharge papers said Northern Solomons and Southern Philippines. What I would like to know is: 1. where can I find info on where Company C participated, 2. where I can find info on him (he made staff sergeant & received the bronze star. Contact: Gene De Groot; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Information about my uncle Robert. He was with Company G, 182nd Infantry on Guadalcanal as a rifleman. He was overseas from January 1942 to June 1943. Contact: Russ Brady; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Information about my grandfather Leo Knoff. He was in the Americal Division in WWII. He was always in and was not a replacement; he fought in Guadalcanal, Banika, Philippines, and many others. I have all his medals and some pictures. Contact: Alec Knoff; alec. [REDACTED]

## Vietnam War

**Looking for:** Captain Jones, 5/46th Inf., 198 LIB. CPT Jones was my CO. I was 2nd Platoon leader, Company B, 1970. We spent time together at Benning after VN. Cpt Jones intended on staying in the military. Contact: Pepper)( BuckyKahl; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Information on Captain John Michael Gibbons, helicopter pilot KIA in Quang Ngai Province on February 12, 1970. I was a friend of his who lost track of him after 1966. Any information about John would be greatly appreciated. I am trying to establish a scholarship in his honor at our school. Contact: Dan Bangs; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Anyone that served in the OVC helicopter unit OH58. It later moved to CHU LAI in 1971. Contact: Fred Lewis; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Any team members or historical resources for LRRPs with C 4/21 June 68-69. Contact: Russ Lutey; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Anyone who served with or has information on my father Evert Lamont Robertson from Nibley, Utah. Who served as a radar tech with the Americal division in 69-70 I think. I'm not sure if he enlisted or was drafted, all I know is he went in right out of high school. He passed away and he never talked about the war. Looking though his discharge papers I am trying to piece together his time serving in Vietnam. I have a limited few pictures, a few stories he did tell, I just want to know more about him. Contact: Shane Robertson; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Chris Mix, supply clerk in Americal Division, 198th, 1/52nd Inf., C Co., from 69-70. He was a grunt but went to the rear when he blew out his ear drum. Contact: Jesse Reynoso; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Capt. Joel Snow and the infantrymen serving in his company, 1/46th in Danang, Aug.-Nov. 1971. I think we were out of Camp Red Horse, but that may have been the arty unit I was assigned from. I was your Sgt. Forward Observer for several months. I have pictures of us in the field. Contact: Jim Wideman; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Anyone who served with or knew my uncle, William "Billy" Byron Webber, who was in Co. A, 523rd Sig. Bn. as a radio teletype operator in Vietnam, April 1969-70. He passed away in 1995. I am a veteran law enforcement officer. I'd like to find out more. I found two people who served in the same company and time: Joe Spain and Neal Reichardt. Contact: Jonathan Parker; [REDACTED]

**Looking for:** Joseph Miller, who served with A Co., 3/1st, 11th LIB in Vietnam, 1968. He was a machine gunner from New York. We were in touch at one time. Contact: David Orndorff; [REDACTED], Tewksbury, MA 01876; [REDACTED]

## 2021 ADVA National Reunion September 9-11, 2021 Indianapolis Wyndham West Indianapolis, Indiana

## 2021 ADVA Reunion Update

By Chuck Holdaway, Reunion Chairman

As most of you know by now, the 2020 ADVA reunion scheduled to be held in Indianapolis, Indiana was postponed until 2021. The reunion will still be held in Indianapolis and the tentative dates are September 9-11, 2021.

The host hotel will be the Indianapolis Wyndham West. As soon as our contract is restructured from 2020 the updated information and registration forms will be available in the "Americal Journal" and on the ADVA web site.

We will also be providing an RV site with hookups within a few miles of the Wyndham.

Due to the uncertainty of the virus situation and having no idea as to what will be going on in the coming months, I would like to have as many of you as possible contact me via email to help get a general idea as to our possible attendance numbers. I would like you to include: (1) the total number of attendees in your party, (2) the number of persons attending the Saturday banquet, (3) If you are planning on taking at least one tour, and (4) approximate number of nights you will be staying.

This information will be very helpful in our planning and can be emailed to me. You may also include any questions you may have and I will get back to you as soon as I can. I may be reached by email at [Indy2020reunion@gmail.com](mailto:Indy2020reunion@gmail.com).

Currently, we are planning on offering the same tours as we had planned for 2020. One of the tours is to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and 500 Museum. We also plan to see the various military monuments and memorials in the Indianapolis area as well as the Dallara IndyCar Factory and its "Interactive Zone".

The Indy 500 track and museum area are a "must see" and one could spend a couple of days just taking in all the sights. The various military monuments and memorials in Indianapolis are second only to Washington, D.C. in number. They are centrally located in Indy's downtown area. The Dallara Factory shows how IndyCars are fabricated. The factory has interactive driving simulators, and even offers a ride in a two-seater Indycar (extra charge).

By the time this is published, I will have had the experience of going around the actual Indy 500 track in a specially built two-seater with a professional driver

through the Indy Racing Experience. This is with speeds up to 180 mph. The only thing better would be if I could drive it (especially at my age).

Thanks to all of you for your patience in this situation. By not having a reunion in 2020 and the lessening of the problem of the pandemic, we should have a great attendance in 2021.

## Thinking About Christmas

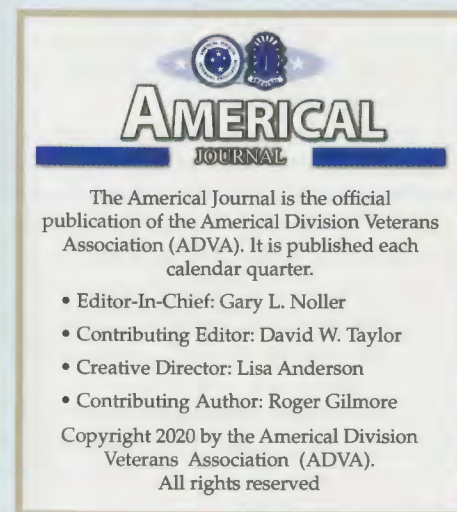
By Ed Griffin, (CH) (COL) (Ret)



When I think about Christmas, I also think about gift-giving. Gift-giving is something that we do almost all year: birthdays, anniversaries, just-because, gifts of love, friendship, and others that are just special to some people.

Several things go into the process of procuring and giving of gifts: the occasion, our relationship to the recipient, appropriateness for the occasion, and price. Often, people spend a lot of time processing all the reasons for giving, or not giving, a gift: Are we really that close? Do they deserve, or need, this gift? Will they get the wrong idea? How much are they worth?

But, especially during the Christmas season, we ought to focus on God's gifts to us! He has given and continues to give us unlimited gifts: life, people, love, health, healing, liberty, and freedom of choice, among many others. God does this because He loves us. God truly is the Greatest Lover! He gave us the Greatest Gift that could be given because of the value He has placed on you and me. God had given great gifts before, but Jesus is the greatest Gift that God has given to us.





From the National Adjutant

By Roger Gilmore

I sincerely hope all ADVA members are staying safe during these trying times and following the established guidelines for protecting yourselves from COVID-19. We face very uncertain times; we all hope this pandemic wave abates in early in 2021 so we can return to some sense of normalcy.

Our membership roll continued to decline as we had probably an all-time low in new members being added over this past three months. I suspect that the pandemic has many veterans or ADVA members avoiding crowds and therefore we do not see the interaction at veteran events or facilities we typically see. Only one new member was added for this reporting period, and his membership is paid life. No new annual pay members joined. We did have eight annual pay members upgrade to life membership during this period. Two former members reinstated their ADVA membership. Hats off to William McKean for his new member sponsorship this reporting period.

It is my thought that our downward trend in new members can be somewhat attributed to many more military veterans using social media, such as Face Book, Twitter, and texting, to re-connect on a more personal basis. The Americal Facebook page gains quite a few new members regularly and likely there are unit Facebook sites out there for Americal Division veterans to use. Social media is a way to connect instantly and on a more personal basis. As you connect via social media with other Americal Division vets, encourage them to join the association. They can benefit from ADVA membership by receiving this high-quality publication quarterly and be eligible as a scholarship sponsor for any children or grandchildren attending college or vocational school.

In this section of the *Americal Journal* we publish the Taps listing. Taps is a roll call of recently deceased ADVA members and Americal Division veterans. The *Americal Journal* is one of many ways to be informed of the passing of an Americal Division vet you served with or stay in contact with. One of the ways we serve families of deceased members is to offer comfort during the grieving process.

ADVA member and former Chaplain Robert Harris offered comfort for many years with his mailings to the deceased member's surviving spouse or family member. Bob decided to step down from his post as ADVA Chaplain early this year. The post of ADVA Chaplain is now filled by member Edwin Griffin, a 4/31st veteran. Edwin was appointed to the position in July by National Commander David Eichhorn.

Edwin plans to continue to minister to the families of deceased members to help with the grieving process. When informed of the death of a member, I will notify Ed with the surviving family member name and mailing address. So, as I do in each issue of the *Americal Journal*, a reminder to notify me when you know of the death of a member or Americal Division veteran.

September 2020 annual pay renewals went out in the mail the end of August. The USPS was very prompt in getting these to their destination, as we had quite a few dues payments mailed to Assistant Finance Officer Ronald Ellis early in September. By the third week in September, we had received dues payments from 70% of those members up for renewal in September 2020. Thanks to all who promptly paid their dues for September.

The Taps section is again very extensive. Veterans of the 1/46th will remember the name of COL (Ret) Richard Carvell, battalion commander in 1970.

Please notify me when you have a change of address so the ADVA roster can be updated asap. My contact information is on the back cover of this publication. The best way to contact me is by email to [redacted] or phone to [redacted]

New Paid Life Members

**Larry B. McNall**  
23rd Med Bn Co D  
Prescott Valley, AZ  
★ William F. McKean

**James J. Balkey**  
198th LIB  
Medenales, NM  
★ Self

**Jack E. Curtis**  
3/18th Arty D Btry  
Antlers, OK  
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

**Jeff Dombroff**  
14th CAB HHC  
Warrenton, VA  
★ Verner Pike

**Charles F. Grimm**  
3/16th Arty  
Montoursville, PA  
★ Self

**Jack Hosbach**  
A/1/20th Inf  
Rochester Hills, MI  
★ John McKnown, Jr.

**Jerome E. Laack**  
A/5/46th Inf  
St. Francis, WI  
★ Jessie O. Gause

**Al Laferte**  
132nd ASHC  
Viera, FL  
★ Bill McRae

**Thomas G. Lightner**  
3/16th Arty  
Vista, CA  
★ Self

Reinstated Members

**William J. Donaghy**  
C/1/20th Inf  
Inverness, FL  
★ Bernie Chase

**Walter Veto**  
A/1/20th Inf  
Racine, WI  
★ Self

TAPS LISTING; MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

World War II Veterans

**Leroy Hartman**  
Unit Unknown  
Boyertown, PA  
July 25, 2020

**Ralph G. Jung**  
164th Inf Rgmt  
Sidney, OH  
September 10, 2020

**Arthur S. Little, Jr. \***  
101st Ord Det  
New London, NH  
June 7, 2004

**Alexander R. Martinez \***  
182nd Inf Rgmt  
Tucson, AZ  
August 23, 2020

**Lew Renville**  
Unit Unknown  
Milton-Freewater, OR  
August 9, 2020

**Melvin E. Schroeder**  
Unit Unknown  
Barrington, IL  
October 4, 2020

Vietnam Veterans

**Robert O. Bartlett**  
198th LIB  
Ely, NV  
July 12, 2020

**Ned Carswell**  
Division Chaplain VN  
Wichita, KS  
September 5, 2020

**Richard F. Carvell \***  
1/46th Inf  
Piqua, OH  
September 8, 2020

**Grover L. Cash**  
D/1/6th Inf  
Faxon, OK  
May 5, 2020

**Steven A. Ferguson**  
D/1/6th Inf  
Ft. Collins, CO  
August 18, 2020

**Robert A. Frey \***  
B/1/46th Inf  
Sibley, IA  
August 13, 2020

**William A. Hall**  
A/4/31st Inf  
Des Moines, IA  
September 5, 2020

**William E. Hargis, Jr.**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Reno, NV  
August 26, 2020

**James Keeter**  
A/5/46th Inf  
Dana, NC  
June 6, 2020

**Tim Kinnaman**  
A/4/21st Inf  
Largo, FL  
September 2018

**Derald Kirklin**  
17th Cav F Trp  
Kansas City, MO  
September 15, 2007

**Norman L. Linto \***  
HHC/2/1st Inf  
Oxford, MI  
April 6, 2019

**William H. Lozier**  
Unit Unknown  
Des Moines, IA  
October 4, 2020

**Warren J. Lucas \***  
23rd MP Co  
Mt. Pleasant, SC  
June 23, 2020

**James L. Magan \***  
C/4/3rd Inf  
Pittsburg, KS  
June 18, 2020

**Jerry L. Mount \***  
C/3/1st Inf  
Westcliffe, CO  
June 27, 2020

**Heriberto Rivas, Jr.**  
196th LIB  
San Benito, TX  
July 22, 2020

**Ed Stolley \***  
A/4/21st Inf  
Bettendorf, IA  
September 14, 2020

**Mike Sutter**  
1/14th Arty C Btry  
Bloomington, MN  
August 27, 2020

Associate Members

**Sarah Bailey \***  
Shelby, AL  
2016

**Virgil F. Baughman \***  
WWII – ETO  
Longview, TX  
August 5, 2020

\* ADVA Member

Soldiers' Sorrow

By Gary L. Noller

I arrived in Co. B, 1/46th Infantry in June 1970. LTC Richard F. Carvell was the battalion commander at the time. He remained with the battalion until November 1970.

Most likely I did not meet LTC Carvell in Vietnam. But I knew who he was. It is very likely that I regularly spoke with him on the radio. I was a RTO in the command platoon (CP) and frequently communicated by radio with battalion staff on FSB Mary Ann. I also remember that he frequently flew overhead in an observation helicopter and would often let us know where we really were on the map.

In July 1996 I began a two year term as National Commander of the ADVA. Shortly after that I was surprised to receive a hand written letter from COL (Ret.) Richard F. Carvell. He congratulated me on my new role and encouraged me to do my best. He offered his full support.

Never in my life would I imagine that a former battalion commander that I barely knew would write me a letter like the one Carvell did. I only attained the rank of sergeant for the last month that I was in the Vietnam. I did not know how I should rate notice from a retired colonel. But that was the type of man that Colonel Carvell proved to be.

Carvell was too young to be in World War II but he saw the brunt of heavy battle in the Korean War. He was an enlisted soldier who then became a commissioned officer. I believe his experiences as an enlisted infantryman in the Korean War provided him with a special sensitivity to those of us who also shared that experience. He had more than one tour in Vietnam and he was certainly assigned to many units across the globe. But he always told veterans of the 1/46th that this battalion was his favorite and its soldiers the best that he had ever encountered.

Robert Frye was in my company in Vietnam. I knew him as Doc Frye. He was the medic in the command platoon and often the soldier immediately in front of me or immediately following me. He was an excellent medic and saw much action in the battles near Hiep Duc in May and June 1970.

I remember Doc Frye as having a no-nonsense type of personality. I particularly remember him from an incident the first time the company walked off FSB Mary Ann into the mountainous jungle to the west. After a couple of days I ran out of drinking water. None was expected to be found until the next morning. I was at near panic.

I told Doc Frye of my worry. At first he ignored me and he went about setting up for the night. I went back to my position with dread. I thought, "What have I gotten myself into now?" But a few minutes later Doc Frye approached and dropped a half-full canteen at my feet. He simply said, "Never run out of water again." I never ran out of water again. I will forever be thankful for a half-canteen of water given to me by Doc Frye- and for his stern advice.

Weeks later Doc Frye's time in Vietnam was complete and he had orders to head home. Co. B happened to be on stand-down in Chu Lai at the time. Doc appeared with a smile and three bottles of Canadian whiskey. He said, "Noller, I am going home tomorrow. Help me celebrate." With that I quickly consumed more Lord Calvert than I should have. The next morning Doc was helped to a Jeep for a ride to the airport. I remember saying to him, "Doc, when you get to the airport be sure to act sober. If you don't they will not let you on the airplane." Doc was a good actor.

I met Doc Frye several years ago at a reunion in San Antonio and I told him these two stories. He sorta grinned and his eyes sparkled. I do not think he remembered the incidents- but I am sure he knew I was telling the truth.

Colonel Carvell often attended the annual FSB Mary Ann reunions and memorial services. This was years ago and near the time that CPT Paul Spilburg, Co. A, passed away due to cancer. Carvell said to me, "Gary, there are two times that soldiers are filled with sorrow. The first is when they see their buddies die on the battlefield. The second is years later when they see their buddies die of illness and old age." I did not know what Colonel Carvell was telling me at the time. But I do now.

Requiesce in Pace

ADVA MEMBERSHIP 30 September 2020

World War II	250
Vietnam	2,497
Cold War	5
Associate Members	178
Total Members	2,930



## Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore, Chairman, Board of Directors

### Foundation Web Site

In the last issue of this publication I covered the re-designed process for ordering merchandise from the Legacy store on the Foundation web site. We no longer have a PayPal link for paying for purchases. Ordering, remittance, and mailing information for store orders is listed on the merchandise link. When checking out with your order, you have the option to register your account if you plan to make future purchases or check out as a guest. Once an order has been placed in the Legacy Store and confirmed, you will receive an email with instructions for payment. It is important that you include a copy of the confirmation email with your payment so we have the shipping address and are able to confirm payment is received. You may also request a purchase using the Contact Us link. Since the last issue of this publication, we've received a few orders (Under the Southern Cross book and legacy challenge coins) and those orders have been filled.

We are seeing inquiries come in through the Contact Us link asking for specific unit information (rosters) or details on Americal Division soldiers' individual service. The Foundation has no information of this nature. We do have listed under the History link a complete database of DTOC logs and somewhat complete log of the Division newspaper in Vietnam, Southern Cross. Specific unit information may be available through the records of the ADVA Vietnam Historian, Les Hines. Les can be contacted at [REDACTED].

### Americal Legacy Calendar – 2021 Edition

Each of you received the new 2021 edition of the Americal Legacy Foundation calendar with this Journal issue. Again, another nice presentation for you to proudly display in your home. This issue was drafted by Director Gary Noller and we appreciate the time and work he put in to make this one possible. Our creative director Lisa Anderson did the art and layout work and another super job by her to finalize what we think is one of the better veteran calendars out there. We anticipate another generous year from ADVA members with donations. Your support is sincerely appreciated; donated funds support the Foundation's various monument and grant programs through your donations. We have plenty of 2021 calendars are available for order. Contact us via the Foundation website (outlined above) or call me to order more.

### Americal Monument Programs – National VA Cemeteries

The nation seems to be very slowly coming back to some semblance of business and work activity. The recovery seems to be governed by the progression of the COVID-19 virus spread. Unfortunately, some areas of the country continue to struggle with rising cases of infection and the strict precautions put in place to slow the spread must be maintained for the foreseeable future. The VA cemeteries continues to offer committal services with robust COVID-19 restrictions in place. Non-essential work is resuming. We are having success in completing monument placements at sites where the placement has been approved at higher levels in the National Cemetery Administration (NCA). We maintain

regular contact with our POCs at these locations to stay on top of each project progress and adjust work scheduling as necessary. Below is a recap of VA cemetery sites selected and where we stand with our placement proposals.

#### Long Island National Cemetery - (Farmingdale, NY)

We have incredibly good news for this monument placement project. The concrete work to pour the monument base was completed in mid September. The Americal Monument, housed in inventory in a Vermont quarry, was delivered to the cemetery the last week of September. We had hoped to have the monument installed by September 30, however heavier than normal work schedules for the cemetery maintenance staff with many internments caused the installation to be pushed back. At the time this article was written, we did not have a date set for the installation.

#### Camp Butler National Cemetery - (Springfield, IL)

This project is likely headed for the "Dropped From Consideration" list. The staff at this location seems to lack interest in moving this project forward. Certainly, the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have played a role in the lack of action to submit the proposal package up the line. Our POC at Camp Butler Cemetery was transferred to another cemetery recently and we have not been notified of any action by other staff members on our request.

#### Rock Island Arsenal National Cemetery (Rock Island, IL)

The cemetery staff advised POC Lyle Peterson the project was approved for placement by the NCA on October 1. Great work and persistence by Lyle to keep the project on the cemetery staff priority list and the paperwork going through all the approval channels. I received the formal letter of approval from the cemetery director on October 5. Lyle plans to follow-up with the cemetery staff soon on the installation process (whether the cemetery will install, or we need to contract with a firm to install the monument). Once we have information on the installation process, I will initiate a shipment request from the quarry in Vermont. Plans are to have a dedication ceremony in 2021 once COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

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

As noted in the last issue of the Journal, this project is on hold due to the extremely high estimate for the concrete base construction on the initial bid we received. We reached out to another local concrete contractor in early October for a competing bid to determine if the concrete work and installation can be done for less. At the time this article was written we had not heard back from the second contractor. More on this project in future issues of this publication.

#### Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery (N. Little Rock, AR)

Word from our on-site POC in late September advises, despite pandemic slowdowns, the cemetery's major renovation project started in 2019 is progressing very well and they expect to have all work done by year end 2020. With complete on-site access again available, we plan to visit the cemetery in Spring 2021 to select a placement site and select a contractor for the base work and installation.

## Americal Monument/Memorial Programs Other Locations

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

This everlasting tribute to the proud heritage and service of the U.S. Army appears to be progressing nicely. The official website for the Museum does not offer much information on the grand opening date. According to the last update I viewed online, opening ceremony tickets are not yet available because the opening date is not set. Our Americal Division unit tribute plaque is ready to take its place on the Path of Remembrance that will honor many of the U.S. Army's divisions and units. A rendition of the Path location where the unit plaques will be displayed is below:



It is my understanding the 90th Infantry Division was the first unit association to purchase a unit tribute plaque and likely the reason their plaque is shown in the above picture. On a side note, the 26th "Yankee" Division Veterans, under the command of Massachusetts Air National Guard (MA ANG) Commander and ADVA Associate member Len Kondriatuk, are placing a tribute plaque on the path. In the early 1920s the 26th Yankee Division had as one of its units the 182nd Infantry Regiment. The 182nd Infantry Regiment was relieved of duty from the 26th Division in early 1942 and became one of the three National Guard Regiments that formed the Americal Division in World War II.

#### Fort Polk, LA

Not much in the way of new information on this monument project. Word from the on post POC in mid-September is no new information yet on the additional document requirements to complete the gifting package. This area of Louisiana was hit hard by recent hurricanes and many of those folks involved with the project proposal are directing their efforts to putting their lives and property back in order. We do have a local contractor (via verbal commitment with a cost estimate) to do the concrete base work. More on this project in future issue of this publication.

#### Fort Rucker, AL

With post access restrictions lifted, our contractor for this monument project, Columbus Monument Company, had planned to travel to the post in September to complete the installation work. However, Columbus Monument

had to shift work schedules due to increased demand for cemetery markers (likely a result of COVID-19 related fatalities) and postpone the trip. Plans were to install the monument on post at the memorial garden are on October 7. Columbus Monument advised me they could not get the installation done on the 7th due to increased workloads with internments and manpower shortages. We are priority one for a date Columbus Monument can devote a full day for travel and installation.

Should travel and group activities get back to some degree of normalcy in early 2021, we plan to have a monument dedication ceremony at Fort Rucker. We hope to set a date that will coincide with other Americal Division remembrance activities scheduled nearby.

### JRB Cape Cod (formerly Camp Edwards), MA

Follow up action on this project since the last issue of this publication is contact with another vendor in the Boston area for a bid to replace the brass plaque commemorating the Americal Division service. The estimate I received is higher than the original submitted by the company recommended by our POC on the project, Len Kondriatuk. That being said, we will go with the original bid. Total cost to manufacture and install a new bronze plaque will run just under \$2,500.00. More costs will be incurred to remove the old plaque and install the replacement, but we do not have that cost yet.

Our vendor of choice, Colonial Brass, supplied a rendition for the plaque re-design in early October. The Board of Directors have looked at the artwork for the new plaque and approved the design. I have contacted the POC at JRB Cape Cod regarding logistics for base entry and access to the work area. No response yet from the POC at JRB Cape Cod. More on this project in future issues of this publication.

## Other Foundation Projects

### The Vietnam Center and Archive

Communication from the Texas Tech Vietnam Center and Archive in mid-August states the school has been in various stages of closure since the COVID-19 restrictions went in place. Work on the ADVA collection for archive ceased during that period of closure. After a partial school re-opening, work did resume on the project. The student assistant assigned to the project is reviewing and connecting all Americal relating items (primarily collections from individuals) for input into the Americal portal page. After that, the assistant will resume processing the new materials ADVA Vietnam Historian Les Hines sent in early in the year. More on this project as details become available.

### Scholarship Program

Another quick word of thanks Scholarship Chairman Bill Bruinsma for the fine work overseeing the 2020 academic year Scholarship program. If you read the Scholarship Report in the 3rd Quarter 2020 Americal Journal issue, the grants were very generous, and many were awarded. Also, thanks to Foundation Finance Officer Spencer Baba and his wife Lin for their timely work getting the checks written and in the mail. As of early October, Finance Officer Baba advises all but two grant checks have been cashed. From that, it appears that most all grantees are attending Fall 2020 semester classes.



Vietnam Historian Report  
By Les Hines



After an initial surge in requests for research there has been a decline in research requests from our veterans during the COVID-19 period. A couple of these requests resulted in updates and corrections to the Coffelt Casualty Data Base and the Faces on the Wall web-site.

There have been many requests for research books. One in particular is a book about the 161st AHC/123rd Avn. Battalion. Although still a work in progress, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilot Association will feature this in the annual directory online next year. There are many chapters in the book about the infantry units and organization of the Americal Division. The book is tentatively titled Our Helicopter War.

There will be a chapter about My Lai that is being told by the pilots in the unit that first reported it. It was not my decision. Some of the contributors were combat officers that I served under in Vietnam. I feel that it is their right to put this in their book. I learned a lot from this book about the Americal Division's support of SOG operations done by my company. I knew they were doing things, but what? The crews on the missions could not tell anyone, not even their company commanders were let in on what was going on.

I thank Gary Noller for completing one of several tasks I have requested. He has added transcriptions of the Task Force Oregon/Americal Division Operation Reports and Lessons Learned (ORLL) into the Legacy Foundation web-site. This provides an overview of sorts of the enemy activities and the operations and movements of our troops. Also there is information about the change of commands at the higher levels of the division and more.

I now have compilations of articles, awards, and etc. extracted for the eleven infantry battalions of the Americal Division available for use. Most of these run from 500-700 pages each. There are some other units done as well, but they are usually under 300 pages. This should make it easier to locate materials about an infantry battalion for those who are not very computer friendly.

The National Archives has not reopened on July 10, 2020 as had been announced this spring because of Covid-19. However, Texas Tech University has resumed adding our materials into the Americal Division portal. I have updates to provide them, but I have not kept up with this. The work that I need to do is daunting. I have hesitated on this to work on projects that can be done in a one or two month period.

I have completed a rough indexing of over 6,000

pages of the ADVA Newsletter and Americal Journal. This is from issues that I scanned. A request published in the Americal Journal for missing issues yielded no results. I learned a lot about the Americal Division by just scanning through these publications. There is a lot of history in these publications about WWII and Vietnam. Texas Tech may eventually get these online. Originally they had determined they had information that could not be put online. They have changed this determination, but there are limited resources and priorities.

I could use some guidance on what our priorities might be regarding our materials.

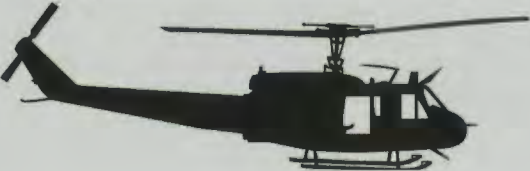
I am working on computer generated 3D maps of Americal Division bases with prominent terrain features. I now have two large 22" x 22" 3D maps of the LZ West and LZ Center areas of operation. Others in process are LZ Mary Ann, Kham Duc, LZ San Juan Hill, and LZ Cork. Others remaining on my list include LZ Baldy, LZ Bronco, LZ Liz and LZ Bowles.

Smaller 3D test maps (9"x9") size were done for LZ Sue and LZ Stinson. A map of Hill 260 is being looked at from WWII fighting on Bougainville. An original map is expensive and takes my vendor nearly a week for printing. I have resin copies of the 3D maps now. These can be made for less than \$200 per map after an original is made with a silicon mold. I am still not completely ready for prime time, but a lot of technical issues have been overcome to date.

I had prepaid for a large order to help finance the vendor's larger 3D printer needed to do the 22" x 22" maps. I had hoped to get 8-10 large 3D maps. I think I may need to pull back from this so I can make it possible for veterans to obtain 3D maps of their own by getting silicon molds made. When I started this I intended for our veterans to start looking for places where a 3D map could be placed. Locations could include local museums, active units, and similar places. That is my end game. I also need help to paint the 3D maps so the LZs and significant terrain are marked as they might be displayed to honor our battlegrounds.

My son has set me up with software and hardware so I can narrate a video to demonstrate what is available in our data base. I spent around a month setting up materials for F/17th Cavalry veterans that may be used to develop a first narration. Many of the items that were prepared are now available on the 196th LIB Association web-site home page section for F/17th Cavalry.

Anyone requesting information or assistance may contact me at [redacted]



Phone [redacted]  
ADVA PX Order Form

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2327	Americal Division History - DVD	\$15.00			
2330	Americal Bottle Opener Key Ring	\$2.00			
2331	Americal Coffee Mug, Blue - Acrylic	\$12.00			
2332	Americal Grey Sweatshirt (XL)	\$35.00			
2333	ADVA Challenge Coin	\$10.00			
2334	Americal Division polo shirt, Black (Med, Lg, XXL)	\$28.00			
2335	Americal Flag w/grommets	\$46.00			
2336	T-Shirt Americal Brigades (Med, Lg, XL, XXL)	\$18.00			
2337	Americal Nylon Wallet	\$8.00			
2338	Americal Tie	\$23.00			
2339	Americal Beer Stein	\$45.00			
2340	ADVA Ballpoint Pen, Blue	\$7.00			
3512	Americal Division Vietnam Veteran-decal, round, multicolor	\$5.00			
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**Dear editor,**

I just finished reading the July-Sep Issue of the Americal Journal. Another quality publication with a good mix of WWII, Vietnam and current. Thanks for all the work you put into keeping our heritage alive.

**Dave Germain**

**A Btry and HHB 3/16 FA**

**Dear editor,**

I just want to say thank you for all of your hard work and excellent management of our fine organization. I have been to a lot of well run reunions and have enjoyed the magazine for years. I am proud of us! Thank you!

**Larry Henry**

**11th BDE 1966-1968**

**Dear editor,**

Just got my issue of Americal Journal and it occurred to me, since you have an article about Bougainville, you might be interested in this video documentary that aired on TV many months ago about a private tour I put together in 2015 to Bougainville. This tour required special permission. Visitors can't get there by air any more and it is very hostile too. The video mostly has to do with the Marines, but I'm sure you don't mind. Anyway, when you have an hour to spare, get comfortable and give it a watch on your computer. <https://wwiifoundation.org/lesson/the-portillo-expedition-mystery-on-bougainville-island/>

**Vicky Reynolds-Middagh**

**Valor Tours, Ltd.**

**Dear editor,**

I just wanted to extend a genuine "thank you" to Charles T. Bell, 164th Infantry, for his letter (through Anita Zantos) containing the Psalm and hymn in the second quarter 2020 edition of the Americal Journal. I was touched by his sentiments and continued willingness to serve. It was a spiritual connection that was greatly needed and appreciated. So, to Chaplain Bell, a smile and a salute.

**Dick Field**

**Americal Radio Research Co (Prov)**

**1967-1968**

**Dear editor,**

I received the Jul-Sep Journal and read Luther Kurass's article, Letters to Home. I want to correct the captions under the photos of the tanks on pages 19 and 20. There were no M-60 tanks in Vietnam. The standard US tank was the diesel powered M-48A3 that is in the photo on page 19.

The picture on page 20 is not all that great for detail but it is

a M-551 Sheridan with the 152mm gun/launcher. It could fire regular warheads or a missile. It was a lot lighter than the M-48 and would therefore have an easier time negotiating mushy ground. Its protection against the larger booby traps was a lot less however. In Shelby Stanton's Vietnam Order of Battle, there is a Sheridan photo on page 307 said to have been taken in March 1970. This Sheridan is lettered AMCAL 1 CAV 1 and said to be at Tam Ky. If the photo on page 20 is one of Luther's it is accurate.

**Mike Ebert**

**Dear editor,**

I got your contact info on the Americal.org website while researching a U.S. Army doctor who served on Guadalcanal with the Americal Division from December 1942 through March 1943. Captain Orrin F. Crankshaw was from Lyndhurst NJ and graduated from Rutherford High School. He attended Dartmouth College and Cornell Medical School. Later he was an instructor at Yale Medical School. Dr. Crankshaw entered the Army as a member of the "Yale Hospital Unit" in July 1942. By August they were on their way to Auckland where the 39th General Hospital was established. By the end of November, Captain Crankshaw had been transferred to the 101st Medical Regiment of the Americal Division and was sent to Guadalcanal. (later the 101st was re-formed as the 121st Medical Battalion). At some point, after March 1943, Crankshaw contracted malaria and was returned to the US to recover. By February of 1944 he was in the United Kingdom as Battalion Surgeon for the 69th Tank Battalion of the Sixth Armored Division. The "Super Sixth" was part of Patton's 3rd Army and fought during the Normandy Breakout, the capture of Brest, the battles on the Moselle River and Metz, the Battle of the Bulge etc.

Crankshak was Killed in Action when the jeep he was traveling in struck a mine near Dasburg, Germany on Feb. 23, 1945. His citations included the Bronze Star, the Silver Star, The Legion of Merit, two Purple Hearts and the French Croix de Guerre. I thought it unusual that he served in both the Solomon Island campaign as well as in North Europe. I know that Generals Collins and Patch went onto serve in higher Commands in Europe after Guadalcanal but was not aware of any Medical Corps personnel who did the same.

I have found a lot of good information on Crankshaw's service in the ETO, but not nearly as much for his time with the Americal Division. I happened upon the name of the Lt. Col. Dale G. Friend who was Commander of the 101st Medical Regiment on Guadalcanal. He passed away in 2003, but his obituary mentions his service on Guadalcanal and later his service in North West Europe.

That's the background, now the questions: Do you have any information concerning the 101st Med Rgt or 121st Med Bn for their time on Guadalcanal, i.e. Unit Rosters, Morning Reports etc.? Have you any information on Col. Friend or any other Medical Corps Doctors on Guadalcanal? Do others have knowledge of military personnel who first served in the South Pacific and later in the European Theater? Do you have any information / morning reports/ after action reports for 221st Field Artillery Battalion for the period of March / April 1945 when the division was fighting in Cebu, Philippines?

**John McParland; Rutherford, NJ**

## Two Bourbons

By Don Counter

It was a 17-hour flight back to the states, precisely a year to the day when I originally left for the war. Throughout the flight I reflected on the months of foot travel down a maze of endless trails, living out of a rucksack, sleeping on the jungle floor amid creeping insects and malaria-laden mosquitoes. The reality of infantry life was vivid: living in the same uniform for weeks at a time, eating canned rations flavored with hot sauce and a hint of insect repellent. Bathing was an infrequent luxury limited to thunderstorms or wading a stream followed by the timely chore of removing leeches.

In the field a popular topic of conversation was returning to the "real world"; arriving in one-piece was the ultimate goal. There was no ceremony, plaque, or well-written evaluation reflective of performance, nonetheless a moment to be celebrated. Returning whole was, in and of itself, the reward.

Most of us were between the ages of 18 and 20, curiously too young to legally purchase a drink in the states.

My battle buddies would regale one another with accounts of citizens offering drinks to returning soldiers. It raised our expectations and we each had imagined it in detail. Having someone offer to buy a drink was a symbol of acceptance and gratitude in the mind of a young man and was also considered a rite of passage. Consequently, we longed for that acknowledgment for our wartime service.

As our plane descended onto the tarmac we immediately noticed the row of blue Air Force buses which would eventually transport us to the nearby Army post. We disembarked and were routed to the waiting



buses. There behind the wheel of our bus sat a somber-faced fellow, informally dressed in blue jeans and work shirt, who watched patiently as we shuffled aboard.

Several of the buses loaded hurriedly, then pulled away. The buses that were parked directly behind and in front of ours had already left. We were nearly the lone bus load.

"What's the hold-up? Let's get a move-on!" I thought, uncertain of the delay and anxious to maintain the flow of movement.

Minutes later our driver stood up, secured the door, hesitated a moment, then nonchalantly greeted us.

"I am not speaking solely for myself, but as the voice of the community and people all across the country," the driver said. He took a long breath then continued, "There is dignity in your personal sacrifices and we are proud of you and all that you have accomplished. On behalf of America, I welcome each of you home."

He turned around, re-positioned himself in the driver's seat and drove us to our next destination for processing. At varied stations we were fed, fitted into a new, fresh out of the box, mothball-scented Class A uniform, processed for leave and pay, then transported to a commercial airport to finally return to our respective homes.

Within twenty-four hours after arriving in the "real world" I was settling into an assigned seat aboard a commercial flight in route to Los Angeles. In the same row with me sat a businessman. Conversation developed, and he promptly inquired as to my military status, to which I replied that I was returning home after a year at war.

Shortly after take-off, the gentleman reached up and activated the call button. As the stewardess responded, he extended his hand, vigorously waving two fingers and ordered "TWO bourbons."

"Ah ha!" – that long-awaited token of appreciation was about to materialize. It was not the taste of alcohol that I sought but the gesture of acknowledgment and validation. There was much expectation – finally, the moment of truth. It was with eager anticipation that I waited. Eventually the stewardess returned with the beverage tray.

I then watched in amazement as



the businessman, in slow succession, consumed both drinks.

The thought of the drink that never materialized and the words of the bus driver still resonate. How ironic, I didn't get what I had initially expected and it took me years to recognize the value in the words of the unassuming driver.

Photos: Don Counter in Vietnam. He served with the 1/46th Infantry in 1970-1971.

## Tips for publication of articles and photos in the Americal Journal magazine

It is preferred that submissions are received by email and email attachments. Send to Gary Noller, [redacted]. Submissions on paper will be considered if this is the only way to proceed.

Send text and photos separately. Do not embed photos into the text document. Photos will be appropriately placed during the page layout process.

Scanned photos need to be at 300 dots per inch (dpi) or higher resolution. Larger image files are better than smaller image files. Send as email attachments.

There is no need to provide extensive formatting to text. This includes page numbering, multiple line spacing, non-standard paragraph indentations, etc. This will all be provided in the layout process.

Provide photo captions that are appropriate. The shorter the better.

Text will be edited for spelling, grammar, clarity, and space available.

Magazines usually have shorter paragraphs and shorter sentences that comparable text in books.

Copyright to the author can be provided when requested. Authors may reprint articles as they choose. Others need to receive permissions for reprinting of Americal Journal articles.



## Army OCS and the Americal Division

By Dave Taylor

"You will have to lead men in war by requiring more from the individual than he thinks he can do. You have to lead men in war by bringing them along to endure and to display qualities of fortitude that are beyond the average man's thought of what he should be expected to do. You have to inspire them when they are hungry and exhausted and desperately uncomfortable and in great danger; and only a man of positive characteristics of leadership, with the physical stamina that goes with it, can function under those conditions" (General George Marshall in testimony to the Senate Military Affairs Committee in 1940)

In 1940, General George Marshall recognized the absolute importance of establishing rigorous training facilities for new officers. The Officer Candidate School (OCS) was established in early 1941 when the Secretary of War, The War Department and the Army Chief of Staff agreed that a training program was needed to quickly commission new officers. By the spring of 1941, the Selective Service System had brought nearly a million men into the Army. Leadership was needed desperately and OCS stepped forward to fill that need, just as it has in every conflict or era since.

The Americal Division has a special place in the OCS story from both World War II and Vietnam. The division was "tied to the hip" with OCS providing the junior leadership needed to fill its ranks in both wars and the Americal Division had to arrange its own OCS in WWII to get by.

The first OCS class graduated in September 1941 at Fort Benning, Georgia. Later that month, the War Department announced that OCS would be expanded to 10 branch schools: Infantry, Signal Corps, Armor, Artillery, Coastal Artillery, Quartermaster, Medical Corps, Engineering, Cavalry and Ordnance, with an initial total enrollment of 2,300 men.



Two generals look on while applicants for the Americal's OCS program on New Caledonia are questioned by the Examining Board.

As the Americal was reorganized from Task Force 6814 on New Caledonia (the task force described as "an odd conglomeration of spare parts...a wartime stew of men and equipment"), the Americal's commander, Major General Alexander Patch, realized he needed a rapid infusion of qualified junior officers to fill his ranks. Many of the initial OCS graduates from Fort Benning were being sent to the units destined for North Africa. Patch requested and received permission from Washington to develop his own OCS program on New Caledonia. Selection was rigorous, and the "examining board" was consisted of two majors and one lieutenant colonel. The training, which began on July 10, 1942, on New Caledonia, was oriented for infantry officers but graduates were detailed for other branches, such as Ordnance and Quartermaster. The "branch training", other than infantry, was to be "OJT" once the newly commissioned officer arrived at his unit. He was selected for his aptitude and maturity and the graduates quickly fit into their new units to learn their trade.

Those who survived the ordeal at Fort Benning's OCS were commissioned second lieutenants, known as the "famed '90-day wonders" of World War II. The momentous decision to start a shortened commissioning program proved to be very wise as OCS became the leading source of commissioned officers during the war. Of the 800,000 or so officers who served in the Army during World War II, more than half were OCS graduates and well over half the combat leaders were products of that system. That includes the junior leadership of the Army divisions in the Pacific Theater.

At the end of World War II, the troop level of approximately eight million was reduced to less than 20 percent of that strength in one year and down to seven percent in three years. Commensurate with that reduction, by the end of 1946, all OCS training was transferred to the Army Ground General School at Fort Riley, Kansas. Officer production slowed to a trickle until 1950.

The officer requirements of the Korean War resulted in the reactivation of six branch OCS programs in 1951; Infantry, Artillery, Signal, Engineer, Ordnance and Anti-Aircraft. By the end of 1952, a combined total of 16,800 candidates had graduated from the six schools. Korea did not require as many new combat leaders because so many were available with World War II experience. All the reactivated schools except Infantry, Artillery and Engineer were closed by the end of 1952. The Engineer OCS closed in June 1954.

The Army expanded in 1965 from 1 million to 1.5 million to fight in Vietnam. The Army needed 40,000 to 50,000 new junior officers for this expanding force. The ROTC production declined and West Point commissioning was slow, so six new OCS schools were opened - making eight in total (of several branches) to produce the numbers needed for the Vietnam War.

During the height of the Vietnam Conflict, Infantry OCS produced about 7,000 officers annually, initially from four - then three battalions at Fort Benning. It is estimated that more than 50 percent of the company grade



Bayonet Drill for officer candidates in the OCS established on New Caledonia in July 1941. This photo was taken September 6, 1942 and the first class graduated on September 18, 1942, in time for the division's deployment to Guadalcanal.

officers who fought in Vietnam were OCS graduates. This certainly pertained to the Americal Division in Vietnam. The OCS program was reduced to two battalions toward the close of the conflict and presently maintains a single battalion. In April 1973, the Branch Immaterial Officer Candidate Course was created at Fort Benning to replace all other OCS courses except the Women's Army Corps OCS which remained at Fort McClellan until 1976, when it too merged with the course at Fort Benning.

In the decades since the OCS branch immaterial program was implemented in 1973, OCS continues to provide commissioned officers to the total force for all basic branches of the Army. The demand for well-trained junior officers has expanded and contracted over the years to support our continuing commitment in South Korea, major conflicts such as the 1991 Gulf War, peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, the Iraq War and continuing operations in Afghanistan. Overseas contingency operations continue as U.S. forces are a vital part of the intervention against radical Islam.

On 12 June 1998, to further integrate the total force, the Army National Guard OCS Phase III candidates began training alongside their active duty counterparts at Fort Benning; officer candidates from the National Guard conducted the final phase of training before commissioning during their two-week annual training period. Over 650 future officers were trained for the Army in the first year with similar numbers being trained in subsequent years.

Notable and distinguished OCS graduates include Casper Weinberger, Secretary of Defense during the Reagan Administration; Robert J. Dole, former U.S. Senator from Kansas and presidential candidate; John O. Marsh Jr., Secretary of the Army during the 1980's; William F. Buckley Jr, political commentator; Winthrop Rockefeller, former Governor of Arkansas; General John Shalikashvili, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of

Staff, General Tommy Franks, former commander of the U.S. Central Command; General Frederick Kroesen Jr., former commander Seventh United States Army; Major Dick Winters, subject of the miniseries Band of Brothers; Thomas J. Cotton, U.S. Senator for Arkansas, and Ralph Peters, author and news strategic analyst.

There have been 61 OCS Medal of Honor recipients. Three of them are Americal OCS graduates who fought in the Vietnam War: COL (Ret) Kern W. Dunagan, LTC (Ret) Charles Kettles and CPT (Ret) James Allen Taylor

The legacy of OCS is maintained by the United States Army Officer Candidate School Alumni Association (USAOCSAA). The USAOCSAA is a non-profit national organization representing all Army officers commissioned through Officer Candidate Schools, regardless of previous school locations and branches. That includes the active, Army Reserve and National Guard components. All Americal OCS graduates are invited to join (<https://ocsalumni.org>).

The OCS Alumni Association fosters fellowship, highlights the history of OCS and memorializes OCS graduates who have lost their lives in the service of their country. The Association is an advocate for the ongoing OCS program and a source of information for all related interests. The Association invites new members and wants to hear from active, retired, veterans and family members. It offers a great way to reconnect with OCS classmates and those affiliated with the program.

Since its inception 79 years ago, the Army Officer Candidate School continues to demonstrate uncommon flexibility, professionalism and the unmatched ability, to provide the U.S. Army with competent, well-trained and fearless officers in the shortest and most responsive time. OCS continues to follow its code: "standards...no compromise".

Dave Taylor, PNC of the ADVA and its WWII Historian, is a board member of the Officer Candidate School Alumni Association and its Public Affairs Officer. Americal OCS graduates interested in joining the alumni association or have questions can contact Dave at: [REDACTED]



The Army's OCS program supplied most of the infantry junior leadership for the Americal in the Vietnam War.





Today's OCS graduates, male and female, are provided a solid foundation in tactical and leadership training before moving on to their branch school. Their motto: "Standards...No Compromise"

## Japanese Defenses and Fortifications

J. David Rogers, PhD – Geological Engineering

*(Contributing Editor's Note: This article is an abbreviated version of a briefing for a Military Geology course, as part of the Engineer Branch Captains Career Course for a Master's Degree at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. The briefing encompasses Japanese defenses on Tarawa, Iwo Jima and Okinawa, 1943-1945. Part of the briefing talks about Japanese army defensive doctrine in general, and that is the focus of this article, as it covers what the Americal encountered on Guadalcanal, Bougainville and Cebu, the Philippines)*

### Japanese Priority for Offensive Action

The U.S. Army's Handbook on Japanese Military Forces described the Japanese attitude toward defense at the beginning of World War II: "The defensive form of combat generally has been distasteful to the Japanese, and they have been reluctant to admit that the Imperial Army would ever be forced to engage in this type of combat"

Every Japanese manual from 1909 onward focuses on the importance of offensive action to achieve victory. The manual noted, "What the Japanese lacked in firepower and material was to be made up for by spiritual power, superior martial values and total dedication to fulfilling one's duty, even if it meant attacking a superior force with bayonets or defending a position to death" The Japanese officer corps basically loathed defensive and fixed fortifications, feeling that these were in contrast to the true Bushido Spirit of the ancient Samurai.

The 1938 Japanese Combat Regulations, which were in effect for World War II, called for "passive defense" only in the face of overwhelming superiority. Prior to this the Japanese had stuck to the "active defense" concept. But thereafter with these regulations "active defense" was to be used only until the offense could be re-established. In the island wars Japanese "active defense" was to halt the enemy at the water's edge, and if unable to decisively defeat him there, they sought to reduce his strength and construct immediate counterattacks to keep him disorganized until mobile reserves could be brought forward to annihilate their foes.

The key problems the Japanese faced were: vast distances between their fortified islands; limited logistical support because of American interdiction to their shipping by submarines and aircraft, resulting in material shortages being routine and often extreme; vast climate differences between different theaters of combat.

### Island Warfare Caused Tactical Changes

As the war in the Pacific continued, Japanese tactics evolved rapidly. These tactics were marked by six key areas: first was the skillful use of camouflage, especially in jungle environments; second, was the utilization of natural materials found on their islands of occupation in their fortifications; third was the effective use

of terrain masking; fourth was the development of mutually supporting fire-support positions; fifth was the extensive use of decoys and finally, sixth was that their fortifications were constructed in such a way to withstand massive firepower.

In the construction of defenses on their occupied islands, local laborers were to be used extensively for constructing support facilities, cutting wood and the transport of materials. On islands such as Guadalcanal and Bougainville, local labor was in short supply because of few indigenous people on the islands. Their hatred of the Japanese caused many to hide in the jungles as best as they could. In the Philippines, such as Cebu Island, the "Cebuano's" were used extensively. But when it came to constructing actual fighting positions, Japanese troops did that themselves on all the islands and the more sophisticated positions were supervised by Japanese engineering officers. What should be noted in both these cases is that there was little or no equipment or power tools to assist in the construction except when operating in more developed areas such as Cebu Island, where the city of Cebu was the second-largest city in the Philippine Islands.

### Building Materials and Construction

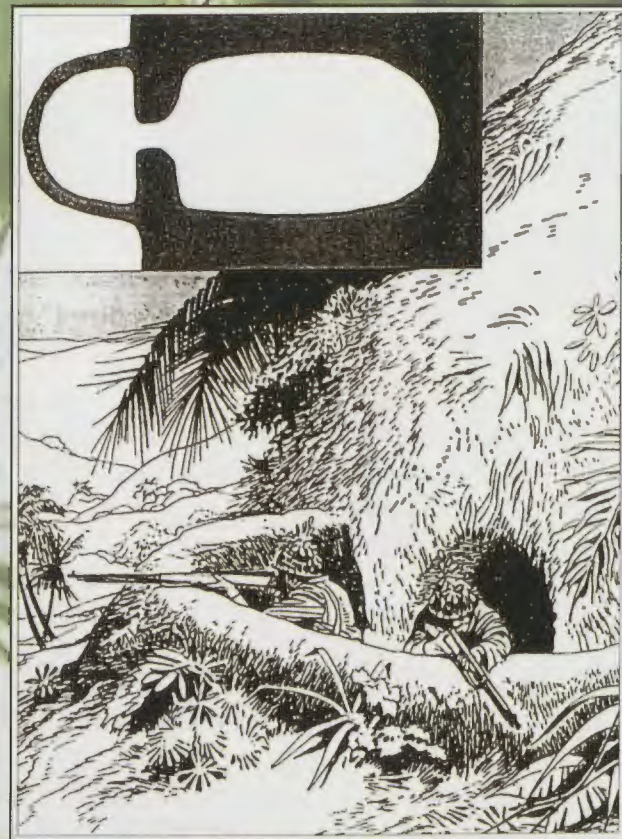
The Japanese Army, out of necessity, made extensive use of local materials for fortifications and obstacles. It was usually all they had to work with. The materials supplied from the Japanese mainland were in insufficient quantities and were earmarked for priority structures such as command posts, communications centers and coastal defense guns. Moreover, the material shortages of concrete and steel were due to the diversion of those materials to fortifications of the "Home Islands" and mandated territories such as Okinawa, Tarawa and Iwo Jima. As such, the US Marines paid a horrific price in casualties fighting on these islands with reinforced steel defensive positions and the enemies' carefully constructed defensive positions deep inside volcanic rock. It should also be noted that a large percentage of enemy construction materials were sunk en-route to Japanese-captured islands by allied aircraft and submarines.

Chief among the building materials acquired were: **Coconut Logs**, their interiors were soft and fibrous, very resilient to impact; **Ironwood**, the common species was hard to work with but extremely resilient; **Steel Staples**, hammered into ends or sides to provide structure; **Wooden Shipping Crates**, they were filled with sand and stacked like bricks, or they could be disassembled and used as planking for soil retention in defensive positions and the wire strapping from crates was used to lash logs together. **Burlap Rice Bags** were filled as sand bags after the rice was used. **Oil Barrels** were filled with sand as uprights in positions. The ends were cut out and used as tunnel entrances and crawl tunnels or the barrels could be flattened and used as roofing for

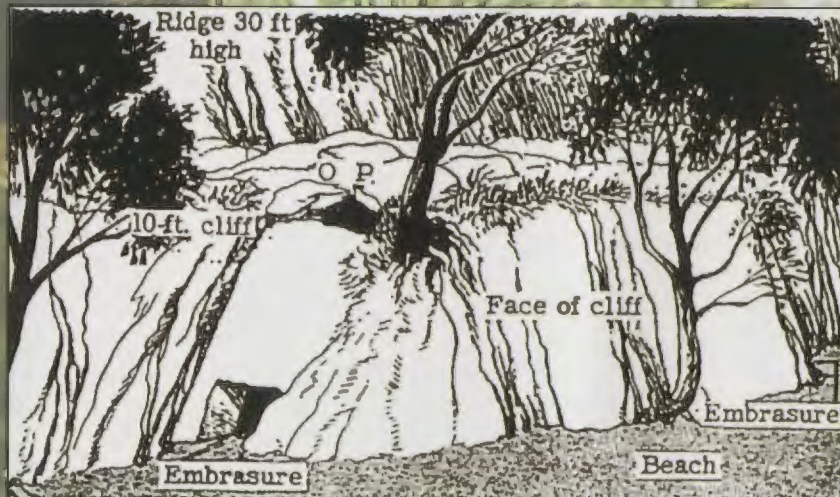




Natives cutting coconut logs for use in fortifications.



Japanese foxholes were usually small one-man holes, but sometimes two and three man positions were connected. These could be used for a light machine gun (LMG) or grenade positions (the inset diagram shows plan view). The cave provided soldiers shelter from artillery and mortar fire.



Principles of Construction: Dig as deep as possible and keep as low a profile as possible.



revetments. **Narrow Gauge Railroads** on some of the islands had been built to haul supplies. After they were destroyed by air attacks by allied forces the tracks were used for overhead reinforcements. **Dimension Lumber**, which was rare and used in warehouses, piers or hangers could be used. These materials availed themselves when more developed islands were captured, such as Cebu, the Philippines. Sawmills were available to take advantage of these resources. **Concrete**, when it could be obtained (rare on islands such as Guadalcanal or Bougainville, but readily available on Cebu), came in 50 kilogram watertight sheet-metal cans. They were used only on the fronts of positions or critical area. Coral and local stone was used extensively in place of concrete.

The Japanese commonly used sharpened bamboo stakes concealed by tall grass as obstacles because barbed wire was in short supply. They were used, in conjunction with mines to defend beach areas where the Americans were expected to land. This certainly was experienced by the Americal Division when it landed on the beachhead in Talisay, a small town seven miles south of Cebu City. Bamboo stakes were intertwined among a series of mines on the beachhead, but it did not impede the division from landing and rapidly moving inland off the beach. Ironically, this was the same beachhead the Japanese forces landed four years earlier.

### The Closer to Japan, the Deadlier the Defense

As the American forces moved closer to the Japanese homeland, the Japanese changed their tactics and sophistication of defensive positions. The "mandated islands" of Iwo Jima, Tarawa and Okinawa were the last defense for the Japanese Imperial Army before their enemy reached the home islands. And these "mandated islands" were key to preventing that from happening.

Japanese tactics would be defense in-depth, reverse slope defense and concealment. There would be no major suicide counterattacks as in previous battles. For example, the Japanese built 800 hardened pillboxes and over 16 miles of tunnels on Iwo Jima, which was only eight square miles in size. Their strategy called for "no survivors." They would fight to the death. Each Japanese soldier was instructed to kill at least 10 Americans. Instead of repelling the Americans at the beaches, they waited until the Marines congested the beaches then called down devastating artillery fire.

American losses on Tarawa were extremely heavy, sparking a debate on the wisdom of continuing the island hopping campaign. These heavy losses seemed to play into the hands of the Japanese because Iwo Jima was the costliest battle in American history. The Americans suffered 6,821 killed, 19,217 wounded and 2,648 taken off the lines from combat fatigue. The total casualties were 28,686 (48% of the forces engaged) which constituted 1/3 of all Marine casualties in the Pacific War. Estimated Japanese killed were 21,844 and only 216 taken prisoner.

Why attack Iwo Jima? Iwo Jima was only 650 miles from Japan, about halfway between the American bomber bases in the Marianas and the Japanese home islands. More B-29 bombers were lost to engine failure than to enemy action during the bombing of Japan in 1944-45. Air-Sea Rescue was unable to keep pace with the number of ditchings and bail-outs between the Marianas and Japan. An American airfield on Iwo Jima would allow crippled B-29s an alternate landing site. It would also provide a base for more search and rescue aircraft and space for escort fighter aircraft to protect the B-29s in their raids on Japan. Once Iwo Jima was secured, 2,400 crippled B-29s ended up making forced landings on Iwo Jima, saving 24,000 lives.

The beaches on Iwo Jima were comprised of loose, angular, volcanic sand and cinder. A wave-cut bench 20 to 35 feet high created a formidable obstruction at the rear of the back-shore zone. This escarpment afforded line-of-sight protection for the Marines but greatly restricted their inland movement. The loose volcanic ash made it nearly impossible to climb up the beaches with heavy packs.

The Japanese were instructed not to return fire once the Marines landed but to wait for the beaches to become congested. This was intended to create greater chaos and improve the likelihood of increased casualties when they called down artillery fire. The Japanese used Mount Surabachi for their artillery spotters.

The high angle of the backshore escarpment made return fire very difficult. The Americans were pinned down and couldn't see where the enemy gun positions were located. Forward air controllers in light aircraft flying overhead couldn't pin down the enemy gun positions either because they were so deeply entrenched or well concealed. Anti-tank mines were emplaced on the slopes and were very effective against American tanks and Amtracs.

### The Final Defense – Okinawa

Okinawa was the final island defense for Japan. It was only 640 miles from the home islands...a short distance for American planes to pummel the homeland. The Japanese Army Order of Battle on Okinawa was 100,000 troops, 198 pieces of artillery of 70-mm or larger; 24-150mm howitzers; 100-antitank guns of 37mm and 47mm; 37 light tanks, 47 medium tanks and numerous rockets and mortars up to 250mm. The American order of battle included 183,000 troops, 327 ships and 750,000 tons of supplies.

The enemy mood on Okinawa was that Japanese soldiers felt their homeland brethren had abandoned them. The Japanese garrison was only comprised of two and a half divisions. They believed the Americans would land six to ten divisions. The estimated U.S. firepower on the ground was 12 times greater than the Japanese. And, of course, the Americans had air and

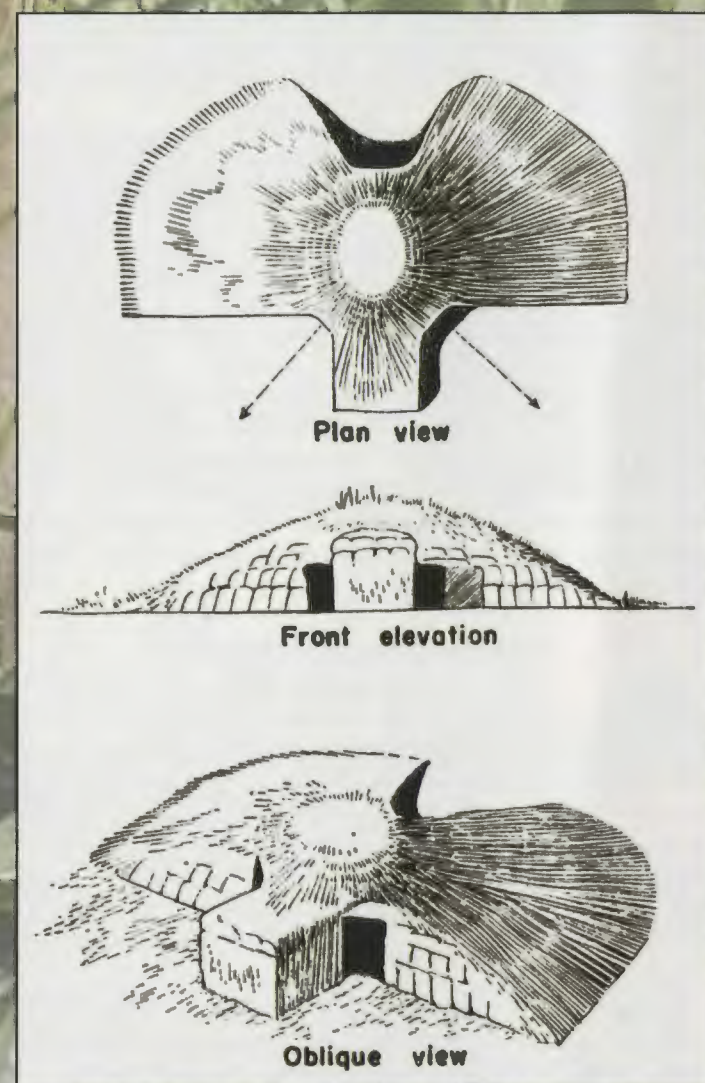




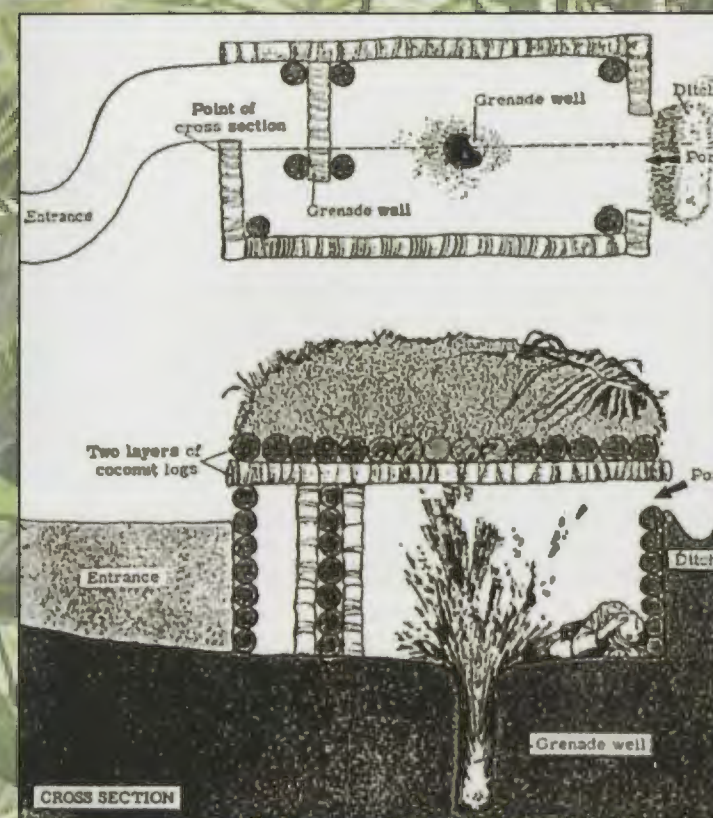
Heavy-built 75mm gun bunker on Bougainville.



Examples of small Japanese individual fighting positions: (1) 7.7mm Aircraft Machine Gun modified for ground use; (2) 7.7mm Heavy Machine Gun; (3) 7.7mm Light Machine Gun; (4) rifleman position; (5) 50mm Grenade Discharger. Such positions, often dug beneath trees, were difficult to detect and offered protection from grenades, small arms and mortar fire.



Typical layout of "double day bunker" housing two Heavy Machine Guns, each with individual sectors of fire. The bunker is divided into two compartments to prevent both shooters from being taken out by a single satchel charge or bazooka.



As the war progressed the Japanese learned that American GIs preferred using grenades to neutralize pill boxes. They shifted to constructing their rifleman positions with redundant grenade protection measures: A grenade well, overhead cover; grenade ditch and a grenade well.

naval dominance over the island.

The defenders on Okinawa, like Iwo Jima, went underground. 10,000 men of the Imperial Japanese Army lived underground. There were 60 miles of tunnels in South Okinawa where much of the fighting occurred. They were concentrated in an area three to twelve miles wide and 16 miles long, mostly consisting of pillbox caves.

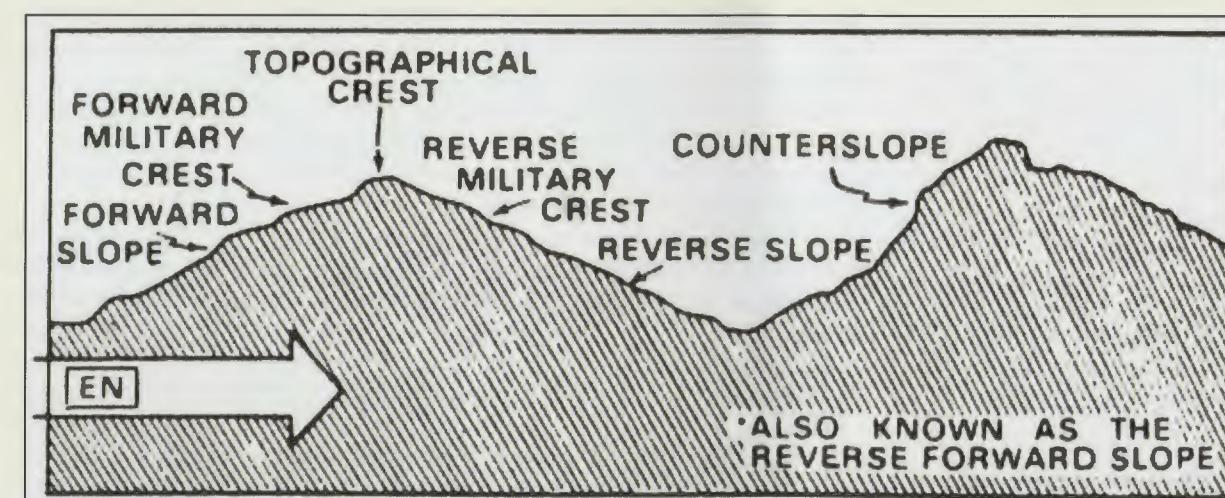
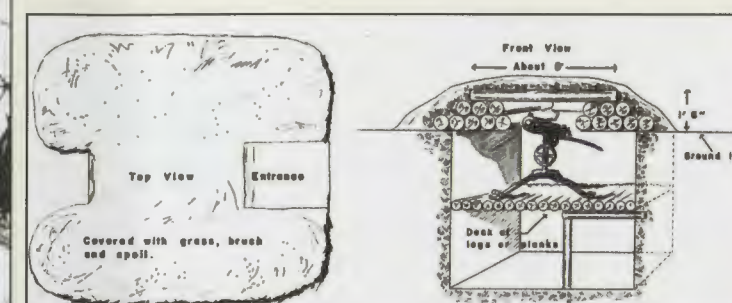
The Japanese Army "Road to Certain Victory" pamphlet stated "sleeping tactics", using tunnels and fortifications, could defeat the American's superior numbers and technology. This was intended to motivate their troops to work on their fortifications.

The soldier's slogan was, "Confidence in victory will be born from strong fortifications". In the end, the strong Japanese defenses and fortifications were not enough to defeat the economic might and strategic planning of the allied forces, but they caused enormous casualties for both sides.

(Contributing Editor's Note: Sources for this article include the permissions of: "Japanese Pacific Island Defenses" G. Rottman (Osprey) 2003; "The Road to Tokyo" K. Wheeler (Time Life Books) 1979; "Bloody Tarawa" E. Hammel & J. Lane (Pacifica) 1998 and "Japan's Battle of Okinawa" T. Huber (Fort Leavenworth Combat Studies Institute) 1990)



Picture: A Heavy Machine Gun Pillbox Firing Port built beneath a living tree on Tarawa. But this same type of position was encountered on Hill 260 on Bougainville where the American fought for the better part of a month to take final control. The battle seesawed with Japanese and American counter-attacks to retake control of this high ground. Sketch: Rough sketch of a Heavy Machine Gun Pillbox.



The Japanese used reverse-slope defenses with much success in the Philippines, Iwo Jima and Okinawa campaigns. Most defensive positions are emplaced on forward slopes, below the topical crest. By fortifying the reverse slope, American forward artillery spotters cannot see the targets to call down covering fire on them.

The Japanese manning reverse slope positions would remain concealed and allow advancing troops to pass over and around them, then open up at close range, then retire into the labyrinth of caves connecting the various gun positions.

At Iwo Jima many of the Marines never saw an enemy soldier the entire time they were on the island because the Japanese were underground and usually attacked at night, retreating to their bunkers by day.



## First Day

By Jack E. Curtis

I graduated from Midwestern University in Wichita Falls, Texas in the spring of 1970. I had been enrolled in ROTC and received a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. The Army sent me orders for active duty on 30 March 1970. I was to report to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to attend Field Artillery Officers Basic Course, FAOBC 13-70. The orders also said, "further assigned to the Republic of Vietnam (RVN)". I wasn't even on active duty and already I knew that I was going to Vietnam.

I laid out my uniform the night before I was to drive the 60 miles from Burkburnett, Texas, to Fort Sill, Oklahoma. I had to report to Sill at 7 a.m. and I did not want to be late. My wife, Sandra, was pregnant with our first child. In the middle of the night she woke me saying she was in labor and had to go to the hospital. I stayed with her as long as I could. My dad, a 25-year career Air Force master sergeant, knew my situation. He said he would stay. I had to report to Fort Sill. My daughter Julie Kaye was born after I left to go to Sill. Thus began my time in the Army, a new second lieutenant, and a dad.

News commentators were reporting all the casualties and actions of the Vietnam war. Every night we were bombarded with the anti-Vietnam rhetoric. Starting in May 1970, Landing Zone (LZ) Siberia started making the news. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) were on a mission to destroy the fire base. It became known to the press as "The Siege of Siberia". For 45 days that was the lead story. The instructors used the information about Siberia in some of our tactics lessons. They emphasized the importance of having good defense when in a static location. In other words, in a fixed position, a firebase is a good target and it must be defended.

Artillery School taught us land navigation, surveying, interior and exterior ballistics, how to call for artillery, and how to calculate firing data. We got to practice each position in an artillery gun crew and

participated in live fire with the 105mm and the 155mm cannons. The class composition was 80 Army officers and 20 Marine officers. After several weeks of watching the Marines with their starched fatigues and polished boots, we Army guys followed their example.

One of my best memories at Sill was when we had to qualify with the M-16. In ROTC we qualified with the M-1 Garand and the M-14. My dad, Cecil, was a rifle instructor in the Air Force and I began shooting at 5 years old. My wife's dad, Barney, shot on the Air Force pistol team. Barney would take Sandra and I to the pistol range and let us shoot. I shot 22 gallery and bench rest competition all through high school and college. We lived in the country, so every night after school I would take my Mossberg 22 auto-loader to the prairie dog towns and hunt.

We went to the Ft. Sill M-16 rifle range for qualification practice. Once there, we received three pre-loaded magazines. I got in a foxhole as instructed. A specialist fourth class (SP4) was assigned to each shooter to keep score. The range officer announced the routine safety rules. They popped up each of the targets individually to let us see them. The SP4 watching me said to aim at the top of the target because the 5.56 bullets would go through it without knocking it down. We were told that if we missed on the first attempt we could shoot one more round at that target.

The range officer announced, "Lock and load. Ready on the right, ready on the left, ready on the firing line, commence firing."

The 100-meter target popped up and I hit it easily. I was amazed how similar the M-16 was to the feel of my Mossberg 22. I knocked down all the targets except the 25-meter target.

After two attempts at 25, the SP4 said, "LT, you are shooting over it. Aim at the dirt in front of the target".

Thanks to his guidance I did not miss it again. After the first practice round we had to break down the M-16 and field clean it. I had gotten to be friends with the number one student in our class. He was a city boy and was having a hard time with the rifle. He was in the foxhole to my right. He pulled the pins necessary to break down the M-16, cleaned it and was attempting to put it back together. The range officer was wanting to get back to qualifying. I looked at him struggling to reassemble the M-16. Somehow, he had reversed the upper assembly and pinned the front pin with the barrel pointing towards the butt and under the trigger. I yelled at him to turn the barrel over. He corrected his error and reassembled the rifle. His SP4 was shaking his head and laughing. I heard him say, "Dumbass lieutenant!"

Back to the foxhole for the second round of practice. I missed one 300-meter target. Many of the shooters were struggling to knock down 50%. The SP4 gave me my score sheet. After policing our brass, we boarded the bus saying, "No brass, no ammo, Sergeant".

The next morning we arrived back to the range for qualification. As soon as I got off the bus, the SP4 shouted at me, "Lieutenant Curtis, over here." When we were ready to start qualification, the SP4 yelled out, "I got 10 bucks on my lieutenant." He had several takers.

"Ok, Lieutenant, get them all."

The first target was the 100-meter target and it went down as fast as it came up. I heard several follow-up shots down the firing line. Each target that popped up went down. The only target I had to shoot at twice was the 25-meter target. In my haste, I forgot to shoot at the ground. I did not make that mistake again. I shot a perfect score and qualified Expert. As we were leaving the range, I saw the SP4 collecting his winnings. He waved his handful of \$10 bills at me when I got on the bus.

I successfully completed Artillery Officers Basic and prepared to go to Vietnam. I left the U.S. on 30 July 1970. We flew from California to Anchorage, Alaska then to Vietnam. As we approached Cam Ranh Air Force Base, the pilot announced on the intercom that they were taking mortar fire on the runway and for us to disembark as quickly as possible!

The Army guys were bussed to the Long Binh replacement depot. A sergeant gave us a quick orientation and told us we would probably be there for several days. Most of the men there were infantry and they were all saying they did not want to be assigned to the Americal Division. They were still talking about the siege of LZ Siberia and how the Americal seemed to be a hot spot.

The next day I checked the assignment postings and saw my name next to Division Artillery (DIVARTY), Americal Division, Chu Lai! I was flown to Chu Lai and reported to DIVARTY. Once there we were taught the Vietnam version of being a forward observer: six-digit grid reference, azimuth to target, distance to target, etc. We were told that the maps were not the greatest and, in some areas to expect them not to be accurate. We learned the value of white phosphorus (Willie Pete) up 200.

The men in the school were saying they did not want to be assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade. The 196th had been in a big battle in Hiep Duc Valley near LZ Siberia and had heavy casualties. After the training, I was to report to the 196th! I was bussed to the 196th Headquarters (HQ) and turned in my paperwork to an artillery captain. I was told to find a bunk; it would be tomorrow for final assignment. That night some of the men were waiting to catch the flight back to Cam Ranh to go home. I was asked where I was being assigned. I told them I did not have a final assignment.

One of the lieutenants said, "Hope it's not the 1/46th Infantry, those guys have been catching hell!"

The next morning, Sunday, 16 August 1970, I got my orders to D Battery, 3/82nd Field Artillery (FA). I was to catch a Huey helicopter to LZ Maryann to be the Forward Observer for B Company, 1/46th Infantry.

At the 3/82 FA supply room I obtained all my jungle gear including a new M-16 and 20 magazines. Gear in hand, I was taken to a helo pad. This would prove to be the only Huey ride I would take sitting in a seat with the doors closed.

When I got to Firebase Maryann I was told to get on a resupply bird to fly out into the jungle to B Company. The Huey was loaded with C-rations, ammo, and other supplies. We had flown about 15 minutes when I saw goofy grape smoke in a clearing. The Huey landed and shirtless guys ran out of the jungle. I got out and one of the men pointed towards the edge of the clearing, indicating that I should go that direction. They unloaded the supplies and the Huey left. The LZ was right on the infamous Dak Rose trail, a main supply route for the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

I walked over to the edge of the clearing. A man identified himself as 1st Lt. Dennis Powell, acting company commander. He introduced me to a blond-haired kid who was to be my radio-telephone operator (RTO). All the grunts were busy sorting mail and distributing supplies. Powell told me to break down a case of C-rations and put them in my rucksack. He asked me if I had any ammunition. I told him I had 20 magazines. He had one of the grunts bring me three fragmentation (frag) grenades, three smoke grenades, and 500 rounds of link belt for the M-60. This would be the load out for the rest of the time in the jungle.

It was about three hours before dark and Powell wanted to get away from the resupply LZ and out into the jungle. I was told to walk just behind the company RTOs with the ARTY RTO behind me. Just before dark the grunts set up a perimeter for the night defensive position (NDP). All the RTOs set up in a small area near the center of the NDP. My RTO told me to find a place close and settle in. The grunts were busy making their ponchos into small tents and stringing up jungle hammocks. My RTO dug around in a C-rations box and gave me six boot laces to tie my poncho up. I did not have a hammock but had my air mattress. I ate something -- I don't remember what it was, but soon learned how to doctor C-rations to make them taste better. Mustard and Tabasco would become a permanent addition to my rucksack loadout.

My RTO sat down with me and showed me where we were on the map. One of the nightly routines was to plan night defensive targets (NDT) and call

the grid locations to the battery fire direction center (FDC). There were several natural travel zones into the NDP, so we marked each one as an NDT. Each NDT was numbered and then encoded with a KAK wheel (tactical signal authentication device). The FDC would calculate the firing data and have the targets ready if necessary. When it got dark, the grunts got silent.

Sergeant Tommy Poppell, a shake and bake from Florida, was the infantry company's communications sergeant. Sergeant Pop, as he was known, had the RTOs trading out radios. The only lights were red flashlights from the infantry RTOs. I reviewed the NDTs over and over, trying to sleep.

In jungle orientation, the instructor said, "There are 100 types of snakes in Vietnam, 99 are poisonous and the other one will crush you to death." The real number of poisonous snakes in Vietnam is 37. Being a country boy from Texas, I had several run-ins with poisonous snakes and was not afraid of them. I wondered how many of those "100 snakes" would crawl over me in the dark. I was exhausted. I finally went to sleep about midnight, my first night in the jungle of Vietnam.

Around 0200 I was woke by the sound of artillery exploding in the treetops. Shrapnel whizzed all around. All the RTOs were on the radios yelling, "Check fire, check fire"! We were taking friendly fire from a 155mm battery. They were firing Harassing and Interdiction (H and I) targets. Later we found out that the



1LT Jack Curtis, artillery forward observer;



battery had a deflection error with the rounds impacting out of their Area of Operation (AO). During the incident all non-contact fire missions from Chu Lai to Da Nang were shut down. I was trying to crawl inside my steel pot. Sergeant Pop got out of his hammock and ran barefoot to the RTOs. He hung a "wait a minute vine" in between his toes and hit the dirt.

Lt. Powell and his RTO, SP4 Gary Noller, took shelter under Powell's poncho tent. They both laughed when they realized the poncho was not going to protect them from artillery shrapnel. SP4 Noller ran over to a 6-foot diameter tree and hid behind the winged buttresses. He ducked his upper body in as far as he could, thinking, "If I get hit it will be in the butt". The artillery stopped firing. Each platoon reported that no one had been hit by shrapnel! Needless to say, no more sleep happened that night.

Monday, 17 August 70, my 19th day in country, we moved out of the NDP and down a trail, each man staying about three meters apart. When the grunts got too close together, the field first sergeant would say, "A well placed heat tab will take you all out". Third platoon had the lead, the command post came second with first and second platoons following.

The command post had barely gotten out of the NDP when the point man opened up on two NVA, killing both. We could hear chickens squawking and Vietnamese voices yelling. Then the fight was on.

Powell grabbed me by the shirt collar and said, "follow me". We ran to the front with my RTO right behind. There was a gully between us and the NVA. I got behind a big tree and could feel the bullets hitting the other side. I flipped my new M-16 over to full auto, stuck it around the tree and emptied the magazine into the jungle. The bullets stopped hitting the tree. My RTO was by my side saying, "Do you want to call a fire mission?" I was so confused from my baptism in fire, I told him, "You do it!"

Third platoon spread out in a line and started an assault on the NVA. The Pig Man, SP4 Dempsey Eason, opened up with his M-60, ripping

the jungle apart. One of the grunts yelled "sniper" and pointed up into a tree. Dempsey turned his M-60 on the sniper position with a hail of 7.62 bullets. Chickens started falling out of the tree! We heard a frag explode and some grunts yelled for the medic. One of the infantrymen and the Vietnamese Kit Carson scout had been wounded and later were medevaced.

The firing went on for another 10 minutes. As quick as it started it was over. Powell wanted an artillery fire mission to block the NVA from escaping. He said, "here", pointing to a map. I got the grid locations and my RTO talked me through my first fire mission. He said, "Tell them it's a contact fire mission."

"Redhead 1, this is Redhead 21. Contact fire mission, over."

"Redhead 21, this is 1. Roger, contact fire mission."

"Grid 967 - 914, azimuth 3170, 600 meters, H.E. (High Explosive) quick in adjustment, battery 4 in effect."

"21, Roger. 967 - 914, 3170, 600 meters, H.E."

"1, stand by for my command to fire, out."

Powell said, "Shoot the mission."

"Redhead 1, this is Redhead 21. Fire, over."

"Shot, over."

"Shot, out."

In the triple canopy jungle there was no way to see where the rounds came out. My RTO said, "It sounds good to me."

"Redhead 1, fire for effect, over."

"Roger, fire for effect, out."

So ended my first contact fire mission, one of many to come.

Third platoon led the way across the gully and up a small hill. Some of the grunts were searching the NVA KIAs. The medic was treating the wounded.

Powell motioned for me to join him. We walked into an NVA base camp and what we figured was a hospital. There was a flagpole with an NVA flag at the top. Beneath it was a makeshift bulletin board with several notes stuck to it. The NVA had split large bamboo stems and stuck them end-to-end for a water system for the camp.

Several of the hooches were 20 feet wide and 30 feet long. The one that we thought could be a hospital had five or six bamboo beds.

One of the grunts came up to Powell and said, "Come see this."

We followed him to a 600-pound pile of rice in sacks. They also uncovered seven rifles with ammunition.

We had used a lot of ammo during the assault. Powell requested a resupply. Because there was no open LZ, the ammo was air dropped to the ground near us. The Huey flew over us. Not wanting to hover, they threw the supplies out the door at full speed, scattering ammo and frags over a large area. We recovered it all except for one case of frags.

A group of grunts hunted for the frags as others searched the area for intelligence. After five or six hours of tearing the place apart the missing grenades were found. We moved out and very shortly the point man ran head-on into two more NVA. The point man had failed to reload his rifle. The lucky NVA ran away with no shots fired.

We left the trail and cut our way back into the jungle to set up a NDP. Powell wanted to make a fake NDP, so after cutting brush we quietly snuck out of the area and went about another quarter mile and set up again.

I don't think many guys slept peacefully that night. Everyone was hyper-vigilant and expected a counterattack. As I laid on the ground, I realized something, "I'm not in Texas anymore!"



SP4 Dempsey (Bud) Eason with M-60 machine gun.

## Howard W. Walker, aka "Robin Hood"

By Dietmar Schneider-Hector

I first met Howard W. Walker at Fort Hood, Texas. He was a sergeant (SGT) and I a specialist fourth class (SP4).

I reported to the 1/6th Infantry (the Regulars), 198th Light Infantry Brigade (LIB), in August 1967. I held primary Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) of Heavy Anti-armor Weapons Crewman (11H10) and secondary MOS of General Supply Specialist (76K30). By luck or chance I received orders in my secondary MOS as an armorer in supply (S-4).

SGT Walker greeted me as a new member of the S-4 and Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC). Our relationship would be characterized as "reserved". I perceived him as a "lifer" who had ingratiated himself with the senior NCOs and officers. He joined the Army on June 14, 1966, only five weeks before I had enlisted. He always maintained a distance between himself and junior enlisted personnel. As the 198th LIB's departure date for Vietnam neared, SGT Walker and SP4 Schneider-Hector retained a professional but not a social relationship.



SGT Howard Walker, 1/6 Infantry 198 LIB, September 1967, Fort Hood, Texas.

In early 2000 I prepared for the annual Americal Division reunion in San Antonio, Texas. I was apprehensive about my first Army reunion. I discussed my concern with Gayle, my wife, about the possibility of meeting individuals whom I had never regarded as friends. She remarked, "Wouldn't it be funny if Howard Walker is the first person you meet?" I replied, "It would never happen."

The good news in this narrative is that time does help mend broken fences. As I sat in the Americal Division reunion hotel I failed to see a familiar face in the lobby. I decided that if the next person to enter the lobby was not a member of the 1/6th Infantry I would return home. One, then a second person entered the room. I rose to leave when Howard Walker strolled into the room. I recognized him instantly; his facial features had not changed.

Howard had always been the "old man". He was nearly 10 years older than me. (He was born on October 25, 1939.) I shouted "Howard" and he turned towards me. Former



(l-r) Howard Walker, Michael "Big Mike" Miller, and author;

comrades in arms embraced and all animosity evaporated.

Together we located Michael "Big Mike" Miller and Joseph McDonnell. The four of us were joined by two non 1/6th Infantry Americal veterans. Our small group had a great evening as we reminisced about events of long ago. They seemed as if they had taken place only yesterday. It seemed as if each of us had been transported back in time when we were much younger and a completely different world.

Since that reunion I lost contact with Miller and McDonnell. But Howard Walker and I remained in touch by telephone, letters, emails, and a 2005 visit to his Loveland, Colorado residence. He provided me with photographs and a written record of his Vietnam days that he had transcribed from letters he had written to his sister, Jean, in Canada. It is primarily from Howard's sources that this narrative originates. We remained in contact until a week before his untimely death on February 19, 2011.

Howard begins his "My Vietnam Tour" story on October 17, 1967 after nearly two weeks at sea aboard the troopship USNS Upshur. Sergeant Walker was a compartment commander responsible for the welfare of approximately 200 enlisted men, SGT and below. In the ship's lower compartments, the refrigeration failed, the saltwater converter failed, and very little fresh water was available. Additionally, the temperature ranging from 80-85 degrees Fahrenheit produced an unbearable odor.



(l-r) Author, Michael "Big Mike" Miller, Joseph McDonnell, and Howard Walker;





**1/6 Infantry arrives in Vietnam on October 23, 1967. First soldier in file on right is SGT Howard Walker followed by PFC Prothro, and SP4 Dietmar Schneider-Hector.**

[Kahler] was the first casualty but I'm afraid that he won't be our last."

On November 6, 1967, Howard experienced "the saddest day" of his life. A helicopter loaded with soldiers exploded on the helipad; three soldiers died and two were injured seriously. One of the three soldiers, covered with oil and bleeding profusely, died in Howard's arms. This tragedy cut a deep emotional scar into Howard from which he never recovered. In his writings and conversations with me he admitted, "For a long time, each night when it was quiet, I heard that young man's voice asking me to help him. I couldn't. And it brought tears to my eyes." Subsequently, Walker was relieved as NCOIC of the ammo section and assigned to the battalion S-5 (PSYOPs).

Landing Zone (LZ) Gator became the battalion's base camp by mid-November 1967. It was an LZ that the 196th Infantry Brigade had controlled. Howard's stay with the S-5 was brief because he resumed his duties with the ammo section when he arrived at LZ Gator. Unquestionably his diligence and leadership impressed his superiors who ensured his promotion to staff sergeant (SSG) on December 17. Six days later, 1SG Canfield, CSM Price, LTC Baxley, and CPT Sims pinned his new stripes in a special ceremony. Howard acknowledged his men by noting, "I couldn't ask for a better bunch of men. They are the best and the strongest, I owe a lot to them." Sadly, Howard does not name any of these soldiers that he praised. Following his promotion, Howard and his buddy SSG Don Kermin, supply sergeant for Co. C, departed for R&R in Tokyo.

Howard returned from Tokyo just in time to prepare for the 1/6th Infantry's movement to Lo Giang, a village outside of Da Nang. The Battle of Lo Giang was costly for the battalion; it lost 20 soldiers killed including Howard's friend SP4 Rodney Troyer, of Co. A. As a result of this battle (February 7-11, 1968), the 1/6th Infantry, "the Da Nang Gang", (minus Co. D), received the Valorous Unit Award for its "extraordinary heroism." Many individual valor awards were earned, notably SGT Alan Allen's Silver Star Medal.

Staff Sergeant Walker relocated to LZ Baldy on February 13, 1968 and became part of a security team to protect engineer minesweepers. Eight days later he

contemplated a transfer to a line company. He said, "I don't think I'm doing enough as a staff sergeant in the ammunition section." He continued his work on the security team until February 29 when he received notice that he would be the acting platoon sergeant in the 2nd platoon, Co. D.

It was a brief stay with Co. D, but it opened his eyes to the reality of "humping" in a line company. He engaged in a 10-hour patrol "with water as high as my waistline and very muddy. The temperature was very high and at times I didn't think I was going to make it. I was carrying 50-60 pounds of equipment and at times it felt like 600 pounds with each passing hour." His platoon searched a pagoda and five hamlets trying to locate hidden weapons.

Afterwards he returned to HHC as the ammo Non-commissioned Officer in Charge (NCOIC) as well as the battalion Demolition and Chemical NCO. The battalion prepared to meet the 3rd NVA (North Vietnamese Army) Regiment, 2nd NVA Division in the vicinity of LZs East, West, and Center. He noted that a rumor held that the 1/6th Infantry might relocate to the city of Hue. However, it was just a rumor. The destination remained the Tam Ky area where the battalion would continue to be part of Operation Wheeler/Wallowa. After May 29, the 1/6th Infantry would participate in Operation Burlington Trail.

On April 12, 1968, Howard received the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB) while still involved in coordinating and filling the battalion's ammunition requests for the companies operating in Dragon Valley. On April 29, he transferred to the 2nd platoon, Co. D as platoon sergeant. He would be delayed in joining the platoon because of heavy rainfall. Howard reached the 2nd platoon on LZ West by the end of the first week in May.



**Chinook and Huey on helipad, location unknown, 1967.**



**Howard's E-6 promotion ceremony. Howard in center.**

he had "a pretty good bird's eye view...." He and his men waited for the order to move forward.

Howard watched the two sides in battle while listening to Hanoi Hanna on a captured shortwave radio. His thoughts drifted as he heard her propaganda. He wrote that her broadcast, "Gets me all mixed up. What the hell are we doing here! I've seen so many of our men wounded, so many of them dead, and I have yet to see the enemy [at this juncture Howard contradicted himself] down in the valley." Howard, with his wit, took stock of this epiphany by quipping, "Maybe the lack of oxygen sitting up here on top of this mountain has made me a little blue." He regained his composure quickly.

Howard's narrative contains very few of his men's names. In mid-May he mentioned that his RTO (radio-telephone operator), SP4 Brown, dropped two hand grenades into a hole that resulted in the death of an NVA soldier. However, before Brown tossed his grenades, Howard had fired more than 50 rounds with an M-60 machine gun into the hole. The aftermath was unsettling, or in Howard's words the NVA soldier "was a hell of a sight." He commented that his company commander told him later that Howard "looked like someone out of a combat comic book, firing that machine gun with a big cigar hangin' from his lips."

Later, Howard was finally able to take a bath and shave from a five-gallon water can. He smoked several cigars that SSG Kermin had sent him. He revealed, "The leeches, the elephant grass, the rain, and the long hot hours were about to get me down when I heard one of my men crying. I had to pull myself together and talk to him. I told him that like it or not we are soldiers and we have a job to do and that he is not alone. I felt like crying also." Unquestionably, Howard empathized with his soldier, but duty takes precedence over personal feelings.

The casualties for the 1/6th Infantry for May were greater than February's losses. The battalion's May deaths totaled 29 men while February's numbered 20 men. The number of wounded men still requires research. Co. D losses for May were four dead (SGT Francis Hayes, SP4 Larry Phelps, SGT Fred U'ren, and SGT Bruce Anello) and many wounded. Howard wrote that he was the acting platoon leader because the lieutenant had been wounded during a mortar attack. He added, "Our company has been ass-kicked all over this area. Co. D was able to field 153 men and now we are down to 70. My platoon is down to 18 from 35 a few weeks ago." Serious morale problems began to plague the 2nd platoon and Howard had to confront the issue.

In the meantime, he led his platoon as well as Co. C's 3rd platoon (12 men) off the hill they were holding. The lead soldiers walked into a booby trap wounding seven soldiers. This event triggered outward anger by several of his men. Howard said, "I had a lot of trouble controlling the men as half of them went berserk, one soldier grabbed a machine gun and wanted to kill us all." He and several men rushed quickly to disarm him. Howard then radioed for helicopters to extract the wounded soldiers. Howard recorded that nearly all the wounded men were screaming. He said, "I had to hit two men with my hands to quiet them down." Once the dust offs were completed Howard led the remainder of his men down a valley and up another hill where they were airlifted to LZ Center. While Howard had "a tired bunch of guys" on hand he received good news. Finally, replacements arrived for his platoon.

Howard and his "Dirty Twenty" spent June humping up one hill after another

He surveyed his new surroundings and discovered that he had an unobstructed view of the valley. He watched a large NVA unit located 2,000 meters from his position being pummeled by jet fighters. He anxiously waited for orders to move against them after the jets had softened them up. Instead of moving forward against the NVA, Howard received orders to use his platoon as a blocking force in case the enemy should break through B and C companies' lines. His platoon had gone for two days without water because resupply helicopters were diverted to other units with "a higher priority." He observed the action in the valley because

chasing VC and NVA elements. The good news for Co. D was that it did not have any soldiers killed during the month. He wrote that he acquired a new AK-47 from an NVA soldier, who no longer had any use for it, because his M-16 jammed or misfired repeatedly. He used the AK successfully on four NVA soldiers. Howard and his men endured rainfall for five consecutive days while trudging their way through the almost impenetrable jungle and struggling up a succession of hills. He wrote that he had not eaten for several days (he had lost his rations) and "my feet are cracking; the leeches are taking a lot of my blood." Optimistically, he observed, "I'm still alive, so I guess everything has to be OK." Howard's physical stamina is amazing considering his age (29 years old) and the hardships he endured day after day.

Captain Price, Co. D commander, impressed by Howard's leadership in the field, informed him that he had initiated paperwork to secure a battlefield commission for him. Howard reasoned that such an appointment was justified because of "my extracurricular activities at no extra cost to the government." He would be scheduled for tests at the education center in Chu Lai. It is unclear if Howard rejected a commission, or if it was withdrawn, or he if failed the exams. Howard declined to answer the question when I asked him many years later.

July was an interesting month for Howard and his men. On July 4, he lost two of his squad leaders when they stepped on a mine while they were returning from a night patrol. Luckily neither NCO was killed. Howard did not identify them but noted that both men were Californians, new to the platoon, and "both were good men."

On July 8, Howard reenlisted for six years. He had joined the ranks of "lifers" in the unit. Years later I asked Howard why he reenlisted. He answered simply,



**Highway 1 near Tam Ky.**



"I had nothing to go home to."

Howard created a new moniker for his platoon after his reenlistment. He changed the "Dirty Twenty" to "Robin Hood and his Merry Men." Howard, of course, was Robin Hood, SGT Robert Grauer was Friar Tuck, and the company commander was the Sheriff of Nottingham. He did not identify any other of his men with nicknames.

Robin Hood (with red scarf) and several of his Merry Men.

Despite new identities, the 2nd platoon's continuous night patrols exhausted the men. On July 19 Howard recorded that the platoon had only 19 effective soldiers in the field. Twenty soldiers of the 2nd platoon were in the battalion base camp for a variety of reasons: "some are sick, some are shamming, five have worms, some are wounded, some have skin infections" (as did Howard). Two days later Howard posited his thoughts if someone might ask him how he felt. He answered himself (with dry humor), "Besides being dirty, mosquito bitten, ant bitten, irritated by rashes, eating bad food, wearing flunky clothes, drinking unclean water, and wearing smelly socks, I'm doing OK. The blisters on my feet are as big as ever, my cuts and bruises on my legs and arms are as colorful as ever." He continued, "My beard, mustache, and hair on my head itch something fierce. But other than that, I'm OK. Thanks for asking!" More bad news for Howard, the platoon had been reduced to 14 soldiers in the field.

The endless patrols and firefights strained Howard's physical and mental faculties. He wrote on August 23, "My nerves are getting me down. My hands are shaking, I can't seem to sleep and I'm losing weight. No one has said anything to me, but I feel they know I may be losing it." Not all was well with Robin Hood and his Merry Men but to their

credit they soldiered on.

At the end of August, the VC and NVA targeted American sites along the coastline which included Chu Lai. As a result of these rocket and mortar attacks the 1/6th Infantry was back in action. Howard's platoon was tasked to prevent an approach to Chu Lai by the 2nd NVA Division. They were to find and destroy the enemy's launch sites. As the platoons established their fighting positions, they became the targets as the enemy mortared their positions. Co. D had several soldiers wounded but no one was killed in August.

On September 2, Howard's 2nd platoon successfully took Hill 410 that had been held by units of the 2nd NVA Division. Securing the hill cost the platoon two soldiers (PFC Angel Reyes and PFC Ronnie Pimental). Howard described his loss, "I lost two men, two men that I will never be able to tell them how sorry I am for their sacrifice. They paid for this lousy piece of terrain. It took us three days to climb up, one and a half days without food or water."

Co. D's 1st, 2nd, and 3rd platoons overcame tremendous physical obstacles such as the high, rugged terrain as well as the unbearable heat and rainfall. The billowy storm clouds engulfing the Hill 410 prevented helicopters from retrieving the dead and wounded soldiers. Howard said, "They lie beside me wrapped in ponchos, my heart is saddened, and my eyes are full of tears." His men must have shared his sentiments. Once the skies cleared, Reyes, Pimental, and the wounded soldiers were airlifted from the hill. Three days later they engaged the enemy again killing 11 of them. The good news for the platoon, it did not lose any of its soldiers.

The soldiers on the ground were concerned about the VC and NVA but they also had to be alert for friendly aircraft misfiring their guns or bombs. On September 9, Howard wrote bluntly, "Today I am afraid. Last night I counted two flights (three aircraft each) of B-52s. I'm not sure how close we were but the noise was deafening, and I could feel the heat as the trees were swept back. The Ruff-Puffs (Regional Popular Forces) we have with us were simply astonished by this awesome firepower. The skies were lit up for miles." While the firepower may have been impressive, Howard and his men must have been terrified by the bombs' proximity to their location.



SSG Walker with his AK-47 at LZ Bayonet.

Howard's days as the 2nd platoon, Co. D, platoon sergeant were coming to an inglorious end. His arms had become infected to the degree that they required urgent medical attention. On September 22, he left his men in the field and returned to LZ Bayonet. After he received the medical care for his arms, he attended a luncheon with the battalion commander and the "Da Nang Gang", principally the SSGs and up. Subsequently, he packed his personal gear for his 30-day leave. He had extended his tour with the proviso that he would transfer back to HHC and resume his duties as NCOIC of the ammo section.



Howard's Vietnam castle.



(l-r) UNK, SP4 John Cook, and UNK; three men in Howard's ammo section.

Howard did not comment about his leave in Canada. He begins the narrative upon his return to the unit on November 9, 1968. LZ Bayonet possessed strangeness for Howard. He stated, "I used to walk into any tent and sit down and talk with my old buddies. Now they are all back in the United States (15-20 soldiers from the Da Nang Gang had extended their tours too) and their replacements are all strangers to me." A notable exception was SSG Harry Fredericks, NCOIC of the battalion S-1. He and Fredericks went to Saigon for an unstated reason. Howard also buddied with Joseph (Big Bad Joe) Carbonneau who accompanied Howard on his third R&R.

In mid-November, the VC attacked LZ Bayonet with mortars and grenades. A few soldiers were wounded but the VC forces were repulsed. A month later the VC launched five 122mm rockets into the 1/6th Infantry's base camp. To worsen matters all the soldiers in camp were stunned when we learned that a C-130 loaded with 36 men bound for R&R or home crashed on the Chu Lai airstrip after making a forced landing shortly after takeoff. Thirty soldiers were killed.

Howard offered a sardonic remark when he learned that intelligence reports indicated that the VC cadres were ready to give up their struggle but



SGT Dennis Lippincott surveying damage after sapper attack.

apparently "nobody told them about it."

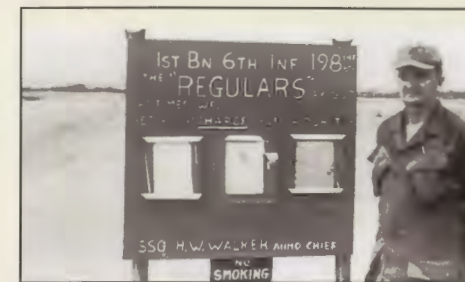
The 1/6th Infantry base camp remained on high alert during the winter and spring months of 1969. At one of the battalion's forward fire bases enemy sappers infiltrated the compound destroying 17 trucks and tankers. Reports of this type as well as his own experience made Howard uneasy about the night bunker guards. He wrote, "I don't trust anyone anymore." He added, "I'm getting this awful feeling which causes me to be more apt to staying up during the night. I think I'm scared. The VC units are too active in our AO (Area of Operations)." On his own volition Howard walked the camp perimeter to ensure that the bunker guards were awake. He returned to his tent only when he felt confident that the guards were alert.

Howard extended his tour for another six months thus earning another 30-day leave. Again, he makes no mention of his time in Canada or the U.S. He returned to Chu Lai on June 8, 1969 and reached the 1/6th Infantry base camp at 5 P.M. The following morning Howard was awakened by NVA rockets; it was one of these rockets that hit the Chu Lai hospital that killed Army nurse Sharon Lane. Almost two weeks later NVA rockets hit the Americal replacement center killing five soldiers and wounding 17. It was not safe anywhere.

On June 26, 1969, Howard began work in the battalion S-5. He does not cite any reason but on August 27 he returned to duty as the NCOIC of the ammo section.

The constant loss of friends due to rotations and deaths unquestionably had an impact upon Howard. In addition to the emotional baggage Howard had also acquired physical ailments that caused him great concern and discomfort. In his final entry on September 24, 1969 he describes his infections that resulted from his field duty. A doctor informed him that he might have a kidney infection too. He indicated that the doctor implied that he should go home because he had been in Vietnam too long. Howard acknowledged the doctor's analysis. He wrote, "I've been getting sick quite often and I am always coming down with infectious type sores." Despite the medical warning and pain Howard did not heed his doctor's advice.

Howard served in Vietnam from October 1967 until July 1970. He knew of the battalion's first year's deaths which numbered approximately 100 men. Co.



Howard resumes his duty as ammo chief, July 1969.

D had 10 men killed.

He remained in the Army attaining the rank of master sergeant and retired in February 1988. Without hesitation, Howard's finest moments were when he served in the 1/6th Infantry at Ft. Hood, Texas and in Vietnam. He enjoyed the comradeship he found in the Americal Division reunions. He attended as many military reunions as possible and it was easy to spot him in a crowd waving his Canadian flag.

Howard Walker died on February 19, 2011, a member of the "Da Nang Gang" and a "Regular" forever. He was one of a kind and he will be missed by those individuals who had the privilege of knowing him. In August 1968 LTC William Kelly, the battalion commander, wrote a letter of commendation to the unit in which he wished to convey his "heartfelt admiration and appreciation to each and every Regular for the commendable manner in which you have accomplished the challenging missions assigned." His words are appropriate for Howard W. Walker, a soldier's soldier, a loyal comrade in arms, and a friend.

Dietmar Schneider-Hector, PhD, Professor Emeritus-NMSU and Staff Sergeant, USA, Retired. I was a member of the 1/6th Infantry from August 1967-May 1969. I reside in Hillsboro, New Mexico and my email: [REDACTED]

I welcome any comments.



Howard's "Robin Hood" hat atop an M-60 machine gun.



Bombing activity near LZ Center, May 1968.





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