

July • August • September **2022**



AMERICAL

JOURNAL

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



**AMERICAL DIVISION MEMORIAL MONUMENT
FT. POLK MUSEUM
LEESVILLE, LOUISIANA**

UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

Looking for: Witnesses to a helicopter crash in Vietnam on August 08, 1967. My husband was with the Americal Division in Vietnam in 1967. At the time he was a Captain with the Army in Chu Lai. His name Captain Vivian(VJ) Villarreal with Americal Division Artillery Headquarters. Sadly my husband passed away 5 months ago.

While in Vietnam he was injured in a helicopter crash on August 08, 1967 in the Chu Lai area, chopper crashed as a result of escorting a convoy and taking fire, chopper went down in the China Sea. Luckily some Marines saw the chopper go down and rescued my husband, the pilot and another person before they drowned. They were taken to the nearest medical field hospital (1st Marine hospital) in Chu Lai. My husband had broken ribs, cuts and lacerations but was released the next day and went up again on another chopper. Unfortunately the Commander in charge, Col. Young did not report his injuries into his record and was never awarded a Purple Heart. My husband a very humble man never thought of correcting his record by pursuing the award. My husband continued his career and in 1988 retired as a LTC with 26 yrs. In service. Now that he has passed I want to pursue the inquiry into getting him awarded the Purple Heart for our kids and Grandchildren. I think he earned the award as a result of his injuries. Contact: Gloria Villarreal; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any/all 16th Combat Aviation Group veterans to participate in recording histories for unit historical purposes. Contact: CPT Kyle Abraham; 16th Combat Aviation Brigade public affairs officer and unit historian; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information or people that served with PFC Dale Walter Mead. Dale died in Quang Ngai on 8 Feb 1971. He was my biological uncle. Contact: Darryl Mead Hobbs; [REDACTED]

Looking for: My father, Robert Ison is looking for Stan Rickerson, Chuck Schafer, Jake Boyle and Brian Tucker. My father was in the 4/31st Infantry, A Company in 1969-71. His lieutenant was Jerome Frazelle who was KIA. He also was with Stan Rickerson. Contact: Tammy Sherman; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Billy Long. Served with E Troop 1st. Cav. 11th. Infantry Brigade, Duc Pho. Contact: Larry Demontmollin; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Looking for members of the 3/18 Artillery. Contact: Richard Thompson; [REDACTED]

Message: Looking for correct email address. I contacted but email address came back to me. It was Tom Hottle, [REDACTED] Do you know of any other way to contact this person. B/3/21st Infantry, 1969 Sept to 1970 Sept. Contact: Ronnie DeWitt; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who might have information on Michael Scott Haines. He was with A Co., 1ST BN, 52ND INFANTRY, 198TH INFANTRY BDE, AMERICAL DIV. He was KIA June 6, 1968. Mike was my best friend from AIT at Ft. Polk March and April, 1968. We went to VN together, arriving at Bien Hoa mid May. At the replacement depot, we were assigned different units as I went to 1st Inf. Div. Contact: Tyler Bush; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Our lost brothers that were members of D Company, 1st BN, 6th INF, 198th LIB in Vietnam. We have located over 130 members and have conducted a reunion each year since 2011. (not counting 2020 or 2021). This year the reunion will be in Chattanooga, TN from September 12-16, 2022. We will be visiting the National Medal of Honor Heritage Center, Chickamauga National Military Park and the TN Aquarium. Contact: Gary Salpini; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Terry L DeVaughn and Dwayne Fuller. HHC 1/6 198LIB '68-'69. Contact: Joe Greene; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who served with my dad, George Booth Jr. He was part of B Co 1/6 infantry out on an 11 man ambush patrol on 12/10/1969 when he was wounded. Contact: Heather Booth Cutler; [REDACTED]

Reunited After 54 Years

April 13, 2022 I attended an event of the Central New York Elks. Once the presentation was done, a man came up to me and asked if I came from Baldwinsville NY? I said yes, he asked "on Margaret St?" Yes, but I could not place this guy who obviously knew of me. He shook my hand and said, "Paul Miller". I was dumbfounded- Paul and I grew up two houses away from each other, went all through school together, our mothers worked together for years, and get this.....we got drafted the same day! We went all through basic at Ft Dix in the same platoon. Once done, he went to Ft Polk, I to Ft Belvoir. We hadn't seen each other for 54 years. I had known that he was in the 198 LIB, near Chu Lai, from letters from my family. I spent most of my time in-country in the same area. I received an assignment to the 14th CAB and I'm sure our ships moved elements of 198 LIB many times. But we never did cross paths in Vietnam (that we knew of). Quite a quirky story, so long after the fact. Darryl Merriam

News In Brief

[Note: Ralph "Butch" Elliott was a pilot for the Americal Division's 174th AHC. This is some information on this from the Army Engineer web-site. Les Hines; ADVA Vietnam Historian]

Retired Major Ralph E. Elliott III will be inducted into the Engineer OCS Hall of Fame

On 15 June 2022 at 9 a.m., Retired Major Ralph E. Elliott III will be inducted into the Engineer OCS Hall of Fame in the Regimental Room at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. Major Elliott, while flying a recovery mission in a UH-1H, Huey helicopter, on 4 March, 1971, was shot down in the Republic of Laos in the headquarters of a North Vietnamese Division. He was accompanied by his co-pilot Lt Richard Gabauer, his crew chief Harold Brasket, door gunner Dave Smalley, mechanics Jim Watkins, Rumaldo Salinas and Mike MacFadden. During the three days and two nights of intense enemy contact, Lieutenant Elliott had called in 97 air strikes on enemy positions including a 51 caliber machine gun position and a fuel pipeline. The pipeline discovery culminated in a B-52 bomb strike only 2 miles from his location on an enemy fuel farm. All were rescued by South Vietnamese Rangers who traveled two miles over two days of intense fighting. All his men made it out without injury. When Major Elliott returned to CONUS he was awarded a Silver Star while stationed at Fort Leonard Wood and is the first person to be inducted into this Hall of Fame since 2008, 14 years.

2022 Ballot Results

By Chuck Holdaway

The members of the Americal Division Veterans Association elected the following officers in the 2022 balloting. Terms will begin on July 1, 2022.

National Commander:

Robert K. Cowles — 11 LIB E/1/1 Cav

Sr. Vice-Commander:

Wayne M. Bryant — 196 LIB C/1/46 Inf

Jr. Vice-Commander:

John J. Head Jr — 11LIB E/4/21 Inf

Executive Council (11)

Lawrence Lennon (I) — 198 LIB A/1/6 Inf

PNC Ronald R. Ellis — 196 LIB C/1/46

PNC J. Reginald Horton (I) — 198 LIB A/1/6 Inf

PNC Larry Watson (I) — 198 LIB A/1/6 Inf

PNC Ronald L. Ward — 198 LIB A/1/6 Inf

PNC Larry Swank — 198 LIB A/1/6 Inf

Joe Kotarba (I) — 55 Arty G Btry

PNC David D. Eichhorn — 196 LIB HHC & C/3/21

Ron Nereson — 196 LIB C/1/46 Inf

PNC Richard L. Scales — 196 LIB B/3/21 Inf

Michael J. Murphy — 196 LIB C/3/21 Inf

Ron Nereson — 196 LIB C/1/46 Inf

In Memory

By PNC David W. Taylor



2021 ADVA National Reunion Rockettes: Jan DeGroot, Gena Bryant, Gina Watson, Linda Ward, Vonnie Gilmore. Photo by Dutch DeGroot.

I regret to inform you that PNC Larry Watson's wife, Georgina "Gina" Watson, passed away on April 3 in Palm Harbor, Florida. They had recently sold their house in Wooster, Ohio (Wayne County, where Larry was the county Veterans Service Officer for many years) and bought a house in Florida which Gina was thrilled with.

I remember Gina would be in pictures with other wives who had an informal group that would meet each annual ADVA reunion. She will be buried at the Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery, near Wooster on Friday, April 8. My wife and I will attend the viewing and pay our respects.

*Eternal rest grant unto Gina, O'Lord
And let perpetual light shine upon her.
May the souls of all the faithful departed,
Through the mercy of God, Rest in peace.*

Amen



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

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

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Cover: Americal Division memorial monument installed at Ft. Polk, Louisiana.

Adjutant's Notes

By Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant

Our new member gains for this reporting period are significantly down from the previous reporting period. I cannot recall a reporting period since I have held the office of National Adjutant that we have had so few new annual pay members. Perhaps a sign of the times as we age - a reluctance to join another veterans organization. Only one Americal Division veteran joined in the past three- months as an annual pay member. Three joined the Association for the new life membership rate. These three new life members joined in response to the national recruiting initiative by Editor--Chief Gary Noller in 2021. On a positive note, thirty-one active annual pay members paid the new Life member rate to upgrade. We had no re-instatements for the annual pay rates this period. Any former members who reinstate their membership at the new life member rates are counted in New Life Member counts.

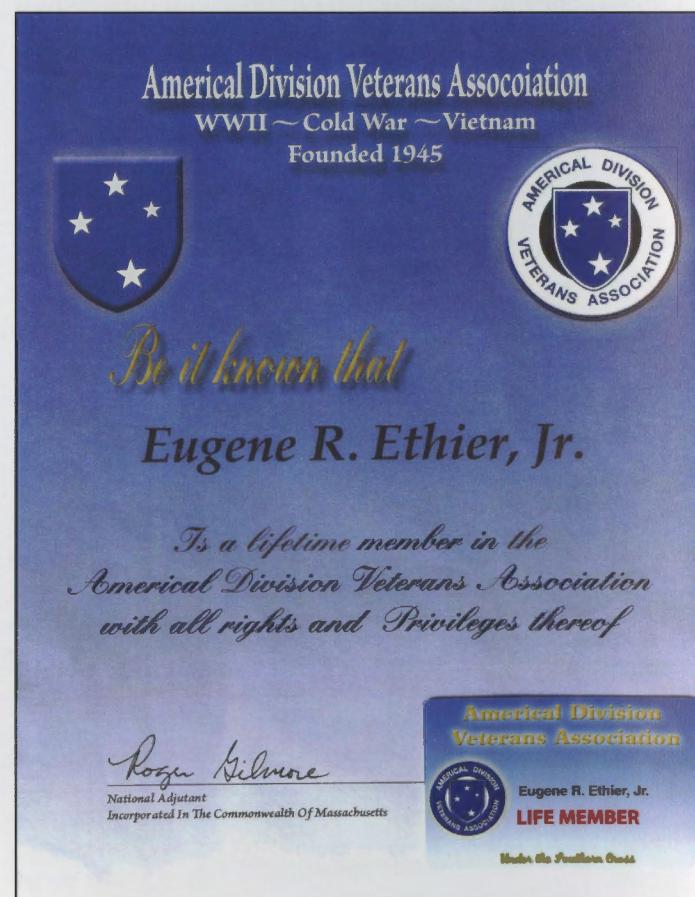
Our new Life member count has increased significantly over the past year. At this same point in time in 2021, just over 50 percent of our Vietnam veteran membership was for Life. As of this issue of the Journal, the count is right at 60 percent Vietnam Veteran life membership. Since January 2022, our dues income just from new life members is \$4,400.00. Compared to these members paying an annual pay rate, this is an increase of \$3,300.00 in dues revenue over that five-month period.

In the last issue of this publication, I mentioned the new ADVA life membership card and wall certificate suitable for framing you receive when you upgrade to life. Below is a picture of the wall certificate and permanent life member card. The wall certificate is a new format; the text at the top is changed to reflect Cold War as one of the eras of Americal Division activation.

The May 2022 annual pay renewals were mailed the last week of April 2022. If you know your annual pay renewal date is May 2022 (see the back cover of this issue for your renewal date) but have not received a renewal notice with remittance envelope, please contact me and I will mail you another. If your annual pay renewal date is May 2022 or earlier, please mail your annual dues payment asap.

The Taps listing is not as lengthy as past issues. Our list of deceased Americal Division Vietnam brothers is again longer than the WWII Americal Division veterans listing. Please notify me when you know of the passing of an ADVA member or Americal Division veteran.

I understand moving is a full-time job with many things to get done, but please try to remember to notify me when you move. The mailing address for address changes is on the back cover. Emailing or texting your address change is preferred.

New Members
Annual Pay

Russ Samuels

6/11th Arty
Loudon, TN
★ Roger GilmoreNew Members
Joined as Life

Don Counter

A/1/46th Inf
Huntsville, AL
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

William P. Herris

Div HDQ HHC
River Falls, WI
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Bill Pipkin

A/1/20th Inf
Hot Springs, AR
★ PNC Gary L. NollerNew Life
Members

Larry Andrzejewski

B/1/52nd Inf
Bellville, OH
★ Conrad Geibel

Donald E. Boito

3/82nd Arty Btry B
Foxfire Village, NC
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Donald J. Bugos

198th LIB
Canton, IL
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

John H. Dahl

3/16th Arty HHC
Greenfield, WI
★ Terry Babler

Danny Dingus

B/2/1st Inf
S Whitley, IN
★ James CrumNew Members
Annual Pay

David M. Fallon

A/5/46th Inf
Rutherford, NJ
★ Robert Wolf

David E. Hammond

C/5/46th Inf
Portland, OR
★ Michael Danker

Tom Helgeson

D/3/1st Inf
Eau Claire, WI
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

George E. Howe

Div HDQ HHC
Ipswich, MA
★ Bruce Buehrig

Leonard Howe

A/1/20th Inf
Kelso, WA
★ Ron Green

William T. Kushmaul

3/16th Arty Svc Btry
Pittsford, MI
★ Self

Charles McCoy

23rd Admin Co
Tampa, FL
★ Bob Kapp

Dale A. Meisel

23rd MP Co
Wescosville, PA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Darryl Merriam

14th CAB HHC
N Syracuse, NY
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

John D. Olson, Jr.

B/5/46th Inf
Broken Arrow, OK
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Richard W. Parker

A/1/6th Inf
Greenville, SC
★ Self

William Phelan

4/21st Inf
Muscatine, IA
★ PNC Ronald R. Ellis

Charles J. Proscio

D/5/46th Inf
Brooklyn, NY
★ Mike Smith

John Sears

D/4/3rd Inf
Hickory Hills, NC
★ Self

John J. Shay, Jr.

UAASSG
S. Salem, NY
★ Self

Robert Simpson

B/4/21st Inf
Lanoka Harbor, NJ
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Donald P. Sims

B/1/6th Inf
Thomasville, GA
★ Roger Gilmore

Michael T. Snidecor

MACV DXI
ISRAEL
★ Self

Joel A. Surratt

A/1/20th Inf
Kernersville, NC
★ Self

Michael P. Trimble

26th Cmbt Engrs Co A
San Diego, CA
★ Pete Messina

James Valenti

C/4/21st Inf
Batavia, OH
★ Roger Gilmore

Edward E. Walters

E Trp 1st Cav
Broomfield, CO
★ Jimmie Simmons

Daniel White

E/5/46th Inf
Ft Myers, FL
★ Self

John J. Williams

4/3rd Inf
W Seneca, NY
★ Bernie Chase

Jan Winters

D/1/20th Inf
Highland, CA
★ John W. Ewing

Grover E. Wright

1/14th Arty
Bassett, VA
★ LSelfTAPS LISTING;
MAY THEY REST IN
PEACE

Edward J. Holmes *

A/5/46th Inf
Atlanta, GA
August 5, 2021

Dick Kinder

198th LIB HHC
Procius, WV
March 27, 2022

Anthony J. Paluszek *

D/1/52nd Inf
Rindge, NH
April 26, 2020

Darryl T. Smith *

B/1/20th Inf
Gettysburg, PA
May 2, 2022

Tommy Thompson

2/1st Inf
Louisiana
December 23, 2021

Danny Turpen *

A/1/20th Inf
Bloomington, IN
July 2021

* ADVA Member

ADVA MEMBERSHIP
31 May 2022

World War II	217
Vietnam	2,396
Cold War	4
Associate Members	184
Total Members	2,801

Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore, Foundation President

Foundation Web Site

In May, Director Gary Noller, working with ADVA Historian and Foundation advisor Les Hines, added a new section of Americal Division Vietnam data to the Foundation web site. This data can be found under a link from the Americal History section on the home page. Begin at www.americalfoundation.org. Then, from the Americal History section, go to Vietnam War. In the middle of that page, find the link titled Vietnam War Document Extract Compilations. Click there and find the list of units with data compilations. Links are indexed by unit specialty, i.e., Aviation units, Artillery units, etc. Select a unit to view the data.

Les has collected a very large amount of documents over the many years he has been researching Americal Division units' history from Vietnam. This has been a huge undertaking for Les and the ADVA volunteers and contributors that have assisted Les in collecting and preparing the historical data for the documents. Many sources of data (Southern Cross publication and Americal Daily News Sheets as examples) are the input for these compilations, and most all the individual unit documents consist of several hundred pages. Most extracts contain a brief history of the formation of the Americal Division (in 1942) as well as individual unit history, from brigade level down to battalion/company level. Pictures accompany some stories.

Inquiries coming through the Contact Us link for ADVA are now mostly SPAM. A few requests are for Americal Division history information. Requests for division historical information are referred to ADVA Vietnam Historian Les Hines or other data experts for a response. Les may be reached by email at [REDACTED]

In the last issue of this publication, I reported on the Foundation web store ordering process and the lack of follow through by the ordering parties to complete payment before the order is shipped. We have yet to look at revamping the process to simplify the ordering instructions but will commit to an action plan by year end 2022.

Americal Legacy Calendar – 2022 Edition

Donations from the 2022 Americal Legacy Foundation calendar have slowed considerably since the last issue of the Americal Journal. Total donations year to date are just over \$28,000.00. We have seen such an enthusiastic response to this issue of the calendar, most likely the best since the calendar's inception, and appreciate each donation. We know there are other fundraising opportunities for the Foundation, but the overall success of the Americal Legacy calendar over the years and the tremendous response from ADVA members is the prime reason we continue the program. The Foundation could not fund the monuments and memorials grants programs without this financial support.

My supply of extra calendars is gone, all being mailed to new members and filling requests for additional calendars. Director Noller has additional copies of the 2022 issue if you want an additional copy for a fellow Americal Division veteran who was not on the mailing list. Please contact me or Gary to get another copy in the mail. I can be reached at gilmoraces@aol.com. Gary Noller can be reached at gnoller@aol.com.

Because of your generosity, the Foundation Memorial fund bank account balance is well funded. We have expenditures to settle before the fiscal year ends (June 30, 2022) estimated

to be \$4,500.00. Since the last issue of the Journal, we paid out just over \$4,800.00 for Americal Division monuments and placement work at national VA cemeteries. Your donation dollars are at work to memorialize the legacy of the Americal Division. Specific details on completed placement work are outlined in the section below on Americal Monument Programs.

Americal Monument Programs National VA Cemeteries

We are making considerable progress for the Americal monument placement program at the nation's VA cemeteries. We had successes in recent months; see below for more details. Proposals submitted to various sites around the country are awaiting review by the cemetery director or at the district office for approval by the district director. Proposals that are valued at less than \$10,000.00 can be approved by a district director. The National Cemetery Administration, which oversees all national VA cemeteries, seems to move directors around frequently so incoming directors have a myriad of priorities to address when assuming the position at a new location. Our proposal is not always high on the list for a new director, so we continue to follow-up with our POCs for progress reports.

We also find that the placement approval process is different for some national cemeteries. In a few cases, the cemetery director approves the placement proposal. Most situations require approval at the district level, and this is the time-consuming part of the process. It is possible our package goes to the district for approval, then sits at a desk for an indeterminate period of time before it is reviewed.

Since the inception of the VA National cemetery monuments placement initiative as our primary focus, we have successfully proposed and gotten approval to place at ten locations throughout the nation. The first one was completed in November 2017, the latest will be at Fort Jackson National Cemetery, South Carolina. One is in place at a state Veterans cemetery (Arkansas). We are under contract with Keith Monument, our vendor for the monument, for five more pieces. Placement proposal paperwork is submitted to eight national cemeteries, and we are awaiting approval from those locations. Our work continues with the ongoing financial support from all past donors.

Below is a recap of VA cemetery sites selected and where we stand with our current placement proposals. Comments on the Fort Snelling National Cemetery and Fort Bliss initiative provided by Director Gary Noller.

Washington Crossing National Cemetery (Newtown, PA)

Our POC at this site advises he sent a follow-up email to the district office in early June to inquire about the review and approval status on this proposal. The proposal package has been at the district office for a number of weeks now, but apparently no action yet.

Fort Jackson National Cemetery (Columbia, SC)

In late March, I traveled to Columbia and met with the Fort Jackson cemetery director to view the monument placement site and discuss planning and work requirements for contractors who would do the concrete base work. I also met with a local concrete contractor while there to discuss concrete base specifications and view the pour site. A local

monument company will do the monument installation work. The concrete base work was complete the end of April. The Americal monument was delivered to the cemetery the last week in May. We expect the monument company to have the installation onto the concrete base complete by mid-June.

Fort Snelling National Cemetery (Minneapolis, MN)

We are still waiting on word from the Department of Veterans Affairs as to the approval of this location for the installation of a memorial monument.

Fort Bliss National Cemetery (El Paso, TX)

Installation was complete the week before Memorial Day.

Americal Monument/Memorial Programs - Other Locations

Fort Polk, LA

The last issue of this publication noted the Americal Division monument installation was completed by the end of December 2021. At the time this article went to publication, I had no decent pictures of the monument in place. On my return trip from South Carolina the end of March, I passed through Fort Polk and shot a few pictures of the monument outside the post history museum.



Joint Base Cape Cod

In the 4th Quarter 2021 issue of this publication, I advised our POC for this initiative, Len Kondratiuk, is continuing to liaison with the facility commander for a proposal to place the completed plaque at this location. Our original intent was to place the plaque at Joint Base Cape Cod, but we determined this is not a doable project. The plan is to submit a proposal to the incoming commander of the Camp Edwards National Guard Training facility to place the completed plaque there. More on this initiative in future issues of this publication.

Missouri National Vietnam Memorial

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

Other Legacy Project

Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive Project

In the last issue of the Americal Journal, I wrote a short piece about a meeting with the Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive staff to discuss enhancements to the portal search process and future grant funding for more work on the Americal Division records. Foundation Director and First VP Gary Noller and I traveled to Lubbock, Texas for a May 4th meeting with Dr. Steven Maxner and his staff to go over progress and what we expect to get done with future efforts on Americal Division materials they have on hand. ADVA Vietnam Historian Les Hines has been instrumental in this archive process, as his data collection is the foundation for much of the Americal Division records that have been archived within the Special Collections Library at Texas Tech. Les was not able to travel to Lubbock for the meeting but joined us by telephone with his input.

From that meeting, we agreed to fund another non-endowed gift agreement for immediate work on the Americal materials provided by Les. Since we already have a program specific agreement in place, there is no need to enter into a new gift agreement with Texas Tech Foundation. Our grant amount for \$10,000.00 to cover the coming academic year was mailed to the school in mid-June. The work to review, scan and digitize the documents on hand and any additional documents provided by Les will be done by student interns.

During the meeting, Les provided some details on unit extracts, compilations, and other operations summaries from Americal Vietnam records he would like to have added to the Americal portal at the Vietnam Archive. We discussed lifting restrictions on copyrighted documents within the Americal portal. Gary advised the copyright restrictions now imposed on some items within the portal can be lifted via a signed agreement with the Vietnam Archive. Dr. Maxner discussed another option for viewing restricted documents thru an individual account registration within the portal. The registration would require agreement not to share restricted document information.

Another key takeaway from the meeting is the possibility of creating an Americal Legacy endowment. Dr. Maxner discussed his thoughts on a permanent endowment from the Americal Legacy Foundation. A gift of this type would ensure that funds are on hand into perpetuity for funding any work on Americal Division records. An endowment should earn income from investments and help Texas Tech Archive management raise capital for continuing the work there. An endowment benefits both parties. The endowing party achieves earnings on principal, the Texas Tech foundation has permanent funds to work with and can leverage endowments to attract other donors. An endowment does come with restrictions on spendable income and preservation of principal. In late May, Legacy Foundation directors approved the proposal to establish an Americal Legacy endowment at Texas Tech for ongoing work to archive Americal Division records from the Vietnam War. Our initial financial commitment to the endowment is \$10,000.00. We expect this permanent Americal endowment to be in place by year end. I encourage all ADVA members who share our vision for the endowment funding the preservation of the Americal Division Vietnam legacy consider any donation to the endowment fund.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Memorial Day 2022

By Terrie Sautter



American veterans Earle Gleason and Bob Pace presented the Americal Division arrangement during the annual Memorial Day ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC. Earle met Bob on Veterans Day 2021, and Bob later joined the Americal organization. He was kind enough to join Earle to carry the arrangement during the procession.

While listening to the ceremony speakers, Earle and Bob had a chance to talk about their service and discovered that they were both mortarmen - 81 mm - as well as RTOs. Coincidence??

As fresh flower wreaths proved to be quite expensive the past few years, I created an Americal arrangement from silk flowers for a fraction of the cost and which can be used in the future. As long as Earle is at The Wall, so will the Americal be represented.

Americal Monument Completed Ft. Bliss National Cemetery

By Gary L. Noller

The Americal Monument at Ft. Bliss, Texas was completed the week before Memorial Day. This is the result of almost 12 months of work and is another accomplishment of the Americal Legacy Foundation's memorial program.

In the summer of 2022 I identified several National Cemeteries that looked to be good candidates for the installation of an Americal Division memorial monument. These cemeteries all have current memorial walkways or other means to display monuments donated by veterans organizations. Ft. Bliss, Texas displayed several monuments in the median of the main road entering the cemetery.

I made contact with the cemetery director through email and phone contact. Francisco Gonzalez, Jr. began his duties as cemetery director at Ft. Bliss National Cemetery just a few weeks before my contact. He is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and

held previous posts with the VA cemetery administration.

Roger Gilmore submitted a formal memorial construction application package to Gonzalez. Ft. Bliss uses a design that the VA calls the Standard Memorial Monument (SMM). This design has been used by the Americal Legacy Foundation in nine other memorial installations.

Director Gonzalez approved the plans in October. Roger and I then visited Ft. Bliss a few days before Thanksgiving. We met with Gonzalez and reviewed the plans and procedures. Before we left we picked out a spot for the memorial location.

Things slowed down a bit during the holidays. The next step was to find an El Paso contractor that would construct a concrete foundation for the memorial and then place the memorial stone on the concrete foundation. I talked with many contractors but few showed any interest. One stated that he was concerned about doing work on federal property and the restrictions that may be encountered.

In March I made contact with Louie Zamorano of Zamorano's Monument Company. I explained the scope of the project and after a few questions Zamorano stated, "We can do that for you." Zamorano's is a family owned and operated company and Louie quickly recognized our need and pledged to get the job done. He said, "We have done work there before. I know some of the people there."

I notified Roger that we made arrangements for installation by an El Paso contractor. Roger then issued an order to Keith Monument Co. in Kentucky to ship an Americal Monument to Ft. Bliss. It arrived two weeks later.

In April I notified Louie Zamorano that the monument arrived in a storage yard at the cemetery and that he could proceed with its installation. He asked if there were any special requirements established by the cemetery administration. I told him what I had been told by Director Gonzalez, "Do the work during normal business hours, do not block roads, and be respectful of the ceremonies taking place on the grounds."

Zamorano completed the work on May 25 and sent a photo showing a flawless installation. Gonzalez acknowledged the completed work with the following words, "Thank you and your organization, Americal Legacy Foundation, for donating this monument. The Americal monument is a great addition to Fort Bliss National Cemetery."

Gonzalez notified us of approval for the monument in just a few weeks after receiving our application. This was a great benefit because sometimes approvals take many months. For example, I am also working on a memorial installation at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota. The local administration approved the work about a year ago and sent it to higher headquarters for approval. We have heard nothing back from them in almost a year.

Roger and I agree that one of the keys to success is a face-to-face visit with cemetery directors. This seems to give credibility to our intentions and also allows us to answer questions about our design and installation procedures. Ron Ellis has made several face-to-face visits in the recent months and has also conducted telephone contacts to determine available locations for Americal memorial monuments.

Members have also pitched in and helped with installations in their local cemeteries. We have current interest in memorial in California, Pennsylvania, Oklahoma, and Kansas. My next effort will be directed to the National Cemetery at Ft. Sill. Sill is only a few hours drive for me to make for a visit.

Unit Extracts Now Available On The Internet

By Leslie Hines, Vietnam Historian

The Americal Division Veteran's Association Historical Data Base contains many news articles, reports, unit albums, casualty reports, KIA information, videos and maps relating to units that served with the Americal Division.

My work on this effort began way back in the 1990s. Many items came from veterans sharing their news articles with me or from tedious efforts to locate and transcribe the text and images from microfilm copies. Today the data base now holds approximately 40% of the stories of our service in the Americal Division and supporting units. But it is the result of my best effort.

I have realized that it might be difficult for a veteran to find stories about their battalion from the data base if they did not have some computer skills. This compilation may come too late for some, but it is always something that I hoped that would be done by a unit's web master or some other helpful soul as I continued to add more material to the data base. But it is time that I start making the effort. If for no other reason than to illustrate what can be done if someone makes the effort to compile their own unit stories from the data base.

I refer to the compilations as Extracts. I created extracts for the following units assigned to the Americal Division in Vietnam:

Aviation Units: 71st AHC, 174th AHC, 176th AHC, 132nd ASHC, 178th ASHC, A/123rd Avn, B/123rd Avn. D/1/1st Cav, F/8th Cav.

Artillery Units: 1/14th Arty, 1/82nd Arty, 3/16th Arty, 3/18th Arty, 3/82nd Arty, 6/11th Arty, G/55th Arty, 6/56th Arty.

Cavalry Units: 1st/1st Cav, E/1/1st Cav, F/17th Cav, H/17th Cav.

Infantry Units: 1/6th Inf, 1/20th Inf, 1/46th Inf, 1/52nd Inf, 2/1st Inf, 3/1st Inf, 3/21st Inf, 4/3rd Inf, 4/21st Inf, 4/31st Inf, 5/46th Inf, G/75th Inf.

Engineer Units: 19th Engr, 26th Engr, 39th Engr, 9th USMC Engr.

Additional Units: 723rd Maint, 23rd MP, 23rd S&T, 523rd Sig, 6th Spt.

Units that are yet to be completed: Primo Avn, 116th Avn, 161st Avn, 282nd Avn, 48th Avn, 11th LIB Avn, 196th LIB Avn Charger, 198th LIB Avn Bayonet, 236th Med, 54th Med, Med. Hospitals, 588th Maint.

I open each extract with a brief explanation about items that will be found in the data base. The following is the wording that is associated with the 1/46th Infantry

This compilation limited to only news stories. These come from "Pacific Stars & Stripes" and the "Army Reporter" which published many of the articles provided by the Americal Division Information Office. It also includes brigade command newsletters (198th/196th LIB), the division daily news sheets, the Americal Division magazines (12 issues), the Americal Division Book (printed in July 1970), and 117 issues of the "Southern Cross" published in Vietnam were included.

See examples of extracts from the Army Reporter on page 15 of this issue of the *Americal Journal*.

Notable sources of stories that were not included in the compilation were the ADVA Newsletter/Journal stories and the 1/46th Battalion Newsletters. Some of the ADVA "Newsletters" have been scanned as read only images. The issues of the ADVA "Journal" is searchable and currently is complete.

It would be possible to select many more articles if I had time to research stories that did not provide the company name. For example a story might only refer to the action of a unit of the Americal Division or the 198th/196th Bde engaging the enemy. If the story indicated their were 23 enemy killed and a cache of 12 B-40 rockets I might be able to identify that the company was from the 1/46th Inf. Bn. Without this determination I would not be able to include this story in the compilation.

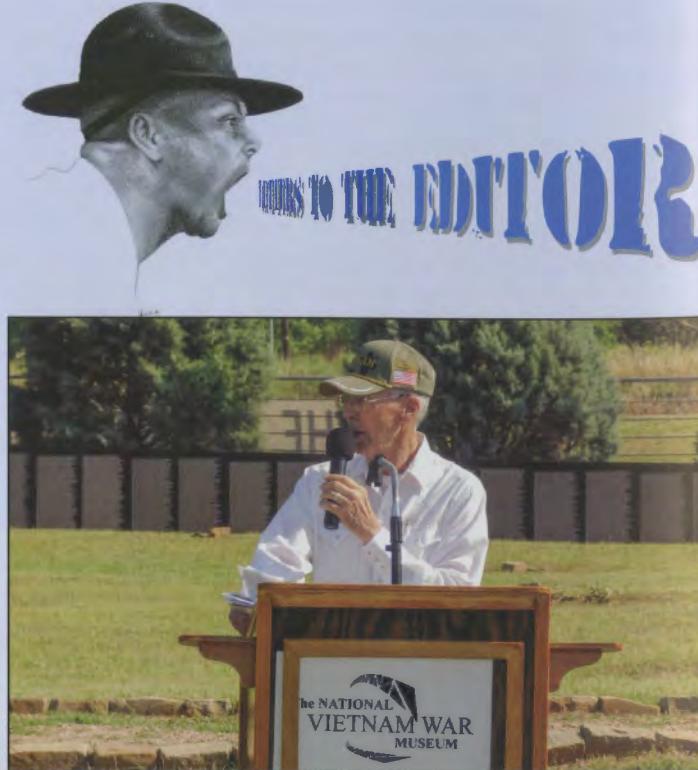
Note: References to photos may indicate that we have an image taken from microfilm or xerox copy. These may be found in PDF files in the historical data base or you may request copies of the images the ADVA historian.

Three tour books for the 1/46th Inf. Bn. have been located. These books are similar to high school year books. These were created under the direction of the officer assigned duties as historian for the battalion. A copy from 1969 and two from 1971 for the 1/46th Inf. Bn. have been located and copies can be shared electronically or reprinted. It is possible that the books were printed by Stars & Stripes in Japan and it might be possible to locate additional copies in Japan.

Also, there were battalion newsletters printed for infantry battalions in the 198th/196th Inf. Bde. as well as a newsletter for the 198th Inf. Bde. To date we have not been able to locate many of the 198th/196th Inf. Bde newsletters (Bayonet/Charger). There have only been a few of the 1/46th newsletters located to date. Most 1/46 Inf. Bn. Battalion S2/S3 images are available for Vietnam (Thanks to Bill and Ann Schneider).

Some OP Plan and OP Ord map overlays are available as well. I have not been able to locate quarterly historical summaries like the ones that were available for the 1/6th Inf. Bn. Another source that has not been worked is the news releases sent to home town newspapers with stories about our veterans.

Many of the unit extract compilations are hundreds of pages long. They may be viewed on americalfoundation.org. Go to Americal History and then to Vietnam War and then to Extracts and select the unit of interest. The files are in .pdf format.



National VN War Museum Treasurer Jim Messinger gives opening remarks.

Dear editor,

The National Vietnam War Museum, located near Mineral Wells, Texas, hosted a ceremony to update and honor The Wall on May 28, 2022. The museum grounds features a one-half scale version of the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C. It also has a wide variety of displays of military mementos and vehicles.

The ceremony honored two Vietnam War soldiers whose names were added to the Wall since the last update. They are the following:

ANDREW J SMITH, PFC, U.S. Army, Grabill, Indiana, Panel 36E, Line 86 and LARRY RTENDA, PFC, U.S. Marine Corps, Clarksburg, West Virginia, Panel W30, Line 70.

Two U.S. Air Force service members were repatriated in 2020 and change of status was updated. They are the following:

PAUL A AVOLESE, MAJ, U.S. Air Force, East Meadow, N.Y., Panel 23E, Line 25, and ALVA R KROGMAN, 1LT, U.S. Air Force, Worland, Wyoming, Panel 14E, Line 4.

ADVA member and 174th Assault Helicopter Company (AHC) pilot Jim Messinger was Master of Ceremonies for the event. Jim is the museum foundation treasurer and oversees much of the day-to-day site work for the museum's ongoing work to tell the story of the Vietnam War.

The keynote speaker for the ceremony was Neil Graham Hansen. Mr. Hansen's topic was "The Last Plane Out of Cambodia." He spent more than a decade in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War as a captain for Air America. His stories of his flying adventures highlighted how harrowing and dangerous the job was and was punctuated at key moments with funny stories.

The ceremony closed with the playing of each service branch's song, then a rifle salute and taps by a local VFW and AMVETs post. The museum will have a grand opening ceremony on June 25, 2022, for its new permanent display building.

Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant



11th Light Infantry Brigade Veterans Roger Gilmore, Jose Martinez, Tommy Acosta.

Dear editor,

Attached is a photo of an "art therapy" wood carving I did back in the early 1980s. It is called "Mac's Hit!" It was the most evocative piece from my old "G.I. Series" of woodcarvings.

In the summer of 1970, SP4 John "Mac" McCormick, a grenadier, and SP4 JB Akins, an RTO, from Echo Recon, 1/46 Infantry, were on a daytime OP when two Vietcong soldiers sneaked up on them and shot Mac in the back. JB grabbed Mac and they came clambering down the hill covered in blood, JB shouting "Mac's hit! Mac's hit!"

We managed to clear the high ground and get in a Dust-off assisted by two Huey Bravo gunships to get Mac out. I was later told over the battalion radio the good and the bad news: Mac had survived, but that he probably would be a paraplegic and in a wheelchair for the rest of his life.

For over forty years I thought that. Beat hell out of myself as his Platoon Leader with a million "I shouldas" and "If onlys". Thankfully Mac was the only man I had wounded in Recon, and we had no Recon soldiers killed (although that extremely good luck did not prevail when I took over Delta Company 1/46 in November and December.)

Once when I was lamenting this fact over the phone to SGT Earl Kline, who sadly passed recently, Earl said, "L.T., do you mean John McCormick? (Yes.) Oh, Mac has some bad back problems, but he runs an auto wrecker truck in Oklahoma! He has for many years. He's not in a wheelchair!"

I was so massively relieved that I burst into tears. A couple years later, Mac and his wife Christie came to an Echo Company/Echo Recon biannual reunion in Branson, Missouri. He was walking and married and he and his wife had two daughters, all of which were miracles (!). I was able to present them with this old carving. God indeed works in mysterious and wondrous ways.

There are remarkable similarities between my old wood carving and there recently dedicated 196th



Lt. Inf. Bde. memorial statue at the National Infantry Museum at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Whenever you post photos of the beautiful new statue, I remember this carving and those events when "Mac (was) hit!", emotionally more than intellectually. The sculptor did a magnificent job on our 196th LIB memorial.

Tom Schmitz; 1/46 Infantry

Dear editor,

I am searching for friends of my father. He passed away on March 15, 2019. His military information is: SP4 Gerald J. Butler from N. Oxford, MA.

Served March 1969 through January 1971 with Co. C, 4/3rd Inf., 11th Lt. Inf. Bde. "Jungle Warriors".

I've been looking through all his old photos that he never showed any of us and I found a photo with three men hanging around a Jeep smiling. On the back it has the names: "George Boykin, Dave Limberg and Shorty in Quan Ngai, 1970". If any of you three are out there please contact me, I would LOVE to talk with you!

Other places listed in his photos: Duc Pho, Chu Lai Beach and Mt. Montazooma.

Dan Butler, [REDACTED]



Dear editor,

I have been on a search for four American Vietnam War veterans who helped my cousin, Thanh, in Vietnam in 1967-69. He is getting older and feels a pressing need to find the soldiers that gave him food as a young boy in exchange for translation services. He wants to thank them for their generosity and for saving his family's life. That second chance lead to a life well lived. He has a successful furniture business, a happy wife, five children, and lots of grandchildren. But he is unsettled with this part of his life.



The four men he is looking for are: 1. L.T.N HENRICSON - Head of Division 5 during the period 1967-1968, based in TANDA, VIETNAM. After the war, all I know is that he went back to California. 2. Sergeant LUCKY - Driver of Division 5 for Lieutenant Henricson 3. L.T.N RAY during 1968-1969 4. CAPTAIN SNEAD during 1969-1970

He can't remember their first names, but remembers that they were part of the Army or the Marines. Except Sergeant Lucky, the other three were Head of Division over the years. They were stationed at TANDA base, south of Đức Phổ (Núi Dâu). Division 5 was either psychological warfare division or psych ward. He can't remember for sure. These men gave Thanh the nickname "Tom" and took a couple of photos of him that I've provided.

If you can help lead me to the right people that can locate these veterans, please feel free to call me on my cell phone [REDACTED]

Lieu Suss; Huntington Beach, CA

[Editor's note: Most likely, Division 5 refers to S-5, Civil-Military Operations.]



AMERICAL DIVISION VETERANS ASSOCIATION ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM 2022

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. You may register online and pay by credit card at on the reunion web site at www.afr-reg.com/americal2022 (3.5% will be added to total). You may also register by completing the form below. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before August 2, 2022. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.**Norfolk, VA 23510**
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Check #	Date Received		
Inputted	Nametag Completed		

CUT-OFF DATE IS 8/2/22 – reservations accepted after that date by space available			
	Price Per	# of People	Total
TOURS			
THURSDAY 8/25: City Tour/Smithsonian Natural History Museum - Member/Spouse/Guest	\$58		\$
THURSDAY 8/25: City Tour/Smithsonian Natural History – WWII Member/Spouse or Escort	\$0		\$0
THURSDAY 8/25: Meet and Greet – Member/Spouse/Guest	\$26		
THURSDAY 8/25: Meet and Greet – WWII Member/Spouse or Escort	\$0		
FRIDAY 8/26: US Army Museum/Smithsonian American History Museum -Member/Spouse/Guest	\$57		\$
FRIDAY 8/26: US Army Museum/Smithsonian American History Museum- WWII Member/Spouse or Escort	\$0		\$0
SATURDAY 8/27: Vietnam, Korean and WWII Memorial Tour - Member/Spouse/Guest	\$37		\$
SATURDAY 8/27: Vietnam, Korean and WWII Memorial Tour – WWII Member/Spouse or Escort	\$0		\$0
MEALS			
SATURDAY 8/27: BANQUET - Please select your entrée(s)			
• Chicken Parmesan	\$49		\$
• Sliced London Broil	\$49		\$
• Vegetarian Entrée	\$49		\$
WWII Vet, Spouse and/or Escort Banquet Dinner at no charge – Please select an entrée:	\$0		\$0
<input type="checkbox"/> Beef <input type="checkbox"/> Chicken <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian			
REQUIRED PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE			
WWII Americal Veteran plus Spouse or escort free	\$0		\$0
ADVA Member	\$25		\$
Non-member, Fee includes one-year ADVA membership dues & benefits	\$35		\$
Spouse and/or Guests (each)	\$25		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME AS YOU WANT YOUR NAMETAG TO READ

MAIN ATTENDEE: FIRST _____ LAST _____
UNIT _____ YEARS WITH UNIT (YYYY) _____ 1st TIME ATTENDEE? YES NO

Please indicate your era - WWII Panama Vietnam

SPOUSE/ESCORT NAMES (IF ATTENDING) _____

GUEST NAMES _____

MAIN ATTENDEE STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PH. NUMBER (_____) - _____ EMAIL _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____
(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly with hotel)MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? (Every effort will be made to provide this service). YES NO ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____
ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES NO ARE YOU FLYING? DRIVING? RV?

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-4:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays).** Call _____ to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion.

Sample Extracts From Army Reporter

See a related article by Les Hines, ADVA Vietnam Historian, on page 9 of this issue of the *Americal Journal* magazine. The extracts shown below are taken from the Army Reporter. - Editor

25Jan71- Vietnam communique Jan. 4-10

Soldiers from the **23rd Infantry Division** (Airmobile [since when?]) killed 13 enemy soldiers Jan. 9 in southern Military Region 1. A reconnaissance element of the **1st Bn., 46th Inf.**, killed five enemy soldiers southwest of Tam Ky. Soldiers of Co. A, **1st Bn., 6th Inf.**, killed five and detained two enemy soldiers in action southeast of Chu Lai. Elements of the **1st Bn., 52nd Inf.**, killed three enemy soldiers northwest of Quang Ngai City. In the south of Quang Tin Province the evening of Jan. 9, an element of the **198th Inf., Bde., 23rd Infantry Division**, operating 14 miles southwest of Tam Ky with a Republic of Vietnam Regional Force element, engaged an unknown-size enemy force with organic weapons. Enemy losses were 14 killed and seven individual weapons captured. There were no friendly casualties.

In Quang Ngai Province Military Region 1 Jan. 6, an element of the **11th Inf. Bde.**, while on patrol 17 miles southeast of Quang Ngai City, engaged an undetermined-size enemy force. The action was supported by helicopter gunships and artillery. Enemy losses were seven killed and one individual weapon captured. U.S. forces sustained no casualties. Also in Quang Ngai Province shortly after noon, elements of the **198th Inf. Bde.** engaged an estimated 10 enemy while on patrol nine miles north of Quang Ngai City. Enemy losses were one killed and one individual weapon captured. U.S. casualties were four wounded. One former enemy soldier acting as a scout was killed.

Troopers of the **23rd** killed five enemy soldiers and captured 1,000 pounds of rice in the southern part of Military Region 1 Jan. 6. A reconnaissance platoon of the **2nd Bn., 1st Inf.**, while on a combat sweep northwest of Tam Ky, discovered an additional 200 pounds of corn in a burned-out enemy structure. In other **23rd** action, **Co. A, 5th Bn., 46th Inf.**, discovered an enemy weapons cache while on patrol northwest of Chu Lai. The enemy hoard consisted of two machine guns, three automatic weapons, 25 mortar rounds three rocket-propelled grenades, three cases of AK47 ammunition and 600 machine gun rounds. The captured equipment was evacuated to Chu Lai.

A short time before, northwest of Tam Ky, a unit discovered an additional 500 pounds of rice, which was evacuated to Duc Duc. Soldiers from the **23rd** killed seven enemy soldiers in the division's area of operation in Military Region 1 Jan. 7. Three of the enemy were killed by air crews of the division's **116th Assault Helicopter Co.** as the choppers were flying to Hawk Hill. **Co. C, 1st Bn., 52nd Inf.**, killed two enemy in an action south of Chu Lai. The other two enemy soldiers were killed in separate actions involving **Co. D, 3rd Bn., 1st Inf.**, southwest of Quang Ngai City and **Co. C, 4th Bn., 3rd Inf.**, west of Duc Pho.

In Military Region 1 shortly after noon Jan. elements of the **4th Bn., 21st Inf.**, detonated two booby traps. Two

U.S. soldiers were killed and 12 wounded in the incidents southwest of Duc Pho in Quang Ngai Province. In other **23rd** action near Duc Pho, elements of the **4th Bn., 3rd Inf.**, killed five enemy soldiers. **Co. B** engaged two enemy, killing both, while operating west of town. Three enemy were found hiding in a tunnel, also west of Duc Pho, and were killed by men from the battalion's **Co. C**.

In Military Region 1 Jan. 10, elements of the **23rd** killed 10 enemy soldiers and captured more than 1,000 pounds of rice. The division's **11th Inf. Bde.** killed seven enemy soldiers. A reconnaissance element of the **1st Bn., 20th Inf.**, killed five and men from the **4th Bn., 3rd Inf.**, killed two. Over 1,000 pounds of spoiled rice was discovered by **Co. C, 1st Bn., 52nd Inf.**, of the division's **198th Inf., Bde.** in a tunnel and bunker complex south of Chu Lai. The rice and the complex were destroyed. Other brigade elements killed three enemy soldiers in scattered actions.

219Oct70 Vietnam communique Sept. 28-Oct. 4

Five miles southwest of Tam Ky in I Military Region Oct. 4, elements of the **Americal Division's 1st Squadron, 1st Armored Cav.**, and a Regional Forces company received an undetermined number of mortar rounds and a ground attack from an estimated enemy company. Gunships were called in and soldiers from the **1st Armored Cav.** reacted in a two-hour contact. Eleven enemy soldiers were killed and one individual weapon and an RPG round were captured. Division soldiers supported by gunships from the **123rd Combat Avn. Bn.**, engaged an enemy force of undetermined size eight miles north of Duc Pho in I Military Region Oct. 3. Men of the **1st Bn., 20th Inf.** killed seven enemy, detained three suspects and captured one individual weapon.

05May69 Vietnam communique April 14 to April 20

Soldiers of the **Americal Division** found plenty to keep them occupied during the week. A reconnaissance patrol from the **4th Bn., 21st Inf.** called in air strikes late April 18 on an NVA force moving through the jungle about 10 miles west-northwest of Duc Pho. A first-light search the next day revealed 18 NVA bodies.

In an action about 15 miles northwest of Duc Pho, gunship crews of the **123rd Aviation Bn.**, reported killing 11 enemy in two contacts April 19. On April 16, an element of the **1st Bn., 20th Inf.** was protecting the Sa Huynh Bridge 12 miles southeast of Duc Pho on Highway 1. An estimated 40 NVA sappers attacked the bridge in an abortive attempt to blow it up. As **ETroop, 1st Cav.** arrived to reinforce the infantrymen, the enemy retreated, leaving three dead comrades behind.

Soldiers of the **1st Bn., 46th Inf.** observed an enemy force moving through the jungle-covered foothills 14 miles southwest of Tam Ky April 19. The called in air strikes on the enemy and later counted the bodies of 14 enemy in a sweep of the area. An April 15 medcap by soldiers of the **2nd Bn., 1st Inf.** treated more than 170 Vietnamese civilians in a village 17 miles northwest of Tam Ky. One of the villagers told the Americans of an enemy rice cache that yielded three tons of rice.

From the editor:

Les Hines, ADVA Vietnam Historian, prepared the map displayed on the previous two pages. It shows locations and notes related to Operation Lamar Plain.

This battle took place in May 1969 in Quang Nam Province in the area to the south and west of the provincial capital of Tam Ky. Much action was near the district capital of Tien Phouc. It involved forces of the Americal Division and the 101st Airborne Division.

Fighting was extremely heavy with many casualties on all sides. Several American soldiers earned the Medal of Honor during this battle. Americans were successful in defeating the enemy but only after a protracted battle lasting several weeks.

The map shows notes of battle events and locations. Tien Phouc can be located just above the horizontal center line about one-fourth of the distance from the left edge of the map. A road can be seen in the direction from Tien Phouc and to the upper right of the map. This is the road to Tam Ky. Chu Lai is on the coast almost due east of Tien Phouc.

Several years ago, Rick Olson, former National Finance Officer for the ADVA, completed extensive research on Operation Lamar Plain. He wrote a story published in the Americal Newsletter, forerunner of the *Americal Journal* magazine. It is reprinted at this time and coincides with the action shown on the map prepared by Les Hines. Olson's story details the action of Captain Kern Dunagan, commander of Company A, 1/46 Infantry, and his receipt of the Medal of Honor.

Hines' map shows the locations of Medal of Honor actions of six soldiers. The are Thomas Joseph McMahon, A/2/1/196 Inf., 19 March 1969; CPT Kern Wayne Dunagan, A/1/46/198 Inf., 14 May 1969; Daniel John Shea, HHC/3/21/196 Inf., 14 May 1969; James C. McClosughan, HHC/3/21/196 Inf., 13-15 May 1969; Santiago Jesus Erevia, C/1/501 Inf., 21 May 1969; Joseph Guy La Pointe, B/2/17 Cav., 2 June 1969. Erevia and La Pointe served with the 101st Airborne Division.

To assist with the defense of the district and provincial capitals, the Army placed the first brigade of the 101st Airborne division under the control of the Americal Division and ordered them to the area of Tam Ky. This unit came with much needed aviation assets to include air cavalry.

As Olson tells near the end of his story, this action received very little publicity at the time. Most likely the big news of the day involved the third brigade of the 101st Airborne Division. This unit was heavily involved at Dong Ap Bia, also known as Hill 937, also known as Hamburger Hill. This action, known as Operation Apache Snow, battled enemy forces that held extensive positions on Hamburger Hill. It received daily media attention and became an iconic battle of the Vietnam War.

Operation Lamar Plain Story

By Rick Olson

This story is about a combat event that happened in May, 1969 in the area around the fire support base named LZ Professional. It is a reconstruction of events from declassified official records as well as the personal recollections of veterans from Americal units who were involved.

Sources include Americal Division after-action reports, 1/46 Infantry daily staff journals, the Operation Lamar Plain after-action report filed by the 101st Airborne Division, Medal of Honor documentation, and an August 1993 Vietnam Magazine article titled Recon Zone Alpha written by John Hayes.

US Infantry Battalion Under Siege

On May 12, 1969, the North Vietnam Army (NVA) began a major offensive throughout the Americal Division area of operations at LZ's Baldy, Center, and Professional. One of the most intense attacks occurred in the "free-fire zone" around LZ Professional patrolled by the 1/46 Infantry. The attack on LZ Professional escalated into a Tactical Emergency (TAC-E.) on May 15, 1969 when a full airmobile brigade of the 101st Airborne Division was dispatched into the area.

The 101st Airborne's, 1st Brigade brought a force of two infantry battalions, the 2nd Squadron /17th Air Cav, teams of OH-6A "Loaches" armed with 7.65 mm miniguns, AH-1G Cobras (aerial rocket artillery), a 105mm Artillery battery, a company of UH-1 Hueys, and a section of CH-47 Chinooks and a team of Air Force forward controllers.

The 1/46 Inf. battalion was placed under the operational control (OPCON) of the 101st brigade, which was in-turn OPCON to the Americal Division. May 15 became the start of a joint Americal/101st Airborne effort named Operation Lamar Plain that continued until mid-August 1969.

From May 12 to the conclusion of Operation Lamar Plain, US casualties counted to 125 US KIA, 460 US WIA, and 1 US MIA. Most of these counts were sustained in intense combat during the month of May.

The Americal units directly affected were the 1/46th Infantry companies and C Battery, 1st/14th Arty, which maintained 105mm artillery atop LZ Professional. The 101st Airborne Division units directly affected were the infantry companies of two battalions, the 1st/501st Inf. and 1st/502 Inf., a helicopter assault unit, B Troop 2nd Squadron /17th Air Cavalry.

A Massive Show of NVA Firepower and Endurance

On a moonless night, at 0220 hours on May 12, 1969, LZ Professional, defended by Co. D, 1/46 Inf. and Btry. C, 1/14 Arty, was surprise attacked an NVA sapper unit from the V-16 NVA Sapper Battalion. On the morning after the attack the remains of twenty NVA sappers killed in action were left stranded in the perimeter line barbed wire.

The LZ received a continuous barrage of incoming

mortar rounds and rocket fire from a recoilless on the adjacent hill 497. The intense incoming prevented carcasses of the dead NVA from being removed from the LZ's perimeter wire. They were left to rot in the hot sun leaving a horrible smell and sight.

As the day wore on, conditions on LZ Professional had become severe. Any medical evacuation required significant air support to temporarily douse incoming fire. Defense of the LZ required constant day and night air support, including the awesome firepower of AC-47 "Spooky" fixed wing gunships circling the hill.

The NVA also set up a substantial battery in the area immediately surrounding the LZ. An estimated 15 to 20 anti-aircraft (12.7mm) positions which were strategically placed where two or more guns could fire simultaneously against aircraft. For several days, anything airborne near the LZ would face a virtual continuous wall of salvos. As an aircraft flew over the area it would be fired at from one or more NVA guns and when it would move out of range of one NVA gun, another would begin firing from an adjoining position, and so on.

NVA anti-aircraft firepower was so effective that in the period of just a few days, it disabled most of the B, 2/17 Air Cav unit. On one day, the damage to B, 2/17 aircraft was so severe that only one helicopter out of 28 aircraft was reported in flying condition. (For more information about 101st Airborne aircraft damage, refer to the "Recon Zone Alpha" article mentioned above.)

Overwhelming Odds for A Co. 1st/46th Inf.

At the same time that LZ Professional was under heavy fire, NVA units from the 3rd Regiment, 2nd NVA Division stunned outnumbered 1/46th Infantry line companies fighting near the firebase. A severe attack began at 0810 hours on May 13, 1969 when the 3rd Battalion of the 3rd NVA Regiment (estimated to be 250 to 300 men) engaged Co. A, 1/46th Inf. and the attached E. Co. Recon platoon, a total US force of 91 men.

The Battle Continued for 35 Hours

On May 13, Co. A, under the command of Captain Kern T. Dunagan, was attempting to clear a high ground area immediately north of LZ Professional when the NVA engaged. Throughout the day, Co. A took intense fire. It was able to medevac out some wounded around noon.

By 1645 hours an emergency re-supply helicopter landed in the perimeter. Its assistant pilot was shot in the head and later declared KIA. At the same time, Dunagan was knocked flat on his back and seriously wounded with a mortar fragment in the jaw.

Under this attack, Dunagan was forced to pull his men into a defense position for the night. He assured that all dead and wounded were inside of the perimeter. For the rest of that day and night, any further medical evacuations for Co. A became impossible to accomplish.

On May 14, at 0530 hours, an AC-47 "Spooky" was diverted from the defense of LZ Professional to support Co. A. It enabled a medevac mission to evacuate one US KIA and 13 US WIA. Dunagan's company was in still in serious trouble and faced great danger.

The enemy was reported to have behaved as if losses were unimportant. The NVA had moved in so close in proximity to Co. A that a US soldier's ability to fire at the enemy was severely restricted in order to avoid hitting comrades.

Dunagan had correctly sensed that Co. A was being attacked by a major NVA force. He realized that he must again link up with the Echo Recon platoon which had been separated from his company. He personally began walking point for the company, which was highly unusual for a company commander. He established the link-up with the recon platoon by 0930 hours.

Cpt. Dunagan was wounded for a second time by AK 47 fire while he dragged

a disabled soldier to safety. Despite his inability to speak clearly because of the jaw wound, Dunagan kept calling in air strikes.

The strikes delivered napalm and 500 pound bombs on enemy positions.

Co. C Attempts a Futile Link-up With Co. A

At 1105 hours, Co. C, 1/46 Infantry was ordered to force march to the aid of Co. A and to link-up by 1500 hours. Co. C encountered intense mortar and automatic weapons fire and took numerous casualties. At one point a platoon of Co. C got to within 20-50 meters of Co. A, but could reach no further.

Dunagan tried to move his men closer to Co. C, but the first two men were cut down in the middle of a stream bed. The blood of the fallen men turned the flowing water red for fifty meters and was clearly visible to pilots of aircraft overhead. Dunagan made still another attempt to link-up with Co. C. Another enemy position opened up and his five lead men were quickly killed.

Realizing the futility of the attempted link-up, Dunagan dropped his pack and ordered his men to crawl back into the stream bed. At 1630 hours he realized that he had left the classified cipher gun to the KY-38 secure radio set in his pack.

Dunagan instantly recognized that the entire US Army radio security could have been compromised by the loss of this equipment. Despite his wounds and without hesitation he crawled back out into an open area under intense hostile fire and recovered the cipher gun.

His company's casualties had risen to about one half of its men. The NVA continued an intense attack of mortar rounds and grenades. Co. A had to get out of its indefensible position by nightfall or risk loss of the entire unit.

At 1715 hours, Dunagan, through the Battalion Commander, LTC Underhill, made a desperate decision. He decided to utilize a smoke screen to enable his men to make a break across open rice paddies for Co. C's position 300 meters away.

Because of the intense attack that had been going on against LZ Professional, supporting artillery did not have enough HC smoke rounds on hand. It was necessary to use highly dangerous white phosphorous rounds to build up and maintain a sufficient screen.

The Escape Under Smoke

Dunagan moved throughout his position and readied men to lighten loads and destroy any useful property. He demanded that no wounded be left behind. He gave directions and organized the men in groups around a man with a compass.

All of Co. C's machine guns were given targets off the flanks of Co. A's route of withdrawal. Gunships were directed to fire over the heads of the withdrawing company as the artillery smoke screen was laid.

It was immediately apparent there were not enough uninjured men left to carry both the wounded and the dead. Dunagan and LTC Underhill made the agonizing decision that the dead must be left.

After assuring all wounded men were assigned a carrying party and the smoke had been built up to sufficient density, Dunagan led his company out across the open rice paddy to the position of Co. C. The NVA sensed that Co. A was getting away and directed fire out across the open field. However, the smoke suppressed its effectiveness.

After almost all of the men were accounted for, it was discovered that a six man carrying party led by 1LT Tamantha (the FO) had been hit by a 155mm white phosphorous round. Upon learning of the situation, Dunagan, with complete disregard for his own life, ran back out into the rice paddy to assist in their recovery.

Dunagan found a badly wounded Sgt. Robert Tullos, a squad leader in the recon platoon, with a missing foot. He shoulder-carried Tullos back to safety, being forced to stop and rest along the way due to his own painful wounds. Upon returning with Tullos, Dunagan started to return to the rice paddy to bring back yet another missing man. He was stopped at the perimeter's edge when it was determined the man had already been recovered.

At 1815 hours, medevac missions began. The last medevac was completed by 1845 hours. The Commanding Officer of Co. C, Lt. Walter Brownlee, had to force Dunagan to get on the last medevac chopper. Still in the bush were twelve men missing in action but all presumed dead.

The Battalion Commander, LTC Underhill, had to order Dunagan to the hospital for medical treatment as Dunagan did not want to leave his troops. It was later determined that Dunagan's jaw wound caused him to lose two teeth and numbed his face. His arm had bone splinters numbing his fingers and he had a hairline fracture of one of his ankles.

By the end of May 14, the field strength of the Co. A and the E-recon team had declined to a count of 47 men. On the next day, May 15, the Americal Division declared a Tactical Emergency.

Award of the Medal of Honor

Some fourteen months later, a memorandum was written documenting bits and pieces of information outlining the circumstances of what had happened with Dunagan's unit. On July 20, 1970, a letter was sent to the HQ, US Army, Pacific, from Lt. Gen. William P. Yarborough, Deputy Commander in Chief. The letter contained one sentence: "Recommend approval of award of the Medal of Honor". The award was for Cpt. Kern W. Dunagan, Commanding Officer of Alpha Co., 1st/46th Infantry, 196th Light Infantry Brigade, for heroic action in May, 1969.

Witnesses to the Action Who Were Listed in the MOH

Recommendation were: David A. Waltz, 1Lt, Co E, 1st/46th Inf; Thomas N. Tamanaha, 1Lt, D Btry, 1/14th Arty; Joseph S. Dolock, 1Lt, Co. C, 1st/ 46th Inf; Pete Gonzales, Psg., Co. C, 1st/ 46th Inf; Brian P. Shaw, Sp/4, Co A, 1st/ 46th Inf; Richard M. Belanger, Sp/4, HHC Co., 1st/ 46th Inf; Walter W. Brownlee, 1Lt., Co. C, 1st/ 46th Inf; and Roy J. Ginder, Major, USAF

The actions of Cpt. Dunagan were probably the most heroic of any single individual in this 1969 combat event. The predicament endured by Co. A was presumably the most severe of that endured by any unit involved in this fighting.

Many other units of the Americal and 101st Airborne also took significant casualties. Btry. C, 1/14th Artillery sustained serious losses, which reduced its ability to maintain artillery support, and necessitated its replacement on LZ Professional by Btry. B, 1/14th Artillery. The 1/501st Infantry companies were engaged in a savage day-long battle near LZ Professional on May 18th. Co. D, 1/46th took numerous losses on the perimeter of LZ Professional on May 12.

Unfortunately, all of the incidents happening to these and other units involved in May 1969 cannot be covered in this writing due to space constraints. However, their significance must not be understated.

Despite the TAC-E declaration, the insertion of an 101st Airborne force, the high US casualty counts, and the significant damage and destruction of US aircraft, this fierce combat episode was given only minor amounts of public news media coverage in 1969.

Another brigade of the 101st Airborne was engaged in the "Hamburger Hill" battle at almost the same time. The more famous "Hamburger Hill" battle had significant news coverage and some of it was very visibly negative due to high numbers of US casualties. Speculation existed that the 101st was reluctant to take additional unfavorable publicity and it discouraged or diverted news coverage of the Operation Lam Son Plain story.

Perhaps, in time, we may learn even more of the background of what was happening to all of us who were involved in this intense event some 30 years ago in May 1969.

Through My Eyes: A Story of Hope

By Bob G. Whitworth (c) 2012 Ninth Of A Series
Continued from Jan-Feb-Mar 2022 *America Journal*

Chapter 22 Leeches

Huey gun-ships plastered the surrounding area with rockets and machine-gun fire as another chopper swooped down and laid a heavy smoke screen between us and the outlying terrain. We jumped off our choppers into the tall grass. With so much supporting firepower, we all hit the ground running for cover, just in case this LZ was as hot as they were treating it.

Choppers had airlifted our company to a grassy knoll, surrounded by trees and bushes, in the low mountains. As we fanned out, I realized somebody really believed we were going to be in on something deadly. Fortunately for us, the LZ wasn't hot and we were soon headed deeper into the bush.

Lt. Dennis had been with us awhile now. he gave us orders to fall in behind another platoon and after an hour or so gunfire erupted up ahead. The lead platoon had come in contact with an enemy forward observation post and killed four NVA. That meant there was a larger enemy force in the area. We were in a very dangerous place and my gut was really nervous.

Crap! I hate that feeling.

We kept moving until dusk without any other contact, and set up for the night in the middle of an area full of tall brush. It was a dark, eerie place. I had been in-country for about four months at this point, yet something about that night felt different. Yes, it was dark and we were in a



Bob Whitworth, D/4/21 Inf, 11 LIB

scary-looking place, and I felt fear most of the time in situations like this. But this time, I couldn't get over the feeling that this place was not only dangerous, but also evil. Was it death I was sensing so near to us, or was it overwhelming fear?

I spent extra time that night asking god to look after us, and the night passed without any problems. Early in the morning we were ordered to saddle up and get on our way. No one told us why, but the whole company quickly took off on a forced march out of the area. our platoon was the last one leaving and I was with the machine-gun crew at the very end of the long line.

Earlier that year, when we had been deep in the jungle, some of our troops had been sent out on a patrol. When they returned, they found inch-long, brownish, worm-like creatures attached all over their bodies, sucking blood seemingly right through their skin. After the worms were removed, the spots where they had been continued to ooze blood.

Yuck!

It was really messy. The guys looked like some shaking nervous drunk had just cut them all over their bodies while trying to shave them with an extra-sharp razor. They were a real sight, with pieces of toilet paper blotting the bloody spots.

Those leeches gave me a sleazy feeling just looking at them. someone said they were land leeches. I hadn't known there were such things, but there they were, and there were millions of them deeper in the jungle. I couldn't see any eyes on them, but they could sure detect us within ten feet.

They'd stand straight up on their bottom end, and wave their bodies around in the air. once they sensed us, they would start their humpy-looking crawl as fast as they could go, as if we were their last meal. They headed straight for anyone in their detection range. They would then work their way up our boots to our legs and usually stop there. About six of them would congregate on a small spot, and suck blood until either we noticed them, or they were full and dropped off.

Those awful little creatures were thin like a twig when empty. They were very tough before they filled up with blood, and were seemingly impossible to kill. Even when we stomped on them, they didn't seem to notice. some of the smokers burned them with the tips of their cigarettes. Those of us who didn't smoke discovered we could dissolve them with insect repellent.

When we took a break, we sat on our helmets so they couldn't get to us. At night though, we had no defense when we lay down to sleep. When we woke up, we'd find them on the tender parts of our bodies.

Many mornings I woke up to find them on my lip, eyelid, armpit, or other unhappy spot. When they were filled with blood they had a bluish tint, and were fat and



Whitworth and fellow soldier in the bush.

soft. sometimes when I woke up, before I opened my eyes, I'd reach up and rub my eyelid, only to rub against a full leech. The pressure would burst it, and my stolen blood got smeared across my forehead.

Good Morning!

On our forced march out of the bush, I noticed the guy behind me had a strange look on his face, so I dropped back behind him, next to Frank, to see what was wrong. It was this fellow's day to carry the machine gun and he had the strap slung over his shoulder and back, with the 23-pound gun hanging in front of his body. He was carrying his heavy rucksack and smoking a cigarette. he wasn't tall, and took short quick steps, moving at a rapid pace.

Frank and I watched as he struggled to undo the fly on his pants and pull out the stem end of his bladder.

There, on the end, was one of those leeches!

I've got to watch this!

We were in serious need of a good laugh.

The poor guy couldn't stop walking or he would be left behind in no time, which would be dangerous, and there was no way he was going to ask Frank or me for help. That was good.

He started puffing real hard on his cigarette and when it was glowing red-hot on the end, he pulled on the stem end of his bladder with one hand until it was where he could almost see the leech. Then he reached over the bulky machine gun with the cigarette in his other hand. he could hardly walk in this position, but he was going to try to burn the leech so it would drop off. his aim was bad, and he burned himself instead.

He jumped up, jerking the cigarette away, swearing,

and moaning. I had been waiting for that moment and could see the pain in his eyes, but I couldn't help myself and busted out laughing.

It took several more times of burning himself, jumping, swearing, and moaning before he finally got the mean stubborn leech to drop off.

Needless to say, he wasn't very happy with his painful, recently-burned appendage. But Frank and I were laughing so hard we had tears in our eyes and could hardly see where we were going. We weren't helping much, and that poor guy just might have shot us if he thought it would have helped his situation. heck, I got a free show that I would have given a week's pay to see!

Chapter 23 Aftermath

"Don't stop the flares! Don't stop the flares! Please, don't stop the flares!"

It was night, and amid gunfire and other screaming voices, the terrified plea was shrieking from the radio receiver. Our RTO, sitting in the center of our perimeter, was monitoring a battle that was taking place where our company had just come from on this forced march; that place where evil seemed to lurk.

The soldier on the radio was urgently demanding that the artillery's guns keep firing night flares over their position. They were under heavy attack and I could hear the fear in his voice. I could barely endure the frightening sounds of the battle without being able to do something.

Thankfully, we soon moved out from that position and headed back toward LZ Bronco. We set up one mid-morning alongside a river. The view was beautiful, looking out across the water to the high lush green mountains on the other side.

That afternoon, an NVA soldier came walking out of the mountains and into the water, heading toward us carrying a hand grenade. He waded closer and closer until one of our machine guns opened up on him. He didn't seem to notice he was a target. he just kept coming closer. he was dead in no time and his body was pulled out of the water. We had been searching all through the mountains for the NVA with no success, and here this guy just comes out alone, crossing the river to meet us with a grenade.

What's going on inside his head?

He must have been crazy, because what he did made no sense. Maybe he had gotten a "Dear John" letter from home and decided to go out in a blaze of glory.

After a few more days of searching for Charlie and making no contact, we started moving down out of the mountains and back to the firebase. Weeks later, when we got back to LZ Bronco, I met up with Rusty. since both of our companies worked out of Bronco, he and I got to see each other every once in a while.

"Hey Bob!" he said, "You're looking a little rough around the edges. I could smell you guys coming in a mile out."

"Why, thank you, Rusty!" I replied, "You sure are good at pointing out the obvious, Butthead."

We sat down and visited awhile before he confided in me.

"We were out on a patrol recently," he said, "and I went into a village by myself to refill my canteen with water. After I filled it, I saw a gook, dressed in black, heading out of the village. When I called for him to stop, he pulled out a pistol and shot at me as he ran away. I returned fire and we had a short running shoot-out before I shot and killed him. Some of the guys I had been with heard the shooting and came into the village looking for me," he went on. "When we found his body, he was carrying a satchel with some plans and information inside. It turned out he was a VC general, and the plans he was carrying were to wipe out LZ Bronco."

I listened in amazement. The documents in the satchel ended up preventing our main firebase from being attacked and overrun. Rusty was awarded a medal and given a week's leave out of country.

Unfortunately, while he was away, Rusty's rifle company had been in a bad firefight. Only one member of his squad had survived. I didn't realize it at the time, but the voices I had heard coming over the radio that night in the jungle were those of Rusty's company, his buddies. Losing them had been very hard on him and affected him deeply. Those screaming voices still linger in my mind.

Chapter 24 Shamming

We were always on the move.

Occasionally we were flown to our destination on several Hueys or one large Chinook helicopter with huge rotor-blades on each end. Most of the time though, we waded through the rice paddies, heading from our firebase near the coast into the outlying areas, regardless of what the weather was like. We walked to and from the mountains bordering Cambodia and Laos, and sometimes beyond.

We worked all the time. The higher-ups wanted us out there looking for Charlie and his supplies. If we were sent to a firebase for rest, we still pulled daily patrols and night ambushes, and then had to pull guard for their artillery at night.

We were young and could take it, but were always looking for opportunities to "sham" and get out of the field for a short break. We grunts would resort to almost anything to get back to the rear.

One time, as our platoon was on patrol along a riverbank, we bunched up close together as we walked. That wasn't smart. To one side, about 40 feet away, stood

a dirt bank about four feet high with trees along it. All at once, automatic weapons fire started ripping through us. I glanced toward the bank and saw four VC blazing away with AK47s. It happened so fast that we hardly had time to drop to the ground. As quickly as it started, it was over.

That brought swear words to my lips and made me want to thank Jesus the ambush had failed, all at the same time. The shots came so close that I was checking my clothes for bullet holes! The VC had dumped 120 rounds of .30 caliber bullets into the bunch of us and disappeared as quickly as they had appeared. It was as if it had never happened! Not one of us had been hit, but I wouldn't have been surprised if there was a little doo-doo in some of our britches.

It was a strong reminder of what happened when we got lax. We joked a little about the ambush, what lousy shots the gooks were—like maybe they needed to wear glasses to help them see us better when they were trying to kill us. We simply needed something to break up the grave reality of what had just happened.

We kept moving in the stifling heat. After a while we took a break. I sat down on my insect-repellent-soaked helmet. Just as I pulled my canteen out and downed a few swallows of polluted iodine-water, the order came down the line of men:

"Move out!"

I stood up, grabbed my helmet and put it on my head. As I started walking, a huge red ant, three-quarters-of-an-inch long, crawled out of my helmet liner, crossed my forehead and onto my eyelid. Before I could reach up to brush it away, it bit me.

"Owww! owww!" I hollered. "Darn it!"

I stood there rubbing my eye for a couple of minutes,



Chinook helicopter delivers a sling load of war material.

and then realized I was all alone. I had to get moving or be left behind. It wouldn't pay to lag along behind the platoon, rubbing my eye. I had no interest in having another encounter with Charlie, and he was probably still nearby. I caught up with the guys. Hours later, we joined the rest of the company and found a place to set up our perimeter for the night.

Every night in the field we chose our defensive position, determined where its weaknesses were, and tried to somehow cover them. Then our FO would call in spotter rounds of 105mm artillery to specific positions within 100 yards of the corners of our perimeter. We did this so we could call in artillery to these precise locations if Charlie tried to overrun us.

It was always wild waiting for the artillery to hit. We could hear it coming from a mile away. The screaming sounds got louder and louder as the shells got closer. sometimes I thought they were going to land right on top of us, especially if we knew the enemy was nearby, because then the artillery would be called in even closer. Most of the artillery guys were good and we counted on them.

When we were away from our firebase, it was a good rule of thumb not to go outside their range of fire support. Those big guns could mean life or death for us, and Charlie hated them. If you were on the wrong end of the artillery, you would never know what hit you.

That night, after I pulled my first shift on guard and lay down, I got to scratchin' and rubbin' my eye. I realized that if I rubbed it too much, my eye might swell shut.

Oh, no!

If it did, I would have to go back to the rear for a few days to eat hot meals and take it easy. gosh, my eye was getting so bad that I had to rub it most of the night.

Doggone it!

Sure enough, in the morning, my eye was so swollen I couldn't see out of it. My nighttime endeavors had made it very painful too, so I headed over to the captain and told him I only had one eye and was in great pain. I had high hopes he would put me on the re-supply chopper and send me to the rear for medical attention.

No.

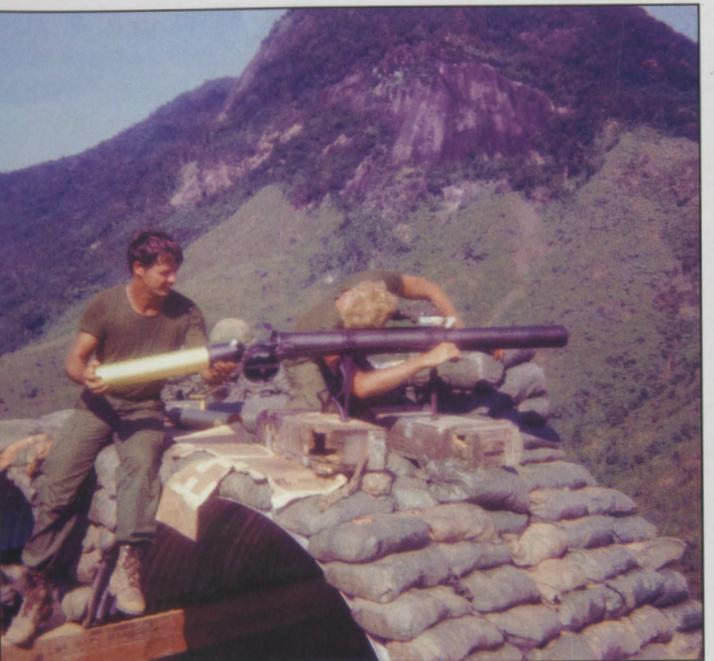
I didn't think he was going to say that.

I have got to stop coming up with these dumb ideas.

Wilbur, a grunt like me, came limping toward us. Overhearing our conversation, he said:

"Hell! If they won't let a blind man go in, then a cripple like me hasn't got a chance!"

Wilbur had gotten a "Dear John" letter from home awhile back, and he wasn't happy about it. It really hurt him that he had been dumped while he was in combat, and he talked about what he would do and say to his "Ex" when he got home.



Soldiers load recoilless rifle at firebase bunker.

As Wilbur turned and limped away, I couldn't help but laugh. Wilbur had said it all and he was right—he didn't have a chance. His words must have had their effect on the captain, though. Hours later when the supply chopper landed, I was told to get on board. I was headed to the rear for a few days.

Back at LZ Bronco, my eye improved rapidly. Somehow Frank had made it to the rear as well. We were eating a hot dinner in the mess hall when we heard loud screams.

"Incoming!"

A siren started blowing.

Everyone in the mess hall jumped up and ran outside to the bunkers. By that time, mortars were exploding outside, but they were still quite a way from the mess hall. Frank and I decided to take advantage of the situation.

We went back behind the counter and refilled our plates with all the good stuff we could find. I surprised myself a little by not getting up and heading for safety, but after all this time in-country, I had learned a few things. When a bullet hit 70 or 80 feet away, it wasn't personal yet. But if bullets were cracking by within a few feet, you'd better get busy real quick because someone probably had you in their sights and the next one might have your name on it. That was personal. The mortars never did get close enough to our position for us to run off and leave all that hot food.

[Editor's note: Bob Whitworth served as an infantryman in the Duc Pho-LZ Bronco area of operations. To be continued in a future edition of the Americal Journal. Photos provided by the author.]

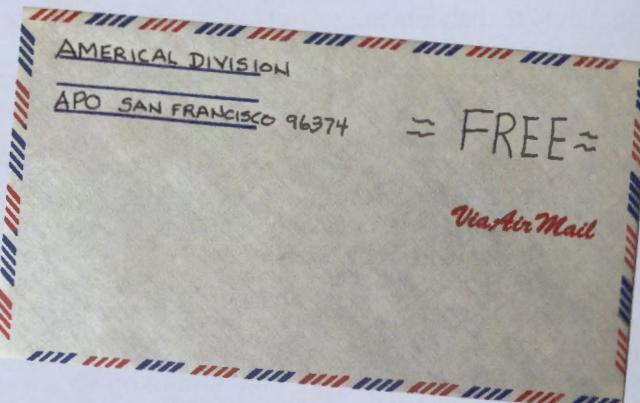
APO San Francisco Letters home

By Don Counter

AMERICAL DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96374

= FREE =

extracts from outgoing letters



August 1970

We were transported in the back of a truck and dropped off at a small provisional airport amid swarms of Vietnamese families being relocated and bringing all they owned albeit nothing by our standards. We nervously awaited our flight to Chu Lai surrounded by these families with grandparents and their possessions including chickens encased in woven baskets and tethered pigs grunting and squealing.

My first observations were: 1.- women with red-blackened stained teeth from chewing betel nut (a kind of narcotic), giving the appearance of a toothless mouth with horribly blackened and discolored tooth enamel, 2.- men place a finger against a nostril and crudely blow thick and gooey contents of their nose onto the ground. We side-stepped to avoid clumps of mucus the size of oysters and 3.- it appears normal practice as these people squat to relieve themselves, even along side the meager air strip, all without benefit of toilet paper or hand sanitation.

We eventually loaded into a cargo airplane and were packed in elbow-to-elbow with people and animals on the bare metal floor. Stench filled the air. This is not civilization as I've known it!

We finished the week long training at the Combat Center in Chu Lai, which was a refresher of basic infantry skills and a crash course on the reality of what was to come. It was an abrupt reminder that most everything here is a threat to life.

Once again we are in a transient status, much like kids in adoption awaiting assignment to our new year long home. A personnel sergeant informed us that our new unit was on stand down and the soldiers were really fu**ed up! My mind raced with thoughts of arriving at a unit under enemy attack, heavy fighting and my exposure to the proverbial "baptism by fire." I secured my duffel bags and reported back to the gathering point, along with David Tarnay, for transportation to the new unit. I perceived the term "stand down" as a standoff with the enemy similar to that of a western shoot out at the O.K. Corral. When we arrived it was calamity and pure craziness. Limp

bodies were being carted around in wheel barrels. Easily one quarter of the unit was wasted, others were numb and clumsy. It was a bizarre environment and yes, they really were fu**ed up, but from intoxication. It was a staggering sense of relief to correct the perceived doom and gloom of stand down to a time when things were a relief from the hyper vigilant performance of field duty and some reckless behavior was tolerated.

Amid the issued field equipment: rucksack, canteens, poncho and liner, air mattress, ammo pouches, first aid pouch, flashlight, pistol belt, web gear and helmet I packed a quality-bound, pocket-sized Merriam-Webster dictionary in C ration foil to protect it from the elements of jungle travel. One fellow questioned if it was my bible?

I was the lone passenger on a 45-minute flight to an isolated jungle outpost. Looking out through the small circular porthole windows of the Chinook helicopter I saw a vast green jungle accessible to nothing, everything is by air or not at all. As we approached our destination I immediately noticed a giant peace symbol atop one of the sandbag bunker's with the word LOVE beneath it. The place is called FSB Mary Ann.

The unofficial greeting at this "under construction" fire base is "drop your ruck and start filling sandbags." I was immediately put on detail with pick and shovel digging into hard packed ground to transform the place into a fortified fire base. Seems the daylight hours are filled with digging trenches, filling sandbags, lifting hefty railroad ties and lugging metal culverts.

This "down in the dirt" work has got to be the demarcation line between the spit and polish Army and being a combat grunt. This place is so remote that everything is brought in by helicopter including water. Potable water is delivered by a water buffalo slung beneath a helicopter, often with one sling broken and water sloshing out. After it is dropped off we still have to wait for the medic to test and treat it before we are allowed to devour even a drop. With no shelter from the direct sun and sweltering heat I am always thirsty.

A fellow asked, "So, where you from?" Since response's are generally by state I said, "California." Several minutes of silence elapsed as I continued shoveling more dirt. "Where in California?" was the next question. "Los Angeles," I replied and continued shoveling dirt. "Where in Los Angeles?" "Culver City", I responded. I was certain that I was being taunted and someone was awaiting a good chuckle at my expense. "So, what high school did you go to in Culver City?" "Culver High" I said. Several minutes and a couple sandbags later, another fellow asked "hey, you know a guy named Bob Hall?" "Yeah, we were in high school together; where's he at?" "Man, he left." "Did he DROS?" "No man, he got his leg blown off by an explosion, and they sent him home." What are the chances that I'm a schoolmate's replacement? It is spooky, as if an explosive baton is being passed on.

September 1970

A knife is a highly valued necessity, but for whatever reason it is something we aren't issued. Those who possess one were generally received in a care package from home. One fellow wrote home describing the soaking wet rain forest environment and subsequently received a shiny stainless steel scuba diving knife. He could have better used it as a shaving mirror or to flash and send reflective signals than to cut anything. His family simply didn't know any better. A K-Bar knife, the type used by the Marines, would be greatly appreciated and may be available from a military surplus store.

It's virtually the same process, the helicopter momentarily hovers and rapidly offloads our supplies. There is no parachute drop, the boxes are simply kicked out, and it rains boxes. It's a 50-foot drop. The potential for mishap and serious physical injury is a concern to us on the ground. We'd never attempt to catch a falling package because it would drive us nine feet into the ground. Being shot could be explained but killed by a care package would be a curious daily log entry. When packages get hung up in the jungle canopy the Guamanians and Filipinos, with the physical agility of monkeys in pursuit of bananas, shimmy up trees almost effortlessly to retrieve items suspended in branches 35-feet in the air. I didn't have to struggle to open the package addressed to me because it was all but smashed open from the force of the fall. Inside I discovered that my all time favorite, pull-top tins of butterscotch pudding, had burst open and splattered on most everything inside the box. Care packages travel half way across the world and are then kicked out of a helicopter 50-feet above ground. The Fritos and crackers were smashed to crumbs but the guys enjoyed the salty tasting treat as much as the experience. The bar soap is unnecessary. In the field, crossing a creek or stream is our bath and rain is our shower and soap is not used.

October 1970

Regarding your most recent letter indicating that the police/FBI were looking for me as the owner of a 1963 1/2 Ford Galaxy, which had apparently been involved in a bank robbery and I was the last known registered owner, please have them send me home so I can be questioned.

November 1970

During a jungle re-supply of clothing, one fellow got a replacement pair of pants many sizes too small. Like a magician he reached into his rucksack and pulled out a pair of brightly colored tie-dyed bell-bottom pants that he'd purchased during his recent R&R in Bangkok, Thailand. It looked like a humorous cross between a psychedelic rodeo clown and a jungle Halloween costume. We were baffled by what would have possessed him to even bring the pants into the jungle. Animated comedic behavior is par for the course for this all around good-natured Southern fellow, and this visual spectacle created some much needed comic relief. The entertainment was temporary because a re-supply bird was sent out with the correct size of jungle trousers.

December 1970

Our basic load is weighty and an operational load means that there is even more stuff to carry. Packing light is critical but care packages are always a welcomed surprise and afford a savory reprieve from C-rations. This latest package was thoughtful, but the hand held metal can opener, white socks, white T-shirts, and Tupperware containers are impractical for jungle life and better suited for Steve and Murph who are stationed at the air base in Da Nang. Anything white in the middle of the green jungle will attract undue attention from the Vietcong. The Hickory Farms summer sausage is a big hit and always shared with others.

On Christmas Day the company commander's RTO handed out two pieces of bubble gum to each member of the company. What's amazing is that he had received the 202-pieces of Double Bubble gum in a care package before Thanksgiving.

He kept the bubbly treats dry and hidden in his ruck until the 25th of December. Grunts on jungle patrol armed to the teeth and blowing big pink bubbles is a memorable moment.

With a sewing needle and thread Dave Dunn stitched a clever little Christmas tree with handfuls of popcorn (insulation from a care package) and sewed them along with some red berries from the jungle landscape.

January 1971

Vietnamization is the name assigned to the passing off of combat duty to the Vietnamese and the eventual departure of our combat troops from the field.

The newspaper clippings (from the real world) are great until they indicate that all combat troops are "out of the field." It is an outright lie and total B.S. Please tell somebody that the press reports are misinformed bull crap and corrupting the truth. The war is going on despite the news. We are in fact, in the field and men are getting wounded. Do we blend into the jungle so well that we are simply invisible?

February 1971

During a two-day pass I visited with Steve and Murph at the Da Nang Air Force base. Steve loads bombs on aircraft and Murph is involved with food storage. Steve has an individual room in a two-story apartment-like building with a communal restroom and showers. Murph resides in a single story building with a smaller room and has a roommate. Both complain of being limited to just two electrical items to plug in; oh, the dreadful decision – would it be the fan, refrigerator or reel-to-reel music tape player? I was not amused with their complaints of "not enough."

I savored food at the Air Force mess hall, took three showers a day, and enjoyed a movie at the base theater. There is even a Korean operated Chinese cuisine restaurant located on the base. Elegant is a word unused in the infantry, but this restaurant had table cloths, uniformed waiters, flavorful food options, dish ware and bottles of Lancers wine at the ready. It is momentarily like being back in the real world, eating real food. What a treat to eat without a plastic C-ration spoon.

Despite the sandbag bomb shelters on their base it is as if the war is going on somewhere else. We three former neighbors are physically in Vietnam, but most certainly have very different occupations. I have been living a simple life of authenticity under a poncho in the jungle. Beneath my rough appearance there is a quiet integrity that goes beyond the ordinary perception.

March 1971

In the pitch dark of night during stand down in Chu Lai, Bill Pfau walked across the staging area to the two-seater shit house, with his flashlight in hand. As he approached he heard an unusual, rumbling sound coming from inside. When he entered he observed a hazy eyed soldier on the wood floor and inquired, "Hey, what's going on?" The soldier sluggishly responded "I'm looking for my bunk, man." Obviously disoriented by alcohol this jungle fighter was navigating in unfamiliar surroundings – in the rear area.

April 1971

As part of the advance party move north to Da Nang in a

convoy of two and a half ton trucks I noticed that desperation was everywhere. The convoy was periodically slowed to a near stop by hordes of street urchins with outstretched arms and hands begging for any and everything.

With our eventual move from Chu Lai to Da Nang our APO mailing address is scheduled to change and we have been advised to inform you to hold off on mail for a week or so until the transition is completed and will reportedly help to prevent the misplacement of mail.

**AMERICAL DIVISION
APO San Francisco 96256**

= FREE =

May 1971

Arrived in Da Nang and now detailed atop LZ Linda/Hill 270. The Marines previously occupied the hilltop as a radio relay station, patrolled the area, and had taken a beating due in part to their limited numbers. There was no place to sleep but in the open, directly underneath the sky and rain. Within two days of replacing the Marines an intelligence warning was issued indicating the strong likelihood of an impending attack of the landing zone. Without protective shelter I was vulnerable. There were no offers, it was like the proverbial "there's no room at the inn, Virgin Mary."

It was with a shovel and survival mode adrenalin that I dug a partial below ground hooch, all by hand. No blueprint or drawing for the subterranean architecture; it was purely instinctual for a safe place.

Using the material resources available: a few half cylindrical corrugated metal culverts for roofing, wooden mortar shell boxes and over a hundred hand filled and stacked sandbags each weighing approximately 45-pounds. I worked steadfast to dig in and create a space to accommodate two sleeping cots.

With a dirt floor and sandbag walls the sweat equity shelter is a place of dusty poverty but a welcomed sight to those who have lived in the jungle. Several days later the finishing touch, a hand crafted sign made from the wood lid of an 81-millimeter mortar box and painted with a Combat Infantryman Badge and the words "Hardship Hooch." remembering that home is where you hang your hat.

June 1971

Early one morning at a tightly enclosed laager the platoon sergeant awoke in his hammock and reached for his jungle boots which were set at the base of the tree he was swinging from. It would be the same precautionary safety routine of tapping the boots together to remove any insects or slithery creatures. It was an ungraceful moment when he discovered feces in his boot. The incident was apparently unintentional as one young soldier during the late hours of jungle darkness choose not to go out to a predesignated area for such bodily matters. Inadvertently he squatted and pooped at the base of the tree. There were no giggles when the platoon sergeant radioed to the rear requesting a replacement pair of boots. They were flown out, and there would be no break-in period with the new boots; it was saddle-up and move out.

July 1971

Concocted drinking cups fashioned from C-ration cans, grenade spoons for a handle and bound tightly together with C-ration box wire, creating a jungle drinking cup. Flags made from tattered parachute illumination flares and sold to clerks, cooks and drivers with the pretext that they are NVA and Viet Cong artifacts.

August 1971

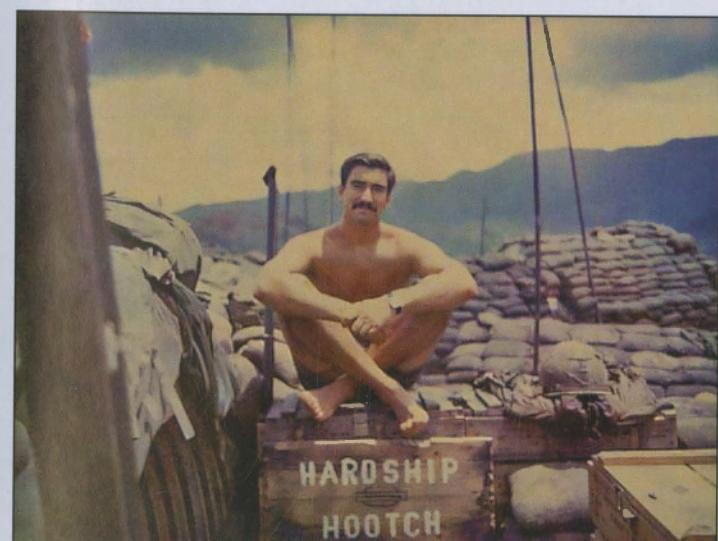
I sold my first house. It was a no-haggle cash deal, no papers, no title search, not even a "For Sale by Owner" sign. A generous offer was made and I accepted. With a handshake the Hardship Hooch was transferred to the operations officer Major Stan Wisniewski.

The last day in the jungle was celebrated with a short-timers last flight out. Dave Tarnay and I were seated in opposing doorways of the helicopter with our feet on the skids. With a thumbs up, a smile and a nod from the crew the Huey lifted off the lofty hilltop pad and dove nose downward to effectively gain power, then gained altitude and widely circled the towering LZ. With near precision we simultaneously pulled the grenade pins, let the spoons fly and tossed the grenades down and out. Whoosh...ohhhh my...Holy Shit... the white phosphorus (Willey Pete) incendiary grenades just barely missed from landing atop the LZ. The pilot negotiated banking movements to the left and right then made abrupt changes in altitude followed by dramatic twists and near side-way turns. The flight path transitioned to nap of the earth, so close to the landscape that if I wore one size bigger in combat boots I'd have scraped the jungle canopy or rice paddy. Leaning out of the aircraft during these evasive maneuvers made for a roller coaster flight worthy of a Mister Toad's wild ride at Disneyland. The dare devil flight was Great!

Days later I hitched a ride to the Freedom Hill PX and with a portion of the sweat equity from the Hardship Hooch I purchased a two-piece set of Samsonite luggage. I have little to nothing to return home with, but hope to use the luggage during future travels somewhere.

See you soon...

Your Son,



Brother's Forever

By Chuck Wanko, Joe Emma, and Bill Stoneman
Continued from Jan-Feb-Mar 2022 edition

LT Chuck Wanko

Story #6: Field Artillery Mortarmen. 1969. On one of my early visits to 588th Ordnance in Chu Lai, the NCOIC at 588th offered me a rusty old 81mm mortar and a few Basic Issue Items (BII). Turns out that his son and I went to high school together. I discussed this with my battery commander earlier and had his okay to get the mortar for firing self illumination as well as firing H&Is around the perimeter. It took us weeks to get the rust out of the mortar tube, but it finally looked great. With this mortar we routinely fired HE and illumination around LZ Dottie.

One dark, gloomy, rainy night we were firing the mortar over the cooks' hooch and motor pool. We had a round with wet powder that went straight up (at least 50 feet), came down onto the cooks corrugated steel roof, then slid down and landed on the ground in front of our mortar pit, but did not explode? The bore safe pin never came out and the round never armed! It should be noted that Division/DivArty ended up issuing each firing battery new (complete) 81mm Mortars after our success in using ours for self-illumination and H&Is around the perimeter. Yes, we received the first of the new 81mm mortars, complete with BII.

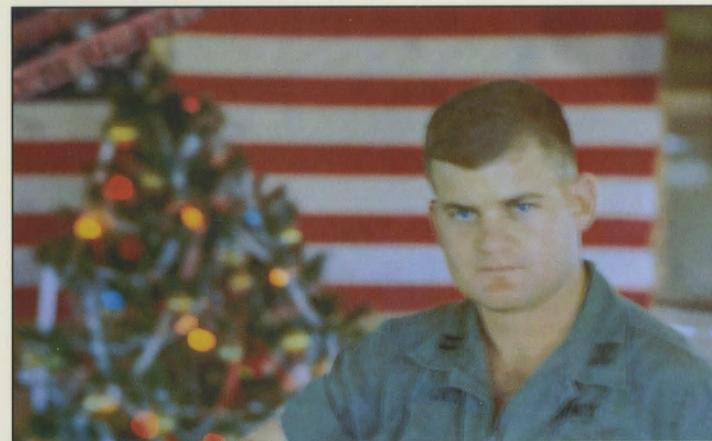


Field Artillery Mortar Men - Bill Stoneman and Joe Emma

Story #7: Real Leadership. 1969. This story is about providing a moral lesson in "doing the right thing" to young NCOs/Officers. It was raining one night (what better time to attack the Americans) so we were lobbing 81mm

rounds out around the perimeter. Obviously the powder bag on one round got wet and it went up and came down in the motor pool. We had problems with wet powders. We may have been trained artillerymen, but we were not trained mortarmen. Understand, we had just received two brand new 5T ammunition trucks that were in the motor pool being serviced. This 81mm HE round landed on the front bumper of one of the 5T trucks taking out the whole front end. As we all were the mortar crew, there was no way to know exactly what the hell happened. There was the typical sound from a fired mortar that it is going to be a short round, so we got down. No one was hurt but that new 5T truck was destroyed!

CPT Cates asked what we thought? We (NCOs) all opted for a story about how we had taken VC/NVA mortar fire (VC/NVA fired our 81mm rounds in their 82mm mortars). We (myself, SGT Joe Emma and 1SGT Ward) accompanied CPT Cates to the FDC where he got on the VHF Radio, called 1/82 FA BN FDC and requested that they get the battalion commander, LTC Garcia, to the phone. When Garcia got on the phone, CPT Cates explained to him that we had destroyed one of the new 5T trucks with a 81mm mortar. The speaker went quiet. Then Garcia told CPT Cates that it took guts to tell the truth! "Write it off as a combat loss" were Garcia's orders. They talked details then ended the communications. CPT Cates then turned to all of us in the FDC and commented that you are always better off telling the truth (doing the right thing), regardless of the consequences; rather than trying to cover up. That lesson stayed with me all my life and I tried to instill that in my soldier and three sons. This was a great lesson learned by all of us in that bunker from a great commander.



CPT William (Bill) E. Cates

Story #8: Military Auxiliary Radio System (MARS). 1969. All personnel in Vietnam were blessed with FREE outgoing mail. Mail was our life line home to our loved ones. There were MARS Radio Stations in the rear area that allowed rear personnel the opportunity to call home from time to time; but but none in the field – UNTIL! Turns out a VHF Radio/Telephone Section was setting up in the 16th Engineer Company compound on LZ Dottie just adjacent to my howitzer. They ran a telephone line

to our FDC that provided secure telephone communications to DivArty and battalion headquarters back in Chu Lai. The crew chief of the VHF section introduced himself and I gave him a tour of my 8" SP howitzer section. Over time we managed to have him and his crew actually pull the lanyard on a live fire mission. He in turn invited us to come over to use his facility to make MARS calls back home! Wow!

My fondest memory of using MARS was to call my girlfriend (future wife) back at East Carolina University (ECU) in North Carolina. The MARS operators on each end had to say "Over" during calls. Also, one of the MARS operators in the states had to relay to my soon to be my wife "He said he loves you, Over". We communicated a number of times until I went down south to the 11th Bde with two howitzer to provide counter-rocket fires for the 11th Brigade.

Story #9: Burning Shit. 1968-1970. Who on a firebase did not participate in burning shit (officers were excluded from this task). I know that as the section chief of an 8" howitzer, I did. My philosophy was "If I sat in the shitter and did my business, I was also capable of burning shit like everyone else." The task of burning shit usually occurred on Monday and required two to four people. Diesel fuel, long sticks, paper and time. We also cleaned our latrines with disinfectants as well.

Burning details usually lasted most of a day. As best I can remember, on Mondays you could look west of LZ Dottie and see the black smoke rising from LZ Stinson as they too burned their shit on Monday. The Shit Detail was kind of fun as the three or four guys were exempt from other details that day, but had to respond to fire missions. While the shit burned it was stirred, to make sure the shit was all mixed with diesel fuel and burned to a dry ash. The ash was then dumped into a hole and covered over. All this time the guys smoked cigarettes, and talked.

Funny how you really get to know guys when you are all burning shit! After the detail, the guys took a hot shower as they were usually covered with Shit Soot. I am surprised that the Veterans Administration (VA) did not come up with a disability code to take into consideration "Shit Smoke Soot Lung Damage". God knows, they are giving soldiers credit for soot damage from burning classified items made with carbon fibers. I guess that Shit Soot is not damaging to the human lungs! When you consider that most personnel on firebases were exposed every Monday of most weeks (either directly or indirectly) depending upon how the wind blew on those Mondays.



Burning Shit

Story #10: Family Member Visits. 1969. During my 18 months in Vietnam, I had the pleasure of being in country at the same time my father was. I arrived in country before my dad's most current tour. My father was the Sargent Major (SGM) of 5th Special Forces Mike Forces in I Corps, He was stationed in Da Nang. He frequented all the SF Teams in I Corps on a regular basis. There was a "C Team" in Chu Lai that he often visited. The SGM at the C Team was SGM Burley. SGM Burley's daughter and I went the high school together and I knew him. On a visit to the C Team one trip, my father was wounded by rocket shrapnel as he got off the helicopter. The detachment medic sewed him up and he continued with his visit. This would have been his first visit to me since his arrival in country. SGM Burley informed me of my father's injury but my dad was not going to pass up visiting his son!



SGT Bill Stoneman Jr and SGM Bill Stoneman Sr.

1SG Ward gave my dad a tour of the battery area and CPT Cates spent some time with him. A few days later SGM Burley notified 1SG Ward that a crew from PA&E Engineers would be arriving soon to build us a new mess hall! I guessed that the special forces party was not impressed with our dining facility. They did a fantastic job, and threw in two gasoline powered refrigerator/freezers. We had a concrete floor, bamboo accented walls, lighting as well as an Officer/NCO Dining and a Troop Dining area big enough to support a whole battery. Thank you 5th Special Forces.

Her Only Son

By Gary L. Noller

The Vietnam War claimed the lives of almost 60,000 American military members. One out of six of the casualties died from non-combat causes. Accidents factored heavily in this statistic.

In the summer of 1970 I served with about 100 other soldiers in Company B, 1/46th Infantry. We performed perimeter security on a firebase deep in the mountainous jungles 30 miles south of Da Nang. We spent much of our time filling sandbags, building bunkers, digging trenches, and keeping things clean. We acted as the general labor force for the base.

In early August a CH-47 Chinook helicopter approached the base with a delivery of drinking water. The helicopter carried a 400 gallon water trailer suspended underneath by web slings. A minute away from the landing pad, the water trailer unexpectedly broke from its slings and dropped into the Song Trahn River.

On August 4 a call was made for volunteers from Company B to go to the river and rig the water trailer for extraction. A squad of about ten soldiers gathered ropes and other rigging and prepared to accomplish the task. One of the soldiers was PFC Glenn Raymond Gilbert, 22, of Voorheesville, New York.

Glenn and I trained together at Ft. Knox and arrived in Vietnam at the same time. We were not close friends but knew each other well enough to stop and chat from time to time. He volunteered to go to the river and help retrieve the lost equipment.

I asked him, "Why did you volunteer to do this?" He replied, "I am tired of filling sandbags and digging trenches. This will be something different to do."

The squad departed and made it way down the steep side of the hill to the bank of river. About 30 minutes later an urgent radio call came from the squad radio.

The radio operator said, "We need help right away. We have a guy who is being washed down the river. We are trying to get to him. Are there any helicopters that can help with a rescue?"

Glenn was lost. He was reported as missing-in-action for eleven days. On August 15 a group of South Vietnamese soldiers found his body in the river several kilometers downstream. A helicopter returned his remains to the firebase for identification.

A squad leader came by and asked, "Noller, you knew Gilbert, didn't you?" I replied in the affirmative. He inquired, "Will you help make an identification?" I declined. Others identified the body as that of Glenn Gilbert.

Gilbert was the only son of Warren and Margaret Gilbert. They operated a small farm a short distance west of Albany, New York. They had one other child, Patricia. Glenn worked on the farm and then took a job in town. With no deferment, he entered the Army by way of the draft.

The Army informed the Gilbert's of the circumstances

of their son's death. They knew he did by drowning while attempting to retrieve lost equipment. He received the Good Conduct Medal and a Bronze Star for Merit. Most likely he also earned the Infantryman Combat Badge for his brief service in the Vietnam War. The family buried Glenn at Prospect Hill Cemetery.

Margaret Gilbert wanted to always remember her son. She became active in the American Gold Star Mothers and served as the Albany chapter president and as the New York state president. She also participated in the VFW auxiliary and the American Legion auxiliary. She was always there to help in any manner she could. She comforted hospitalized veterans and other parents of war dead.

Each Memorial Day she donned the distinctive white dress worn by American Gold Star Mothers. She rode in parades and attended veterans functions. She displayed a Gold Star Mother license plate on her car. She joined the Tri-County Council of Vietnam Veterans and became close to veterans of the Vietnam War. They became her adopted sons.

Warren Gilbert passed in 1992. Margaret lived to the age of 87 and passed in 2014. She outlived her only son by 65 years. Her daughter remembered her mother with the words, "She was proud to be there, to represent everybody that had passed that were in service, and then sad knowing that my brother was one of them."

Glenn Gilbert was born on November 13, 1947. He was exactly one month younger than I. I think of him often and of the tragic way that he perished. The Army abandoned the attempt to recover the lost water trailer. It is probably still rusting away in the Song Trahn.

My mother was not a Gold Star Mother, but my grandmother was. The loss of a son, especially an only son, can never be fully recovered. The sorrow lasts forever.

This Memorial Day I will remember those lost due to war. PFC Glenn Raymond Gilbert will be one of them.

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PFC Glenn Raymond Gilbert, 22

Voorheesville, New York

11/13/1947 to 8/04/1970

Panel 08W, Line 082

Co. B, 1/46 Inf., 196 LIB

Non-hostile, died while missing
Ground casualty, drowned

Song Trahn River

Quang Tin Province

Hau Duc District

FSB Mary Ann



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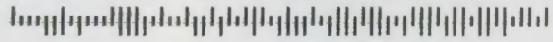


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