

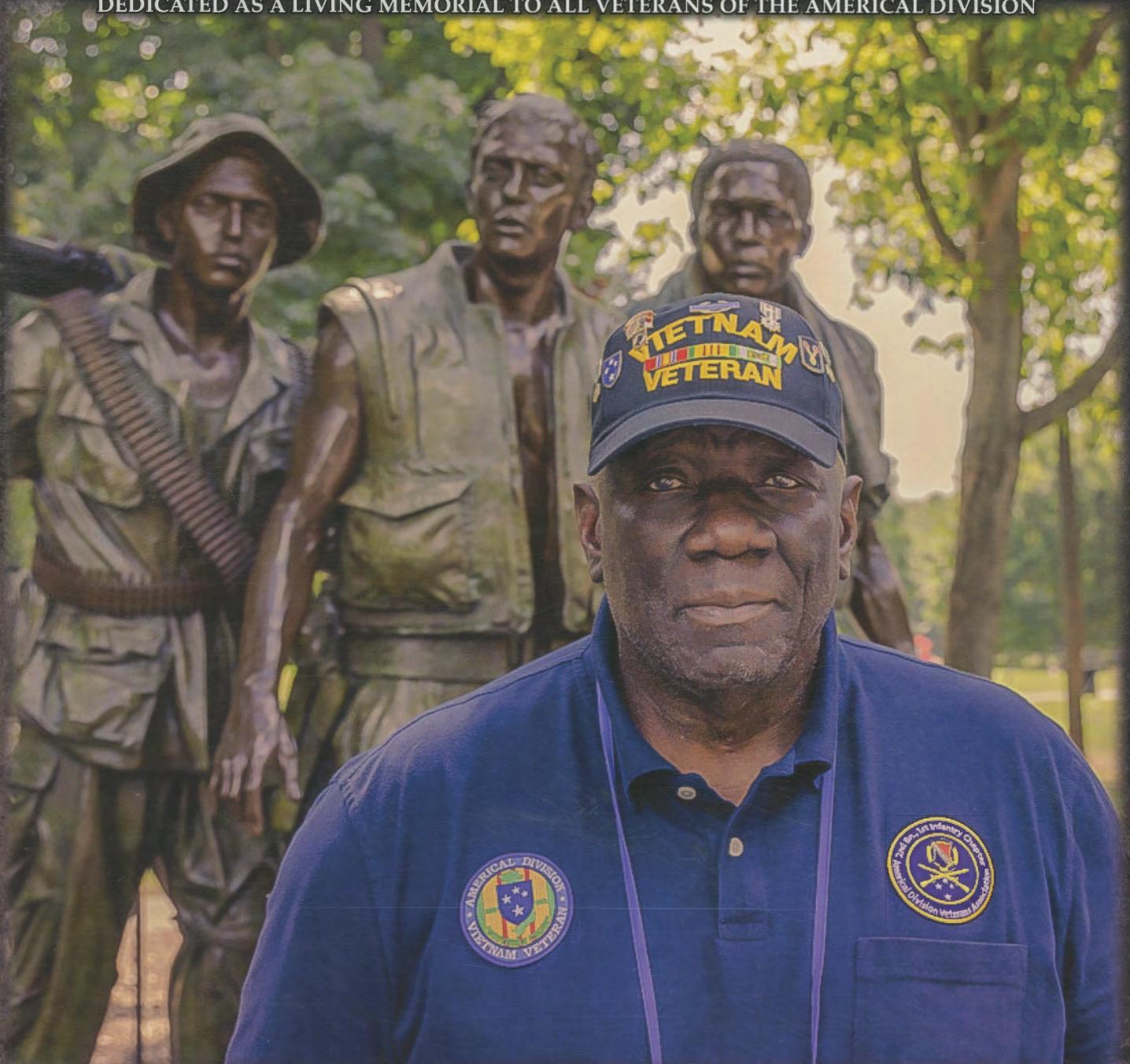
October • November • December **2022**



AMERICAL

JOURNAL

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



UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

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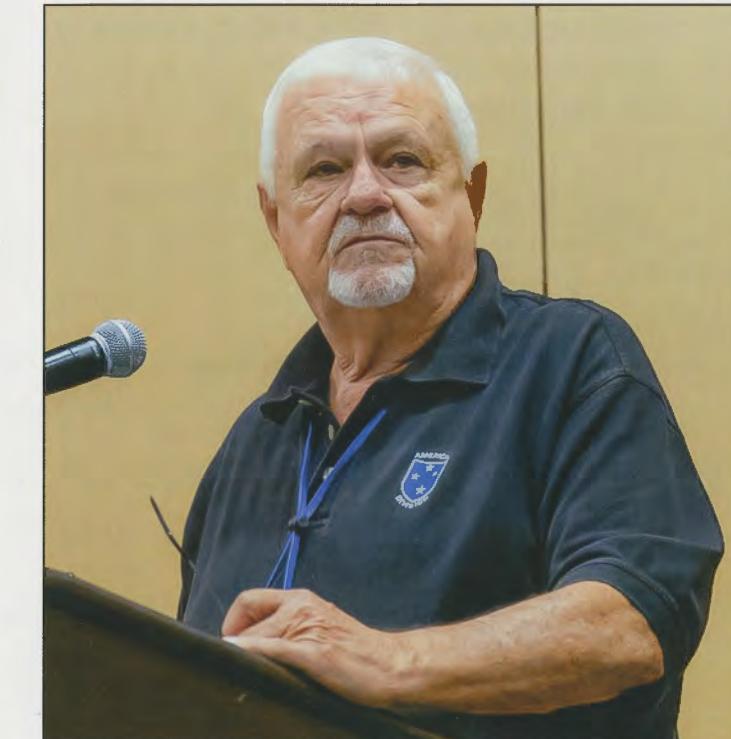
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Wayne Bryant, National Commander

Hello fellow Americal Veterans!

Please allow me to greet you as your newly elected National Commander. I want to thank you for trusting me to serve you for the next two years.

It was good to see everyone at the Washington, DC reunion. It is always good to see all our friends and I am sure new friends were made by many. The National Army Museum was indeed a great tour as were all the other tours.

For those of you that did not attend the annual ADVA reunion, I take this opportunity to inform you that your association is in a secure and sound condition. All of our elected and appointed officers and staff are working hard to keep the ADVA an association to be proud of. Do not hesitate to contact any of us anytime you encounter any issue in need of attention.

Hopefully the days of Covid are rapidly getting behind us and our lives are returning to normal. This includes attending our national reunions as well as chapter meetings. Speaking of which the National is being held in Reno, NV, next year. Watch your Americal Journal and www.Americal.org for more information.

Thanks to each of you for your continued support!

**Wayne Bryant
National Commander**



Cover: Bobby Locke-Bey, 2/1st Infantry, at the Three Soldiers statue, Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C., 2022 ADVA National Reunion. Photo by Dutch DeGroot

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2023

The past months have presented many challenges for us. In this special time of year let us enjoy family and friends and extend good will to all. Have a Merry Christmas and may the New Year bring you good health and good fortune. Be safe. -Editor

2023 ADVA Annual Reunion
June 11-16, 2023
Reno, Nevada

This reunion will be held during the week with the annual banquet on Thursday, June 15. Tours will be scheduled for Tuesday and Wednesday. Business meetings will be on Thursday. No events are scheduled for the weekend.

Reunion Headquarters

Nugget Casino Resort

[REDACTED], Sparks, NV, 89431

Reunion lodging room rate is \$69 plus \$10 resort fee plus \$2 tourism fee plus 13.5% tax (tax subject to change). Free self parking. Free hotel shuttle to and from Reno-Tahoe Airport.

Reunion Chairman

Nolan Hargrave can be contacted at [REDACTED]

Reunion administrative services provided by Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.

The 2024 reunion is tentatively set for New Orleans, subject to change. Larry Swank is looking at tentative arrangements for this reunion. More information will be available on americal.org reunion tab and in future editions of the *Americal Journal* magazine.

In the next issue: Rick Olson, veteran of D/1/46, writes about dangerous encounters with the enemy in the months of April and May, 1969. This led up to the major activity of Operation Lamar Plain.



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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From the National Adjutant

By Roger Gilmore

I want to wish all ADVA members and friends of ADVA a very happy and prosperous 2022 holiday season. As we age, this time of year is so important to share the holiday spirit with family and friends.

For this reporting period, we had an extremely low count for new members added to the ADVA roster. Only seven Americal Division veterans submitted membership applications and became new members. The good news is that five of the applicants joined for the Life member rate. Another positive note is the continuing trend for annual pay members to mail in a one-time payment for Life member status. Forty annual pay members upgraded to Life during this reporting period.

If you have an Americal Division veteran buddy who is not an ADVA member, encourage him to join the Association. Life dues now are a real bargain compared to other veteran organizations. Benefits are this great quarterly publication and eligibility for children and grandchildren to apply for higher education scholarships through the Americal Legacy Foundation.

We have a goal to achieve a Life member percentage of 80% of total Vietnam and associate members over the next two years. This percentage is based on the total membership for these member segments remaining steady. You can make it happen. Mail your Life member dues check to Assistant Finance Officer Ronald Ellis. Ronald's mailing address is listed on the back cover of this publication.

I occasionally gather statistics from the ADVA roster on military service data of members. Recently, I ran a database selection table to identify members with titles that identifies them as U.S. Army retirees. The report shows most members in the selection are officer grade retirees. A few are retired NCOs. Retired officer's break down as follows: Generals (14), Full Colonels (29), Lieutenant Colonels (25), Majors (8) CWOs (4). Retired NCOs break down as follows: Command Sergeants Major and Sergeants Major (10), First Sergeants and Master Sergeants (8), SFC (8). I expect most all retired general grade officers rose to their rank post-Vietnam.

September 2022 annual pay renewals were mailed the last week of August 2022. If you know your annual pay renewal date is September 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.

The Taps listing on the following page contains names of Americal Division Vietnam veterans only. Likely we have many WWII Americal veterans passing but we are not receiving word of their passing. Please remember our recently deceased ADVA members and Americal Division veterans and their families.

Although not listed in the Taps section, Mary Ann Flanagan, wife of PNC Jay Flanagan, passed away in September 2022. Please keep Jay and his family in your thoughts and prayers. When you know of the passing of an ADVA member or Americal Division veteran, notify me with his personal information including hometown and date of passing.

In late September Hurricane Ian brought terrible destruction and loss of life to the state of Florida. Checking the ADVA roster for Florida members living in the path of the hurricane where the destruction was most severe, we have several who reside along the west coast in the Fort Myers/Naples/Tampa area who may have been impacted by the storm. Please keep them and their families in your thoughts.

New Members**Annual Pay****Michael Daugherty**

4/3rd Inf
Charlotte, NC
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Donald J. Yost

11th LIB
Norristown, PA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

New Members Joined as Life**Thomas R. Halpin**

Associate
Archibald, PA
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Lonnie Jackson

C/1/52nd Inf
Cordova, TN
★ Rickey Blackburn

Raymond L. Kalchert

11th LIB
Orville, OH
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Joseph F. McCreary

176th AHC
Berkeley, NJ
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

George Prall, Jr.

E/4/21st Inf
Georgetown, TX
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

New Life Members**Robert B. Best, Jr.**

D/3/1st Inf
Overland Park, KS
★ Self

James O. Billings

5/46th Inf
Traphill, NC
★ Self

Rickey A. Blackburn

B/4/21st Inf
Canyon, TX
★ Self

Mitchell A. Bober

723rd Maint Bn Co C
Lancaster, VA
★ Self

Louis Bordenave

HHC/4/21st Inf
Thompson Station, TN
★ Ron Green

Bernard Borowski

6th CA Plt
Parma Heights, OH
★ Robert Thornton

Bill Bowman

B/5/46th Inf
Louisville, KY
★ Pete Davenport

Scott Broudy

Associate
Plano, TX
★ Roger Gilmore

Edward F. Cloutier

1/14th Arty C Btry
Arundel, ME
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Ed Deverell

B/4/21st Inf
Aurora, CO
★ Slater Davis

James F. Dowling

B/3/21st Inf
San Rafael, CA
★ Roger Gilmore

Peter K. Doyle

C/1/46th Inf
Monument Beach, MA
★ Fred Cowburn

David Dunn

A/1/46th Inf
Bronson, MI
★ Don Counter

Mike Hadfield

1/14th Arty
Myrtle Beach, SC
★ PNC Gary L. Noller

Ryman P. Holland

C/1/6th Inf
Southfield, MI
★ Self

Ralph E. Kahlan

723rd Maint Bn Co E
Blue Ridge, GA
★ Self

Bob Lambert

C/3/21st Inf
West Point, CA
★ PNC David Eichhorn

Douglas E. Lay

1/14th Arty Btry B
Delaware, OH
★ PNC Ronald Ward

Peter E. Martin

17th Cav H Trp
River Falls, WI
★ Paul Letsch

Mark D. Mentz

3/1st Inf
Laona, WI
★ Bernie Chase

Jerome J. Merkle

198th LIB HHC
Tonawanda, NY
★ Self

Larry L. Meynardie

1st/1st Armd Cav E Trp
Virginia Beach, VA
★ Mbrshp Cmte

Paul R.J. Pacheco

3/16th Arty Btry B
Swansea, MA
★ John R. Arruda, Jr.

Clarence F. Phinisee

196th LIB
Dallas, TX
★ Roger Gilmore

Jim Reardon

23rd MP Co
Plymouth, MA
★ Chuck Holdway

Lyle K. Reiner

5/46th Inf
Burnsville, MN
★ Self

Philip Reints

723rd Maint Bn Co A
Clark Fort, ID
★ Jim Buckle

Delbert R. Schindler

198th LIB
Kimberling City, MO
★ Linda Ward/Von Gilmore

James M. Sheehan

5/46th Inf
Holyoke, MA
★ Mbrshp Cmte

William B. Sicknick

C/1/6th Inf
New Brunswick, NJ
★ Self

William B. Sites

6/11th Arty HHSB
Martinsburg, WV
★ Bart Berry

Richard Smethurst

26th Cmbt Engrs Co B
Bryan, OH
★ PNC Rollie Castranova

William Spining

4/3rd Inf
Brentwood, TN
★ Ron Green

Donald Unruh

11th LIB
Galva, KS
★ Dick Jandusek

Claude T. Vires

1st/1st Armd Cav E Trp
Greensburg, IN
★ Chuck Holdway

Felix E. Westwood

17th Cav H Trp
Woodbine, MD
★ Bernie Chase

Russ White

3/82nd Arty HHC
Bonfield, IL
★ PNC David Eichhorn

Charles S. Wilke

D/2/1st Inf
Cleves, OH
★ PNC Rollie Castranova

Robert J. Wood

523rd Sig Bn
Milboro, VA
★ Mbrshp Cmte

Walter L. Zych

3/82nd Arty Btry A
Ft. Myers, FL
★ Self

**TAPS LISTING:
MAY THEY REST IN
PEACE****Rex T. Miller ***

A/3/1st Inf
Spring, TX
February 13, 2021

Danny Milligan

B/4/21st Inf
Wilmington, NC
April 3, 2021

Donald Moss

B/4/21st Inf
The Villages, FL
March 16, 2022

Robert Nadolski

198th LIB
Manila, Philippines
June 24, 2022

Herman Nagura, Jr. *

A/2/1st Inf
Staten Island, NY
May 10, 2022

James C. Newcomb, Jr.

C/4/21st Inf
Cambridge, MD
September 1, 2022

Doug Clark *

17th Cav F Trp
Willimantic, CT
September 15, 2022

Robert Hedrick *

1st/1st Armd Cav A Trp
Elizabethton, KY
Date Unknown

Darryl A. Leonard

B/4/21st Inf
Mound City, KS
March 20, 2022

Jesse J. Lewis *

HHC/1/20th Inf
Fort Smith, AR
March 25, 2022

Lewis McJunkin

D/1/6th Inf
Walhalla, SC
August 17, 2022

Kenneth A. McNab *

D/1/6th Inf
Ontario, Canada
Date Unknown

* ADVA Member

Americal Legacy Foundation Report

By Roger Gilmore, Foundation President

Foundation Web Site

I previously reported on an initiative to improve the Americal Legacy Foundation website store ordering process. I am happy to report that initiative is complete. Gary Noller, Foundation director and web site administrator, coordinated the site store upgrade. Gary worked with our web maintenance group to get the new ordering process designed and implemented. The new process is much easier for the Foundation to administer. It removes the step of emailing a purchaser with instructions on how to complete the order. The new process permits a prospective buyer to download an order form. The order form is complete with product descriptions, pricing and order form mailing instructions. For the upcoming Foundation calendar, mailed in early November, you will be able to order additional copies for a nominal donation.

The website now has a good variety of Americal Division information for you. You can research daily activity in Vietnam and unit history. Individual unit histories are listed under the Vietnam History Link, Vietnam War Document Extract Compilations. News publications from Vietnam are Southern Cross publication and Americal Daily News Sheets.

Recently, I went to the History link and the Vietnam portion to research an incident that occurred in my unit. I used the DTOC files (Division Tactical Operations Center) which contain the daily logs. Each day's activities for the entire division are recorded in these logs. Each day's log page is set up by item number, incident time of day then incident description or message. Generally, the incident description portion begins with the combat unit identifier, i.e., 196th LIB, followed by a name (perhaps the reporting soldier for that unit) then the affected company/battalion/ regiment. Incident map coordinates are also listed. Incident descriptions can contain quite a bit of detail and use a lot of acronyms to shorten the text content. Some acronyms are familiar to most of us. Acronyms such as KIA, WIA, NVA and VC are well known. I found many that were not known to me. But I was able to determine the words for acronyms by reading the incident description and with input from ADVA Vietnam Historian Les Hines.

As a guide for any future research or reading you may want to do using the DTOC files, here is a list of acronyms I found and the situation wording. This is not a complete list of acronyms used in DTOC logs. If you know of others not listed below, let me know so I can add to the database.

- ARMV - Air Movement
- MAM - Military Aged Males
- AWF - Automatic Weapons Fire
- NCD - No Casualties or Damage
- B/T - Booby Trap
- CA - Combat Assault
- OP - Observation Post
- PFD - Pressure Firing Device
- SAF - Small Arms Fire
- SWP - Sweep
- TWFD - Trip Wire Firing Device
- UNSEF - Unknown Size Enemy Force
- D/O - Dust Off
- DET - Detonated
- DIP - Destroyed In Place
- MA - Mechanical Ambush
- MAF - Military Aged Females

The Americal Legacy Foundation web site is www.americalfoundation.org. Please use Contact Us link on this web site for inquiries about any Americal Legacy Foundation programs and fundraising.

Americal Legacy Calendar – 2023 Edition

The Americal Legacy Foundation 2023 calendar was scheduled to be mailed in early November 2022. If you are reading this paragraph and have not received your 2023 calendar, please contact myself or Gary Noller for a replacement. Our contact information is listed in the directory of this issue. The 2022 calendar was highly successful in terms of donations received for unrestricted funds. From the directors of the Foundation, a heartfelt thanks to all who donated this year. I encourage all who support our programs financially to continue your generosity into year 2023. Our success in the monuments placement programs and support for other permanent memorials for the Americal Division are not possible without a great fundraising program. Year after year, so many ADVA members and friends of ALF have stepped up to contribute, and we look forward to another super funding year.

Currently, we are committed to fund other programs that will keep the history of the division alive in archives and other recorded history sites. Agreements are now in place with the Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive for work to digitize and preserved Americal Division records, papers, and publications. We will continue the monuments and placement work at national VA cemeteries into the coming year. Your donation dollars are at work to memorialize the legacy of the Americal Division. The progress report on completed placement work and those that are in varying stages of completion are outlined in the section below on Americal Monument Programs.

Americal Monument Programs National VA Cemeteries

Over the past four to five months, the Foundation made considerable progress on the national VA cemetery placement program. We received notifications from cemetery directors that our standard monument placement proposal is approved by the overseeing district offices. The monument placement at a particular VA cemetery is not high on the priority list for the maintenance staff. At times, it takes a real effort using electronic communications and phone calls to get both parties in coordination to start the work. This can cause some delays getting the placement complete. Other concerns about getting the work started on a timely basis are weather, labor, and material issues for contractors. Labor and materials costs have risen, as have many things around the country, over the past two years. We expect initial cost estimates for the placement work to be somewhat higher once the work is complete.

Foundation directors recently discussed continuing our current purchase plan for the standard memorial monument design from Keith Monument Company. For the past five years, we have used a standard design that meets the standard NCA requirements. Our policy was to purchase the stone and construction costs in groups of five to get a better per unit price. Currently, we have three remaining monuments from our last order that are not committed to an approved cemetery site. We know from recent discussion with Keith Monument that a new order of five will cost significantly

more than the last purchase. With the slow pace of review, study, and approval at VA cemetery sites we have selected, Foundation directors agree that once the current inventory is depleted, we will order a new monument once we have approval from the appropriate level. Below is a recap of VA cemetery sites selected and where we stand with our current placement proposals.

Washington Crossing National Cemetery (Newtown, PA)

In mid-July, I received word from the POC at this site that our placement proposes is approved by the district office. Following the notice of approval, I had a telephone conference with the assistant director and maintenance supervisor to discuss work specifics for pouring the concrete slab and placing the granite monument. Information necessary for the contractor who is placing the monument was passed on the last week in July. I had no response back from the contractor for several weeks, but finally was able to speak with him in mid-September. At the time this article was written, his plan was to contact the cemetery's maintenance supervisor for the exact placement location and start work by end of September. I expect the work to be complete before Veterans' Day; more on the project in future issues.

Camp Butler National Cemetery (Springfield, IL)

We received word from the cemetery director in early July the district office approved the placement plan, and the staff was ready to proceed with the concrete base and placement work. The contractor we are working with needed to complete some of his projects before starting on our Americal monument placement. Per my last follow-up with the contractor, he expected to start the work beginning the last week in September. This was pending ground conditions improving after heavy rains in the cemetery area.

Fort Jackson National Cemetery (Columbia, SC)

Two different vendors were used to construct the concrete pad construction and install the monument. The concrete contractor would have needed additional equipment and more work to get the granite monument moved from the cemetery maintenance yard to the concrete pad. I located a monuments installation company in Columbia that had the equipment and experience to easily move the granite monument from the cemetery maintenance yard and install it properly onto the concrete base. The concrete base work was complete the end of April. The monument was installed in mid-June.

Joint Base Cape Cod Americal Division Plaque

Len Kondratuk, our POC for this plaque placement project, advises he is planning to have a small granite memorial stone constructed to place the plaque onto. Len is working with Camp Edwards base commander to select a placement spot. The preferred placement site is behind the facility headquarters. Our hope is this project can be completed by year end. More on this initiative in future issues of this publication.

Other Legacy Project

Texas Tech University Vietnam Archive Project

One of the discussion points from our May meeting with Dr. Steven Maxner and his VN Archive staff was funding for another non-endowed gift agreement for immediate work on the Americal materials provided by ADVA Vietnam Historian Les Hines. This grant is funded in the Foundation's 2022-2033 budget. The grant check for \$10,000.00 and new agreement letter were mailed in mid-June. The Archive staff acknowledged receipt of both by email.

We recently communicated with the TTU VN Archive staff regarding other documents we wished to include in the digitizing, recording and storage process. The other documents primarily involved WWII Americal documents and memorabilia which are currently stored in a museum in Pennsylvania. The TTU VN Archive staff requested a teleconference to discuss the WWII records (contents, volume of documents, labeling of boxes to identify contents, etc.) and other issues related to the media provided by Les Hines. From that mid-August teleconference, the TTU staff advised the Americal WWII records would not be accepted for archive at that facility. Currently, our WWII Historian David Taylor is looking for other options to permanently store and display Americal WWII records.

During the teleconference, extensive conversations addressed formats for the VN records accepted by TTU, the types of records Les currently provides and the content of those records and how to identify changes to records already submitted to the Archive. Another discussion point was donation of Americal Division Veterans Association records. Examples of these records might be association meeting minutes, correspondence and other official records. The TTU staff laid out some parameters for the records that may be transferred in the future. From this teleconference discussion, document priorities are now set for work by the school's interns. The TTU staff will communicate progress reports on a regular basis.

We received an endowment agreement from TTU. We have executed the document with the proper signatures. The endowment assures Texas Tech and those parties interested in seeing permanent funding for ongoing work that money is in place to start the initiative. Our initial financial commitment to the endowment is \$12,000.00 to start. The funding check will be mailed to TTU before year end 2022. I encourage all ADVA members who share our vision for the endowment funding to mail your donation check or money order soon. Your check, payable to Americal Legacy Foundation, can be mailed to Director Gary Noller at the following address. To be sure your check goes to the endowment, please write "ALF endowment" in the memo section of your check. **Mr. Gary L. Noller, P.O. Box 1268, Center Point, TX 78010.**

If you have records, documents, etc. from your Vietnam tour you would like to donate to the TTU Vietnam Archive, go to the Archive website, www.vietnam.ttu.edu/portals/americal.php. On the homepage, go to the link Donating for instructions on how to donate your items to the TTU Vietnam Archive.

2022 Scholarship Awards
By Bill Bruinsma, Scholarship Chairman

The American Legacy Foundation mailed scholarship award checks in July. Fifty-six scholars received just over \$50,000 in awards. Checks are sent to the educational institution in the name of the scholar.

The amount of the awards breaks down as follows: one at \$5,000; one at \$4,000; two at \$2,500; three at \$2,000; seven at \$1,500; fifteen at \$1,000; nine at \$750; and \$500.

Funding for the scholarship awards comes from two sources. The major source is from the annual donations received from members of the American Division Veterans Association. An additional amount is added from the retained funds in the treasury of the scholarship fund.

The purpose of the American Scholarship Program of the American Legacy Foundation (ALF) is to provide undergraduate college and vocational scholarships to the children and grandchildren, including those by adoption, of current and deceased members of the American Division Veterans Association (ADVA), provided the deceased member held good standing as an ADVA member at the time of death, and to any child or adopted child of an American Division soldier who was killed or died while on active duty with the Division. A member of the ADVA shall be as defined in the current bylaws of the ADVA.

Applications are graded on completeness, legibility, and quality of the required essay writing. Grading is performed by a group of high school teachers that have no relationship to the foundation or to the membership association.

The topic for 2023 scholarship applications will be posted on the American Legacy Foundation website in January 2023. Applications must be received by May 1. An application form and additional information may be obtained on the website at americanfoundation.org.

Applicants are highly advised to not wait until the last minute to submit the required information. Due to the timing of the application deadline and the time needed to process the applications it is not possible to make awards prior to July. In most cases the amount of each individual award is known by July 15 but it may take additional time for the award funds to reach the educational institution.

Allen, Bryanna; \$500
Manhattan Christian College

Alsbro, Jacklyn; \$2,000
Michigan State University

Beasley, Tristan; \$500
Tarleton State University

Beshears, Hunter; \$1,000
Arkansas State University

Biamaitc, Nikolas; \$2,000
Lyn University

Branum, Maura; \$500
Berea College

Branum, Thaddeus; \$1,000
Ohio University

Buelow, Natali; \$500
University of Iowa

Bunnell, Samantha; \$750
Valencia College

Cowen, Allyson; \$750
North Carolina State University

Cowen, Melissa; \$500
North Carolina State University

Dawson, Grace; \$500
Dixie State University

Dawson, Jacob; \$1,000
University of Wyoming

Dessart, Brady; \$500
University of WI – Oshkosh

Duggan, Annie; \$500
University of Dayton

Eberle, Robert; \$500
Long Island University – Brooklyn

Ellis, Rance; \$1,000
Texas A&M University

Forbes, Connor; \$1,000
University of Alabama

Forshag, Molly; \$1,000
University of West Georgia

George, Rebekah; \$1,000
Hillsdale College

Gipson, Warren; \$500
Hampden Sydney College

Heroux, Aimee; \$4,000
East Carolina University

Howe, Kailyn; \$1,500
Northern Kentucky University

Howe, Paige; \$750
Western Kentucky University

Johnson, Jarod; \$750
Rochester Institute of Technology

Keaty, Brenna; \$1,000
Saint Louis University

Keaty, Emma; \$500
University of Iowa

Laine, Abigail; \$750
Merrimack College

Laine, Caroline; \$2,500
Merrimack College

Landrum, Keagan; \$1,500
Purdue University – West Lafayette

Landry, Scott; \$1,000
Louisiana Tech University

Long, Madison; \$1,500
Ozarks Tech Community College

Martinez-Whitman, Sophia; \$1,000
Fordham University

Metko, Alex; \$750
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater

Metko, Grace; \$1,000
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Olson, Ashlyne; \$750
Washington State University

Ortiz, Lauren; \$500
Brigham Young University – Idaho

Piekarski, Alexis; \$2,000
Rasmussen University

Prieve, Scott; \$500
University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

Rollins, Eden; \$500
Isothermal Community College

Rouillard, Sydney; \$500
Tartleton State University

Ruland, Brayden; \$500
Western Illinois University

Schmitz, Sophia; \$750
University of Oregon

Scott, Emma; \$1,500
Mass Inst of Technology

Seiler, Jordan; \$1,000
Indiana University

Shipley, Emily; \$500
St. Mary's College of MD

Smith, Leah; \$5,000
Kent State University

Steele, Hannah; \$500
Snow College

Sutherland, Emily; \$1,500
S.U.N.Y. Brockport

Tognetti, Sophia; \$1,500
University of Georgia

Valenti, Chloe; \$1,000
University of Cincinnati – Clearmont

Varriale, Gabriella; \$2,500
Penn State University

Varriale, Vincenzo; \$1,000
University of Delaware

Walker, Carly E.; \$1,000
Stevens Institute of Technology

Walther, Rheanna E.; \$500
Ball State University

Martinez-Whitman, Sophia; \$1,000
Fordham University



Dear editor,

I found this circa 1970 photo of a couple of Americal MPs enjoying an ice cream break in front of the PX. I have no idea who they are. Thought that you might be able to find someone to ID them.

Don Kilgore



Dear editor,

I want to thank you for publishing Perry Coleman's inquiry about the 23rd S & T Battalion's Drinking Flag with the "TBGDSATBITWFA". This led me to contact Perry who shared the story of it being brought home by his cousin, Brian Coburn. Coburn was a Canadian who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in 1968-1972 and in Vietnam with an armored cavalry unit- "Brave Rifles 3".

I connected with Perry and shared pictures of that flag and my CO's story of allowing us to create it in 1969. We never knew what became of the flag. The flag is now 53 years old and resided for years in Vancouver, Canada with Perry Coleman, the cousin of Specialist Brian Lennox Coburn.

Sadly, Brian died in 2014 from causes of the war. But thanks to your journal, the flag is now home! We are going to use it as the center piece of a small unit reunion this fall. I have a picture of the flag in Vietnam, my jeep that has the famous "TBGDSATBITWFA" on it (the only jeep in the Americal Division with this), as well as picture of the flag with Perry Coleman in Canada, and now with Bill Shugarts here in Virginia. The power of journalism at work. A sincere thanks!

**Bill Shugarts, Battalion Transportation Officer,
23rd S&T Battalion, Americal (1969-1970)**

The following letter was sent to the attention of Bill Bruinsma and Roger Gilmore, Americal Legacy Foundation:

It was an honor to be selected as a recipient of an Americal Legacy Foundation Scholarship Award. I am very proud of my grandfather's service to our country and earning a scholarship from the Americal Legacy Foundation is special to our family.

I am currently a freshman at the University of Iowa in the Honors Program. My studies include communications class and I look forward to honing my skills to tell stories of our veterans, like you and my grandfather. The \$500 scholarship will be of great assistance to me as I am primarily responsible for funding my college education.

My grandfather attended the Americal Division Veterans Association reunion in Washington, D.C. last week. He told me that 60 students received scholarships and this is the 30th year that the Foundation has supported the young students pursuing a college degree. Thank you for this opportunity.

Natalie Buelow

Looking for: Any soldiers that remember me? I was in Co C 5/46 mortar platoon from 1968-1969 at LZ Gator. Contact: William Grady; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Members of my unit who were 96D2Ts in Americal Division Headquarters from 3.10.68 thru 3.9.69? Contact: Richard J. Ganem; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Galan Fish who had a locator request with email [REDACTED]. I have some information about his request. I have sent an email but haven't heard anything back. Contact: Richard Tuttle; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone that served with my cousin, PFC Jimmy Quinn died on 10.29.1970, with 196th LIB, 3/21 Company D. I also have tried to locate books or videos that might be the same time era that he served. Contact: Thomas Halpin, [REDACTED]

Looking for: Jeff Blue who lived in Ohio. Jeff was in Vietnam during 1969/1970 stationed in Chu Lai, Company B, 196th. Contact: John Stainbrook; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone from C/5/46 that may have known Russell Eugene Gedeon, KHA on 7 December 1969 in Quang Ngai Province. Contact: Walter Pasko; [REDACTED]

Message: Sgt Randy Koch, D Battery, 6th/56th Artillery Brigade Ky Hoa Contact: Luis T. Sanchez; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who would know my father, William Roy Brown, went by Roy, 68-69, in Chu Lai. He was in finance. He is suffering from Agent Orange with little time left. Anyone who knew him please reply. Contact: Ryan Brown; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who remembers me from 196th infantry brigade, 4th battalion, 31st Inf. Please call me. Contact: George W Peterkin; [REDACTED]

Looking for: James Hudson, the LT that came in after Frazelle had passed. He was A company 4/31. Also still in search of Gail Jake Boyle. Contact: Tammy Sherman; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone that may have served with my dad in Vietnam. His name is Harold Thetford and he served from late 1968 to January 1969 when he was wounded. He was an army combat medic in Company D, 5th battalion, 46th Inf., 198th Lt. Inf. Brigade. Contact: Kimberly Bryant; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Soldiers that served with my father, Arnold Kauppinen in the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, 3d Battalion, 82nd Artillery, Battery C, CPT Arthur G Lozeau was the Commanding Officer. He was with the 196th in country from 66-68. He was from Peabody, MA. He was a part of the advanced party that arrived in August of 66 I believe. He passed away in 2008. Contact: Philip Kauppinen; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone who knew Dennis (Denny) Leslie Fester. He served at Fire Base 411, Snoopy, and Chu Lai. He was Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion 1st Infantry, 1970-1971. Contact: Thomas Binkowski; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any wartime information on my father, Anthony J. D'Elia, from Ambler, PA. He was an MP with the Americal Division from 1943-1945 and fought on Bougainville, Cebu, and Leyte Gulf before arriving in Japan following the atomic bomb drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Contact: Joe D'Elia; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Sal Costa he was from New York – he served with me during the same time in 67-68 the 1/6th 198th Company B. Also looking for Roger Mereau he moved south after the Army he was in training with me in Chu Lai and I never saw him after the war. Contact: David Salemma; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Anyone that may have served with my dad in Vietnam. His name is Harold Thetford and he served from late 1968 to January 1969 when he was wounded. He was an army combat medic in Company D, 5th battalion, 46th Inf. Lt. Inf. Brigade. Contact: Kim Bryant; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Any soldiers that remember me? I was in Co C, 5/46, MORTAR PLT FROM 1968-1969 at LZ Gator. Contact: William Grady; [REDACTED]

Message: When I was 9 years old Agent Orange ended up killing my Father. I have been looking for years to track anyone that may know him. I don't really remember much about him. I know this is a long shot but my father's information is - He was Company D 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade, Americal Division and was there March of 69 to Feb of 70. His name was Michael Devlin but went by Mickey. He was a medic and received a bronze star with valor. Is there anything you can do to help me? Contact: Kelly Devlin; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Information. My name is James A. Taylor. A Lt. by the name of James A. Taylor received the MOH, Silver Star and Bronze Star w/V. I have my Bronze Medals and Purple Heart Medal but am not listed in the Americal list of medals earned. I've wondered over these past 54 years if I got mixed up with Lt James A. Taylor who was recognized as receiving the Silver Star and Bronze Star as listed in the Americal directory. Both Specialist Froh and myself were told we were getting a Silver Star. Both of us were wounded in March. I would appreciate any information that could answer my question. Contact: James A. Taylor; [REDACTED]

Looking for: Orders for 1st Plt, Trp E, 1st Cavalry, 11 LIB, awarded the UVA for May 12-13, 1969. I found it once on Americal awards but cannot find it now. U.S. Army says there is not a roster of names of those who received the award. Looking for orders DAGO 43 1970. Also looking for troop roster for May 1969. Contact: Michael C. Kenna; [REDACTED]

ANNUAL PAY MEMBERS

Convert Annual Dues to Paid Life Dues

Have a chance to get your paid life dues rebated back to you.

The Americal Division Veterans Association has very low rates for life dues. Annual pay members are strongly encouraged to pay life dues and help the ADVA attain its goals to streamline the administrative duties of the association. Paid life dues means that the member will never again have to remember to write and mail a check to cover annual dues.

Life dues are very affordable and based on the member's age. The top rate is \$100 and then descends to \$50. Many similar organizations have life dues at \$200 or more. ADVA life dues are a bargain.

An analysis of the ages of ADVA indicate that more members are closer to age 75 and beyond than are members closer to age 70. Probably no members are younger than age 70. Many annual pay members can probably become paid life members at the \$50 or \$60 rate. This is the same as paying annual dues for four years.

We are all getting older. The appointed officers that administer the membership database have done a magnificent job for many years. But it is time to begin to lessen their duties and streamline the administrative duties of these dedicated officers. Please give them your support in this effort.

Annual dues reminders are sent three times per year. There are about 300 notices that go out each time for a total of 900 dues notices. This is about 35% of the ADVA membership. The remaining 1,900 members have paid life dues. It takes about a day and a half for Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant, to prepare and mail each batch of dues notices. It takes about the same amount of time for Assistant National Finance Officer Ron Ellis to process the payments and relay dues paid information back to Roger Gilmore. The desire is to cut annual dues members down to a more manageable 100-200 members. This will also save the ADVA money in printing and mailing costs.

The ADVA is happy to announce a new incentive to encourage members to obtain Life Paid status. Once each quarter in 2023 a random drawing will be held to select the name of one member who paid life dues during the quarter. The ADVA will rebate the amount of dues that the member paid back to the member. The member must pay life dues to be entered in the drawing.

Life dues rates are as follows: Age 70 or younger, \$100. Age 71. \$90. Age 72, \$80. Age 73, \$70. Age 74, \$60. Age 75 or older, \$50. Pay the rate for the closest age at the time of payment.

Dues payments should be made payable to ADVA and sent to PNC Ronald R. Ellis, [REDACTED], Henderson, TX, 75652.

Life dues can be paid at any time. Send the dues along with your Name, Address, Telephone, Email, Americal unit, dates served. The National Adjutant will send a life dues paid certificate to show proof of the upgraded membership.

If you have any questions you may contact Roger Gilmore, National Adjutant, email to [REDACTED] or telephone [REDACTED]

Thank you for becoming a ADVA Paid Life Member.

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Vietnam Veterans Sought For Registry



Young Runt (left), Americal veteran, speaks with Jim Knotts, President and CEO of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Knotts addressed attendees at the 2022 Americal reunion in Washington, D.C.

[The following information was taken from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund website. It provides details about Vietnam veterans registering on the website and providing photos and stories about service in the Vietnam War. -Editor]

About the Registry

We proudly believe that service to our country is something that should be celebrated, honored, cherished and remembered. VVMF's registry is intended to do just that for ALL who wore the uniform of nation's armed forces during the Vietnam Era. As stewards of the legacies of those on The Wall and those in our In Memory program, we are honored to now be the stewards of our living veteran's legacies. Together we will create a lasting place where the legacies of those who served, those who made the ultimate sacrifice and those who returned home but later died as result of their service are interwoven. These legacies and your legacies will be treasured by and shared with future generations, ensuring their place in history for all time.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THE REGISTRY?

By signing up for the Registry, you can... Preserve your story or a family member's, upload and share images, connect with others who served during the Vietnam Era, connect your service with the people you knew on The Wall.

WELCOME TO THE REGISTRY!

Welcome to The Registry brought to you by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. VVMF is the nonprofit organization that was established and authorized by Congress to build a tangible symbol of recognition from the American people for those who served in the Vietnam War. The result of our efforts was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (commonly referred to as The Wall), which has become one of the most visited memorials in Washington, D.C. with an estimated 5 million annual visitors.

Since the dedication of The Wall in 1982, VVMF has pursued a mission of honoring and preserving the legacy of service and educating all generations about the impact of the Vietnam War. There are many ways in which we pursue our mission but across

all our programs, we have committed ourselves to preserving the legacies of all those who served and all those who sacrificed during the Vietnam War Era.

For those who died during the War, we have The Wall of Faces. The virtual Wall of Faces features a page dedicated to honoring and remembering every person whose name is inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. In an effort to further preserve the legacy of those who sacrificed all in Vietnam, VVMF is committed to finding a photo to go with each of the more than 58,000 names on The Wall. The Wall of Faces allows family and friends to share memories, post pictures and connect with each other.

For those who returned home but later died as a result of their service, we created the In Memory Honor Roll. Thousands of Vietnam veterans have died each year due to Agent Orange exposure, PTSD/suicide, cancer and other causes related to their service. In Memory was created in 1993 by the group – Friends of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and VVMF began managing the program and hosting the ceremony in 1999. More than 4,700 veterans have been added to the In Memory Honor Roll since the program began. Like the Wall of Faces, the In Memory Honor Roll gives the opportunity for family and friends to share memories, post pictures and connect with each other.

In order to bring our preservation efforts full circle, VVMF knew it was important to honor ALL who wore the uniform during the Vietnam Era and to preserve their legacies alongside those they knew and served with. That's why we created the Registry. The Registry gives a place for living Vietnam veterans and Era veterans, as well as Vietnam Era veterans who have since passed, to have their service forever remembered and their stories told.

So if you or a family member served in the military during the Vietnam Era, VVMF is ready to honor you or your loved one. Before you begin filling out the Registry please review the criteria for creating a Registry profile:

The profile can be completed by the veteran or by a family member.

The profile must be made for an individual who served in the U.S. military during the Vietnam Era NOVEMBER 1, 1955 — MAY 15, 1975.

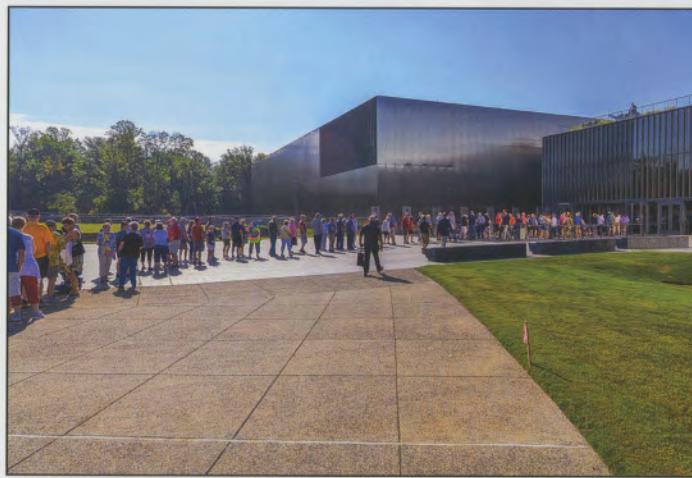
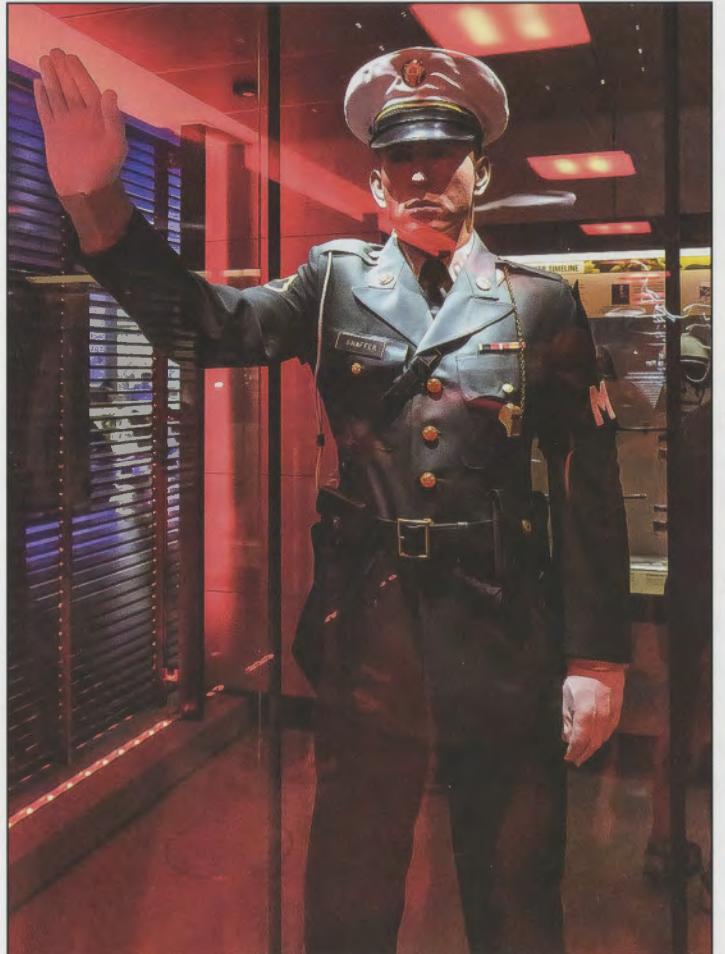
The Registry is for LIVING Vietnam veterans and Vietnam Era veterans. Vietnam veterans are defined as individuals who served in the U.S. armed forces and served in-country/in-theatre during the Vietnam War. Vietnam Era veterans are defined as individuals who served in the U.S. military but were not deployed in-country/in-theatre.

If the individual is deceased but is a Vietnam Era veteran, they may be included in the Registry.

If the individual was a Vietnam veteran and died during the War or returned home and later died, they should already be included on the Wall of Faces (www.vvmf.org/faces) or the In Memory Honor Roll (www.vvmf.org/honor-roll). If the deceased Vietnam veteran is not already included on the In Memory Honor Roll, you should fill out an application for the In Memory Program instead of the Registry (www.vvmf.org/inmemory).

To recap, the person you are going to register must be either: LIVING Vietnam veteran, LIVING Vietnam Era veteran, DECEASED Vietnam Era veteran.

Now that you have confirmed you or your individual meets the above criteria, let's begin creating your free Registry profile!





Attendees at the 2022 ADVA National Reunion in Washington, D.C. gather at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial for a special remembrance ceremony.

LZ Amy Brotherhood

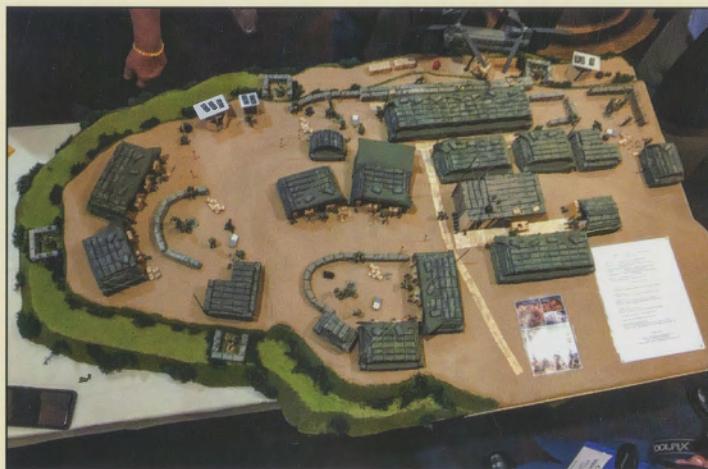
By Hank Suffoletto

In 1967 Uncle Sam inducted a bunch of young men into the selective service. He sent the men into different parts of the country for basic training. He then sent the men to Advanced Infantry training and after that was completed; he assigned the men to different tasks in the Army. Most of the men went to Ft. Polk, Louisiana for jungle training. With this training completed, he took certain men and placed them into areas of expertise. This is where the 4.2 inch mortar platoon came into being for the 4/21st Infantry.

Men started arriving at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii around Thanksgiving 1967. In Hawaii we trained for four and a half months with the 4.2 inch and 81mm mortars. We learned all about the mortars, how to take them apart, transport them quickly, and have them set up at a new location within an hour or less. The squads learned how to set the fuse charges and sight the azimuth and elevation of the gun from the information given to them by the fire direction center.

The fire direction center is responsible to know where they are located on a map in order to register the platoon's four guns to a reference point for future fire missions. Fire missions come from the line companies operating in an area of operations. Precise plotting of a location on the map from the information given to the Fire Direction Chief from a forward observer calling for fire support is very crucial. Learning and repeat practice of plotting this information was drilled into the FDC prior to going over to Vietnam. This is where the 4/21 mortar platoon was formed and molded into a precise team.

On April 9, 1969, this team was transported to Chu Lai, Vietnam. In Chu Lai we received combat boots and ammunition for our weapons and then flown to our first LZ by CH47 helicopters. LZ Thunder was the first of six different LZs that Echo Co., 4/21, operated from. We would split up the guns and send two to a different LZ for a short



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period and later return back to the LZ from where they came. This took place for three different LZs- LZ Liz, LZ Cacti, and LZ Gimlet.

The 4/21 battalion headquarters was located at LZ Baldy. Up to September 1968, Echo Co. spent the longest time of all at LZ Baldy. One day we were told one day that a new LZ was being created northwest of Duc Pho. This was on a mountain top 2,646 feet above sea-level. The mortar platoon dismantled its four guns, packed up the ammo for the mortars, and gathered all their personal belongings. We weren't coming back to LZ Baldy again.

All of this, of course, took place during monsoon season. Echo Co. sat on the helipad with all this equipment in the rain until all was loaded. We were flown to this mountain top where elephant grass was predominate along with leaches and mud for all to enjoy.

We watched the Army Corps of Engineers use a CH54 helicopter to deliver a D8 bulldozer in sections. They put it together and started to level out the ground so that the Fire Direction Chief could set the mortars up and registered. The FDC set up a temporary center to register the guns despite the unbelievable mud. Sometimes after the gun fired it had to be removed and reset because the base plate sank into the muck. While the bulldozer cleared the hill the VC mortared us. The engineer jumped off the bulldozer to safety but his bulldozer kept moving.

We lived under ponchos and plastic sheeting till we were able to build hootches for personal and ammunition. The Fire Direction Center operated in an 8 by 8 Conex container. This is where radio watch and information to the guns was managed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Army named our new location LZ Amy. It took four months of hard work to build the base.

Some of the men that came over from Hawaii and were in the mortar platoon were re-assigned to other companies and other duty assignments. The mortar platoon basically consisted of a Fire Direction Chief, Hank Suffoletto, an assistant, Jim D'Agostino, and other members, Chuck Kelly, George Prall, and Phil Evans.

The four gun squads consisted of a squad leader, a gunner, and ammo bearers. The four squads were manned as follows: Gun 1: Duane Dobbs, squad leader; Lowell Barnhart, gunner; Dennis Scott, Mike Zamora, and M. Blastein, ammo bearers. Gun 2: Joe Bonanni, squad leader; Hank Ugolini, gunner; Dave Rittinger, J. Kelsey, and Woody, ammo bearers. Gun 3: Wayne Van Winkle, squad leader; Skip Sherman, gunner; Tom Ingles, D. Nonher, and Dean Edwards, ammo bearers. Gun 4: Don Atkinson, squad leader, Steve Sutton, gunner; G. Ericson, Mark Clark, and Bob Maestas, ammo bearers.

On the other side of the hill was a battery of 105 howitzers from 6/11th Artillery, a Tactical Command



Center, and a helipad. The mortar platoon provided fire support for the line companies that were operating around LZ Amy. We would fire harassing and interdicting mortar fire throughout the night. We fired on locations of possible crossroads or paths that the VC would travel during the night.

The Fire Direction Chief Hank Suffoletto and his assistant, Jim D'Agostino, trained their replacements while on the job. Craig Burchfield replaced Hank and Jack Head replaced Jim. Hank and Jim rotated out of country in April 1969. The squad leaders of each of the guns were training the newer guys that came into the mortar platoon to replace the men that were rotating also out of country.

Epilogue

After 50 years of last seeing our brothers that served together, I, Hank Suffoletto decided to build a model of LZ Amy. I had pictures taken from a helicopter at different times returning to the LZ locations. Jim D'Agostino also had some aerial shots. So I had a lot to work with as far as the mortar platoon was laid out. I had a couple of other brothers that I found that helped me place different parts of the hill together.

After I finished the diorama, I wanted to find more of the brothers that went from Hawaii to Vietnam and then finally home. After two years of sending out letters looking for anyone that had the name of the person that I served with, I found 24 out of 30 brothers. Some have passed. I used two and a half rolls of stamps to mail out a letter that stated my name, what I did, where I served. If a person

served with us he had my e-mail and cell phone number to get in touch with me.

At last year's reunion I met five brothers I have not seen in 52 years. This year's reunion I was re-united with four brothers that I haven't seen in 53 years. In total, ten brothers that served together were at the 2022 reunion. Brothers who served and built LZ Amy and are in photograph are: Front row- Joe Bonanni, Hank Suffoletto, Jim D'Agostino. Second row- Skip Sherman, Hank Ugolini, Dave Rittinger, Al Britz, Jack Head, George Prall, and Wayne Van Winkle.

The story of this diorama is on YouTube. Search for LZ-AMY and a 48 minute video shows how this was created.



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Chu Lai Base Amrical Division Headquarters

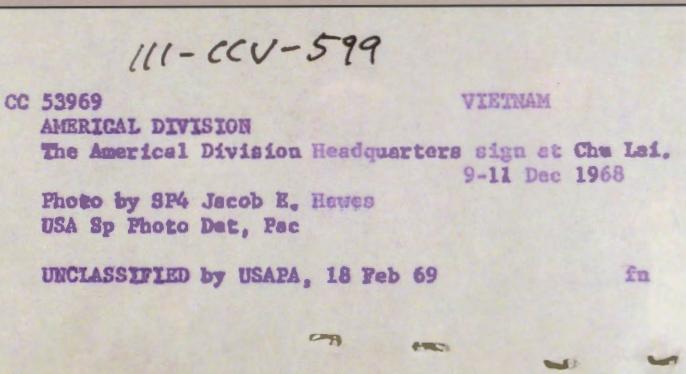
By Gary L. Noller

Prior to the middle of 1965, there was no location in Vietnam with the name Chu Lai. This changed when the United States chose a sandy beach location 57 miles south of Da Nang for the site of a new airfield to support the Marines.

The Marines landed in Da Nang a few months earlier and were in need of a support base in the southern portion of I Corps. Elements of the Naval Mobile Construction Battalion (Seabees) quickly scooped out a short airfield adjacent to the beach. In the coming months this became the massive American base with the name Chu Lai.

As the United States increased the number of ground troops in Vietnam it was decided to move the Marines to the northern part of I Corps and to replace them with an Army infantry division.

In April 1967, the Army created Task Force Oregon with headquarters at Chu Lai. This force drew components and individuals from units already in Vietnam as well as units deployed directly from the United States. In October 1967, Task Force Oregon transformed into the Amrical Division. The 11th Light Infantry Brigade, 196th Light Infantry Brigade,



and 198th Light Infantry Brigade provided the core of the division.

The name Amrical Division name was a throwback to World War II and the creation of an Army division on New Caledonia in the South Pacific. The Amrical Division was formed from an aggregate of units named Task Force 6814. Among the core units were the 132nd Infantry Regiment, 164th Infantry Regiment, and 182nd Infantry Regiment.

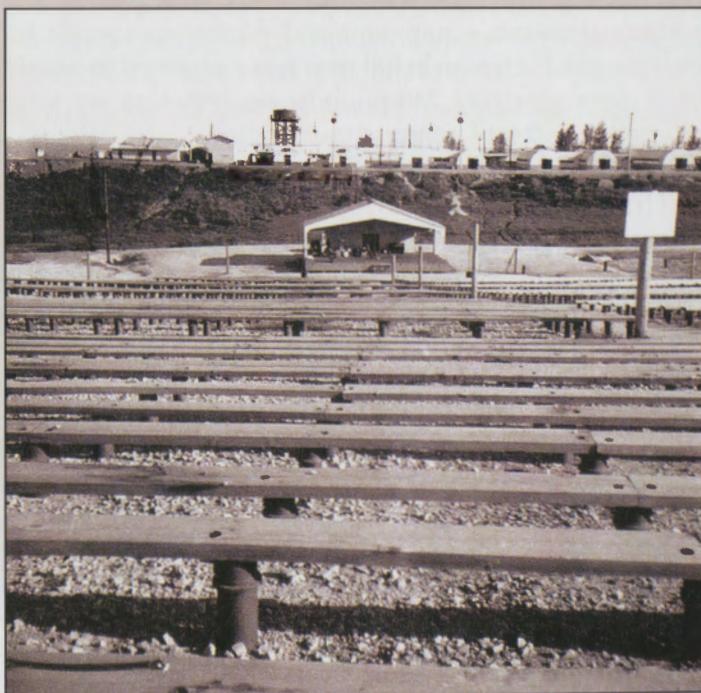
In October 1942 the Amrical Division landed on Guadalcanal to replace the Marines. In 1967 the Amrical Division replaced the Marines at Chu Lai to allow the Marines to concentrate forces north of the Que Son Mountains and extending to the Demilitarized Zone.

The photos of the Amrical Division headquarters



area were taken by an Army photographer in December 1969. Several prominent Amrical landmarks are shown to include the division headquarters, post office, chapel, amphitheater and 91st Evacuation Hospital, and roadside billboard. The division was deactivated in November 1971.

In late 1970 the division began to transition to the name 23rd Infantry Division. The Army created the 23ID on December 1, 1954 in Panama as a result of the Korean War and Cold War. The 23ID took the colors, honors, traditions, heritage, and lineage of the Amrical Division of World War II fame. The 23ID was a skeleton division and did not participate in



First Mission—Day One

By Don Counter

The afternoon before the mission we were provided two simple wood buildings in the company area at the Americal Division base in Chu Lai. The buildings were identical, screened window with a framed screen doorway entry into an open space that was filled with bunk beds. There were no foot lockers, personal space or wiggle room – it was a place to sleep on a first-come first-served basis. After dusk, as the days free-time activities were dwindling, people slowly filtered in to secure a bunk. An hour or so later someone eventually flicked the lone light switch off for a much-needed night's rest.

Nevertheless there was commotion outside. The boisterous activity and loud voices continued unabated, most of which was a result of nervous anticipation and the consumption of alcohol. Periodically people fumbled in, flicked the lights on, searched for a bunk to crash on, often followed by intermittent grunts and groans for someone to turn the damn lights out. There would be no peaceful night's sleep in this transit building.

At dawn we were rousted out of bed for another stupid-ass formation. We were directed to gather our two bedding sheets and pillow case, drop them off at the supply room, secure our personal gear and weapon, then gather outside the area of the administration office and supply room to field-strip and clean our individual weapons, receive ammo, varied devices, and rations, consolidate our equipment, load magazines with fresh ammo and fill our canteens from a nearby water buffalo. Somewhere between all this activity you'd eat breakfast – a canned C-ration. We jam packed our rucksacks with: food, gear, water, and additional ammo, equipment and explosives specific for the mission. Each man in full gear was calculated to weigh-in at approximately 240-pounds; nevertheless we were referred to as "Light Infantry" foot soldiers.

Around mid-morning we loaded-up onto deuce-and-a-half trucks and were convoyed to an airfield in Tam Ky.

In the Aviation world "**weight**," is a major consideration and carefully measured with respect to its distribution and that which is deemed the maximum allowable. It seems we were virtually cargo that lugged its own baggage... Welcome to the Infantry.

Along the flight line we were assembled and pre-positioned to await the arrival of the six helicopter "lift" and our specifically assigned "chalk" (aircraft). There we sat on the ground, leaned against our individual ruck and waited.

Amid our group there was quiet apprehension and uncertainty as to whether we would be dropped into a hot or cold landing zone and the tense facial expressions of the seasoned soldiers was noticeable and served as

evidence of their concern. Eventually word circulated that artillery was prepping our intended insertion point and blasting the surrounding area with explosive rounds. This would be my very first mission.

Our choppers arrived "on station" and with blades rotating at full RPM the crew chief/door gunners stepped out and away from the aircraft, gave a thumbs up to the pilots and then waved us on. Collectively we arose, crouched to lower our posture to safely clear the helicopter blades, then hustled and climbed aboard our respective aircraft.

On my side of our aircraft the M60 machine gun was noticeably suspended by a bungee cord as opposed to being affixed to a support mount. Whether it was impromptu or purely "John Wayne style", this technique permitted an extended scope and almost limitless range of motion of firing but...the elastic support configuration was risky. In the event of a sudden banking movement or turbulence it could result in unintentionally putting 7.62 bullets into the aircraft skid, rotors or even the pilot.

When the airlift was loaded up with three "feet dangling" grunts seated in each of the open doorways and another infantryman sequestered inside, the door gunner/crew chief gave a thumbs up to the pilots, jumped back on board. Taking their respective positions, the birds lifted off. The six choppers flew in straight line formation with Cobra gunships on either side as escort and to provide cover in anticipation of the insertion point being a "Hot LZ".

There were no cheesy grins or high-fives, it was a somber thirty-two-minute flight gazing at the vast green landscape and wondering.

Hand signals indicated we were nearing our landing site/insertion point and the six helicopters split into two groups of three birds. We were in the first group and scheduled to land on a tall grassy plateau.

We were mentally prepared to offload with punctuality to minimize ground time and allow the second group of three birds to land, drop off troops and fly off.

As our helicopter flared, with the nose of the aircraft up to make its approach for landing, a cloud of red smoke billowed on ground. Everyone was instantaneously on alert; it was the signal for a Hot Landing Zone! Our bird hesitated and hovered approximately ten feet off the ground. All senses were on overload for a booby-trapped LZ. There was nervous excitement, shouting and then with an overpowering sense of impatient urgency the door gunner motioned for soldiers to hurriedly off load mid-air. Tension was high and it became evident that the aircraft was not going to land. The M60 gunner blasted away with his machine gun.

There was a bewildered look in most everyone's eyes as the private seated immediately next to me, (a sturdy farm boy and former lineman for either Oklahoma or Nebraska

State college) removed his steel helmet and began slamming and beating the door gunner. It seems that the door gunner with the "loose-goosey" bungee corded M60 had inadvertently shot the Private directly in the foot.

Amid the urgency to off load our aircraft, there was a mad scramble to retrieve the four metal cans of M60 ammo from the wounded soldier's rucksack and remove the linked ammo draped around his shoulders, then hastily redistribute his 1,000 rounds among others in our group.

To avoid being literally pushed out by the door gunner I jumped off from the skids of the aircraft and plunged into the prop-washed sea of elephant grass, and landed with a thud, stunned and vulnerable.

From the jungle growth emerged a weathered and wire-eyed soldier, with shirt sleeves down, who motioned for us to gather. He then herded us through the elephant grass to a hasty rallying point.

We arrived to a loosely assembled group of soldiers, mostly nervous newbies. I dropped to one knee to stay low to the ground and examined my exposed forearms which were lacerated, bleeding and stinging as if alcohol was rubbed into an open wound.

One of the new comer's (green weenies) began scuffing the leather tops of his boots. The effort to create a worn and less spanking new look was quickly mimicked by another newbie in the ultimate struggle for the illusion of inclusion.

Amid the experienced grunts wearing faded and well-worn uniforms, we stood out in our "fresh off the shelf" jungle fatigues, boots and untarnished gear. Despite the self-conscious feeling of being greener than the vegetation, we were reminded that, as privates fresh from Basic and AIT, we were still pissing stateside water and we were just another rotation of inexperienced replacements.

We were eventually led to a jungle hillside that was being cleared for an eventual helicopter resupply landing area. Several freshly fallen trees and tree stumps marked the area. A chainsaw buzzed steadily then, without the proverbial "t-i-m-b-e-r," a massive tree came crashing through tree branches and slammed to the ground on the downward slope. I was bewildered and while attempting to take it all in I positioned myself next to a sizable fallen tree, figuring I could utilize it for cover and concealment. On the crest of the forested hillside a black 500-gallon rubber water bladder blivet (referred to as an elephant rubber) sat as graceful as a Volkswagen Beetle in the middle of the jungle.

A gruff voice shouted, "Come ere newbie!" Hoping the hollering was intended for someone else I didn't acknowledge. A demanding "Cum ere mutherr-fu**err" got my undivided attention. A crusty soldier locked eyes with me and motioned for me to respond to where he was standing. As I approached, he directed me pick up the

ax and begin hacking at the very tree he stood next to. I dropped my rucksack in place, leaned my M-16 against it and he walked away, taking my place at the fallen tree. In less than sixty seconds we had exchanged places. I slammed the ax into the tree. WHAM. A sharp cracking sound resonated, the fellow instantly dropped. Men were shouting but I couldn't see anyone; everyone was hugging the ground. He had been standing in the very spot where I had stood just seconds before. There are few things as subtle as the accuracy of a bullet.

Without hesitation a soldier with a distinctively elongated bird feather in his bush hat went in lone pursuit of the elusive sniper. My impression was, "what courage, determination and guts." He was an imposing figure, a powerfully built work horse and obviously attuned to the environment. Although Carlos Maldonado was his given name he was simply known as Panama, his country of origin. He was composed, fearless, self-assured squad leader and in no way a thrill seeker. He was not only impressive but his presence engendered confidence and reassurance to the group. With life experience in the Panamanian jungle he knew how to keenly read the tropical terrain, like we knew the streets we had lived on. He would pluck vegetation from the jungle and eat them. The muscular figure stood out in a powerful and positive way.

Later that afternoon I was attached to a small group of soldiers and routed a short distance to a night's encampment where hooches were already set up. I realized that everyone, but me, had been paired up with a hooch mate. A sergeant pointed to a section of ground and indicated that I was to set up there for the night. As I began rigging a poncho rain cover, the sergeant asked if I had a mosquito net. I answered to the negative and eventually someone tossed me a bundle of the netting. It was my first experience with a mosquito net. I generically assembled a workable configuration. My sleeping space was just inches away from the trash dump filled with empty C-ration cans of varied sizes, some flattened, others still in cylinder shape some opened at both ends, all with raggedly sharp lids exposed.

As others were opening their C-rations and preparing a meal I overheard conversation about our landing zone earlier in the day. It turned out that it was not a Hot LZ, but more like a drop zone. The alarming red smoke grenade on the LZ was a mishap and created when it accidentally separated from someone's web gear and got activated. In the curious follow-on chain of events the aircraft never landed and the injured soldier never got off the aircraft which must have made for a rather bumpy ride for the bungee corded machine gunner.... all the way to the rear for medical treatment.

As darkness grew, the transition from sunset to pitch black was as abrupt as flicking a light switch. The day

became silent and the night seemed to intensify even the minutest of sounds. I crawled beneath my makeshift home: a poncho with mosquito netting. Having grown up in the City of Los Angeles I was totally inexperienced with camping in the woods and bedding down on the ground did not come easily.

This was no youthful exploration. I was now venturing in a foreign land one with a reputation for being brutally harsh and unsafe for travel. I was at the beginning of leading an inevitable life of long walks that thread through a jungle with a dink behind every bush, rock formation and tree. I found myself all alone. I pulled my camouflage poncho liner up to my face as if to say "Goodnight Nobody."

Whispers dissipated, restless movement settled to a hush and progressively men were motionless from exhaustion.

There was no switching off the light and going to sleep. There was stillness, it was quiet enough for the jungle to be heard. Sounds are amplified and grow bigger as your mind is kept awake. I laid awake questioning the intensity of being someones moving target for a week or a month – a year was unimaginable. I then drifted into a light, erratic sleep.

I was nudged awake for my shift at guard duty by an experienced soldier. The two of us low crawled to our hour-long night trail over-watch position. Even with the freshest of batteries the red filtered lens of my flashlight did not penetrate the blackness. There was no foxhole, the two of us laid there directly on the ground, shoulder to shoulder, as prone as possible with the machine gun between us. He on the left, I on the right. I said nothing but had concern for the potential of being on the receiving end of hot brass spewing from the M60 machine gun ejection port (located on the right side of the weapon). How does one dodge blazing shells flying at a rate of fire of 600 rounds per minute from landing in your shirt? Ouch.

Listening intently I was alerted to the slightest of sounds, in the darkness every sound was new and disturbing to me. They were all unfamiliar sounds to this city kid's nerve racking learning curve.

With the crackle and snap of branches as something moved through the landscape the hair on the back of your neck stood up. I leaned in closer and whispered... "what was that?" Then with all senses fully engaged and fingers on the triggers we were ultra aware of each and every sound. Our senses became alert to every crackling twig, and the movement of anything was amplified, real and imagined. Being new and scared you were aware of the slightest twitch of a branch or minuscule sound. Listening for the slightest stir, anything that disturbed the night or our senses. Lizard, monkey or a nocturnal dink? On the alert when the buzz of the forest transitions to stillness and dead silence. At night the slightest noise could indicate danger lurking but it could play tricks on you. Do you pop a flare or squeeze the trigger, fully alerting the sleeping men?

There was hesitancy to interrupt much needed sleep coupled with risking humiliation, ridicule and scorn if it simply amounted to your fear as a FNG. Ears cocked, the absence of sounds was an indicator to nature as well. It is the incomprehensible quiet that gets to you. Those eerie-quiet and tense hours spent with a sense of aloneness as if abandoned on guard duty, questioning oneself to awaken and alert others, a weight that you didn't want to be the one who causes others to awaken due to a false report caused by your fears. The scary shift over I crawled back to my first nights jungle sleeping configuration and fell asleep from exhaustion.

The distinctive popping sound of a trip flare and the immediate illumination jolted me awake. Then with the attention getting startling SWISH sound of a hand activated parachute flare the remote jungle site was temporarily illuminated and the immediate landscape was filled with distorted images and moving shadows. It was more spooky than the fabled "camel's nose in the tent." When an M60 machine gun fired on full automatic it was pure sensory overload. It was a mad scramble as bodies rustled from beneath their netting and scattered on the ground. With weapon in hand and a bandoleer of ammo I rolled and became tightly entangled in my mosquito netting. Dazed and frozen, questioning what the hell was going on, I unintentionally rolled directly into the trash pit. When the intensity of the situation settled, it was determined to be a firefight with no one; the trip wire had been set off by a wild (Viet Cong) pig. I untangled myself from the collapsed mosquito netting, crawled to my gear and just laid there amid the incessant buzz of mosquitoes, the combined smell of bug juice, a rotting jungle and sweat; trying as best I could to make sense of it all. I questioned how long I'd make it through this raw daily life as an infantryman. With so much adrenalin pumping through my veins there was no way I was going to sleep.

I realized that Hollywood's glamorous images of war was as much a distortion as John Wayne, who was actually born as Marion Robert Morrison, and I was not part of the movie actors guild wherein the hero always comes home alive. This place had the potential to be downright harmful.

In the morning I noticed jagged cuts and lacerations to my shirt, pants and skin. It appeared as if I had had a free style wrestling match with an electric can opener.

In short order a hushed roar of laughter was generated over the FNG who rolled, got tightly hung up in his mosquito net and ended up the trash sump, with a white elongated inside wrapper from a Bit O' Honey candy adhesively stuck to the seat of his pants. Yes, there was blood and it was a memorable sight but no Purple Heart for this event.

Reality set in – I have 347 days remaining in my year long combat tour.

Brother's Forever

By Chuck Wanko, Joe Emma, and Bill Stoneman
Continued from Jul-Aug-Sep 2022 edition

SGT Bill Stoneman

Story# 11: Operation Lamar Plain (Tam Ky International Airport). 1969. Emma and I along with LT Eric White took two 8" SPs up Highway 1 to support the 101st Airborne in Operation Lamar Plain. We set up just off the runway of Tam Ky International Airport. Tam Ky International Airport consisted of a small steel covered structure where personnel could keep out of the elements and a runway that consisted of both concrete and PSP (as best I can remember). When we arrived, the 101st had a battery of M102s (105mm Towed Howitzers) set up in a star formation. We were told to set up in front of the 105s. The issue was that we were now in front of the 105s and in their line of direct fire to the West. If the 105s were to conduct direct fire, we would be in the direct line of fire. LT White discussed this with the 105 battery commander; but the 105s were not going to re-position. So we occupied the directed position with protest. CPT Cates was contacted as well as our battalion TOC. CPT Cates arrived the next day and we ended up re-positioning our 8" just south of the 105s. We were now firing over the 105s! It was simple firing battery operations, light artillery is forward and the heavier the artillery, the further back they are positioned. I hate to say it but our living conditions changed from underground bunkers to sandbagged culvert halves. But we all know, when you are dog tired you can sleep anywhere. Joe remembered the five gallon showers he and I gave each other while there. We did not have the comforts of our homemade showers on Dottie, so we gave each other a five gallon water can shower. Poured water on each other, lathered up, then poured water on each other to rinse. We got pretty good at it. We even had a little water left for shaving in the morning. That was the buddy



Tam Ky firing position

system at work. Our participation in Lamar Plain lasted a couple of weeks then we headed back south to LZ Dottie.

Story #12: Rest and Recuperation (R&R). 1969. Yes, I took an R&R. I went to Sydney, Australia. At that time not many American's had been there. Everyone going to Australia had to undergo a "Short Arm Inspection" at Cam Rahn Bay before we flew out. We lined up, dropped our pants and pulled our manhood out. A medic/doctor came by and squeezed our manhood. If it leaked any type of thick fluid, you did not go to Australia! Upon our arrival we were bused to a processing area where we made hotel reservations and rented clothes (yes, rented). We were not allowed to rent cars while in Australia (they drive on the wrong side of the road). Upon check-in at my hotel (Hotel Sydney) I took a HOT BATH. After soaking, I noticed a film on the water. It was the grime from months of dirt and God knows what would not come off in a our homemade shower on the firebase. My buddy and I picked up two lovely young ladies there in Sydney. Round Eyed Women! Americans were gentlemen compared to Aussie Men (as stated by the ladies). American's opened building doors for women, held the cab door open for them first, lit their cigarettes, treated them like ladies. We had dinner, a few drinks, then went to the "Whiskey A Go Go" and danced our asses off. I found an air-conditioning duct to dance under just to keep from sweating so much. At some point my buddy and I realized we were DEAD TIRED. He and I left the girls and went back to the hotel to get some sleep! We changed hotels the next morning. Ended up staying at a hotel overlooking Rushcutter's Bay near the then Sydney Opera House construction site. The bartender in the new hotel noticed my after shave lotion, "British Sterling", which was not yet available in Sydney. I gave him the bottle and he gave me free drinks for the week. We met two different girls that afternoon at lunch in downtown (Saint James Square) Sydney. One worked for Smith Corona and the other for Standard Oil company. We ended up staying with them for the remainder of the R&R. Wonder what became of them? R&R in Sydney was a total escape from oriental life style. One morning after breakfast, I walked up the street from our hotel into a local neighborhood. I



SGT Emma, LT White, SGT Stoneman

passed by a older lady who was in her yard watering her flowers. I waved and said "Good Morning, Mam". I guess my voice identified me as an American. The lady and I talked and she invited me to have tea on her porch. Now, I was not much of a tea person but 'When in Rome.....' I actually enjoyed the cup of tea with cream but mostly the conversation. I actually got to flavor more of Australia by spending a couple of hours on that front porch talking with this lady. Note: Upon my return to Vietnam and LZ Dottie, I started drinking hot tea with milk and sugar with one of the FDC Chief Computers in our FDC. To this day I enjoy a cup of hot tea with honey (got away from the milk). I have to thank that lady in Sydney for introducing me to hot tea.

Story #13: Guard Duty. 1969 - 1970. At some point I was promoted to Staff Sargent (SSG) and moved into the Chief of Firing Battery (CFB) job. I now was responsible for the four howitzers and ammunition section. I also checked on howitzer section guards at night. Guard duty is a lonely vigil. At times having a visitor stop by to check on you is a blessing. It gives you a kind of second wind. You wake up. Then you have the guard who just says "Fuck It" and just wants to get some shuteye. Those are the guys who can not be trusted and are likely to get their fellow soldiers killed. After a couple of incidents of waking a guard up, I started carrying a red Magic Marker with me. If I caught the howitzer guard sleeping, I would cut his throat. Well not really; but mark his neck with the red Magic Marker like his throat had been cut. It took three days for the marker to ware off. Kind of a "Scarlet Letter". Oh, the guy(s) who were identified as sleeping on guard duty were criticized by their crews. It also spurred crews to watch for the guys who were really tired and shuffle duty around or one of the crew would spend time in the gun pit with them.

Story #14: Extending My Tour. 1969. I extended my tour for an additional six months in Vietnam which rewarded me with a free 30 day leave to CONUS. I flew home to North Carolina, where I spent most of that 30 days traveling between Fayetteville, NC and Greenville, NC visiting Mary at East Carolina University (ECU). I sat in on one of her classes and was introduced to the class my Mary. The professor was very nice and politely told us to leave and enjoy ourselves. We did. The political mood at ECU at that time was not what I expected. I was treated nicely by the students, staff and faculty. Upon my return to Vietnam I flew into Cam Ranh Bay, then caught a hop to Da Nang to visit my father. I was waiting on my dad to pick me up at the Da Nang Airport when a 5/4 ton truck pulls up with some guy in shorts, sandals, and what looked like a Hawaiian shirt. After all, it was Saturday in Da Nang. Yeap, it was my dad. I spent two days with him at the Special Forces (SF) compound, attended a couple of functions, and got to meet a lot of Mike Force personnel. I was very fortunate to meet LTC Martha Ray one evening at the club. I talked with her for a few minutes then she was out and about like a butterfly. My dad's room was right on the white sandy beach of the China Sea. Now that sounds really cool, but the beach was lined with claymore mines secured in the sand by engineer stakes. Not the kind of place you would want to go swimming at. After two days I hugged my dad (I am quite sure there are not many Vietnam Vets who can say that they hugged their father in Vietnam) and caught a hop to Chu Lai. Going back to LZ Dottie was a bit of a culture shock. While we had some creature comforts, it was not Da Nang or Greenville, NC.

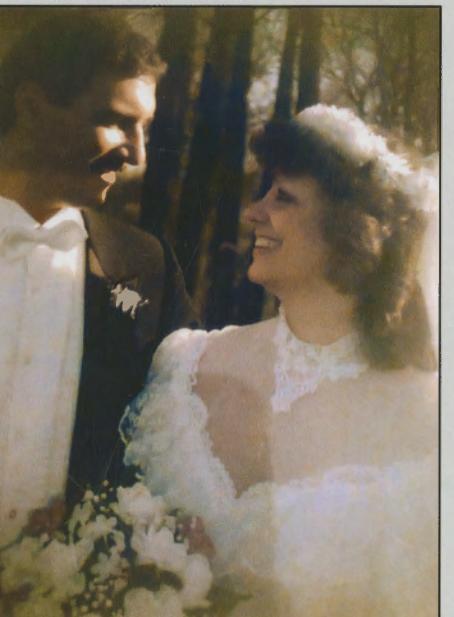
Story #15: LZ Bronco. 1970. LT Don Moffitt, the battery executive officer, and I took two 8" howitzers south to LZ Bronco and set up adjacent to the runway. It was the monsoon season and we were in a sea of mud. I visited PA&E Engineers at Bronco and they came over and helped us build two elevated firing pads with ammo bunkers. The 11th Brigade had a small property disposal yard just behind our platoon position. A number of jeeps with no rear differentials to speak of. We salvaged two jeeps, fixed them up so that the front wheels



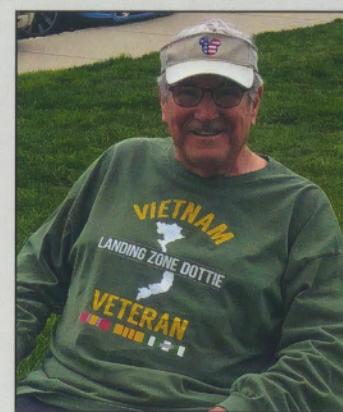
LT Moffitt, SGT Bill Stoneman, PFC Seay, enjoying a game of cards on LZ Bronco.

turned, and we managed to conduct drag races on Sundays. A few cold beers, grilled chicken, burgers and modified/funny car drag races. GI ingenuity. We did lose two of our soldiers to enemy ground attack while at Bronco. Once we began firing our 8" guns we became prime targets and we took a few rockets ourselves. We put up 12 feet chain link fence around our perimeter along with trip wires, cans, and claymores. On 1 April 1970 we were hit. Sappers knew little fear and made it through our defenses, cut holes in our fence, and fired RPGs that ended up killing the two cannoneers. We fired direct fire over our fence but it probably just scared them a little. The 105 battery next to us sustained a damaged 105 howitzer.

Story #16: Coming Home. 1970. Coming home was so uplifting. Yet, it left me with a sense of guilt that I was leaving my brothers. I had re-enlisted



Joe and Beverly wedding



Joe

and requested a lump sum payout of my reenlistment bonus to help with my upcoming wedding. I was at LZ Bronco and called Chu Lai Finance. Turns out that they had been trying to contact me for a week. My lump sum payment had been approved and I was to leave in five days. The next day a chopper picked me up at LZ Bronco and flew me to LZ Dottie. I cleared out and

spent the night saying good-bye and caught a chopper to Chu Lai and battalion HQ. I cleared finance got my orders and was standing in line at the Chu Lai airport waiting on a flight to Cam Ranh Bay. I spent one night in Cam Ranh Bay then boarded a flight to the USA. As soon as the wheels went up, everyone broke out in shouts of glee. Soldiers crying everywhere. Hidden bottle of liquor came out and a welcome drink was enjoyed. Upon arrival at SEATAC airport we boarded a bus to Fort Lewis, Washington. There were demonstrators outside the SEATAC gate and I noticed a big bug strike on my window, only to realize it was a giant loogie had been spit towards me. Good thing the window was up. We arrived at Fort Lewis, quickly processed in and moved to a mess hall to have a steak dinner (everyone got a steak dinner regardless of the time of day or night they got in). Those of us who had orders for follow-on assignments were issued a complete new set of uniforms and equipment. I returned to SEATAC at some point to catch a plane to the East Coast and home. I was in a class B uniform with full ribbons. I wore staff sergeant stripes. I was stared at by a lot of people. No one talked to me and I sat alone. Such a lonely feeling that no one even seemed to notice my presence. Once on the plane I was in economy but the stewardess moved me to a First



Joe with the New Jersey National Guard

Class seat up front. She had a brother in the service. She actually welcomed me home. That was the only nice thing said to me on the West Coast. Upon arrival in Fayetteville, NC, I was met by my little sister and her husband. I was from a Army family and we had sent off and welcomed home our father dozens of times over the years. But, my mom was all open arms when I got home. We can usually expect that from our mom.

POST SCRIPT LT Chuck Wanko - Returning to civilian life, Chuck found himself with a mandatory assignment to the Army Reserve which was part of his original contract signed back in college. This would turn out to be an additional 24 years of military duty. His initial assignment included commander of an Engineer HHC and subsequently a line company. Other assignments included XO of a supply and service battalion, commander of a training battalion, XO of a training brigade, and a final assignment as the commandant of an Army Reserve School. He married the girl of his dreams. The young green 2LT retired in 1994 as a full colonel.

POST SCRIPT SGT Joe Emma - Joe returned from Vietnam after his year in country. He was discharged in August 1969. He worked for an accounting firm for a few years, then in 1981 he felt the urge to be a soldier again and joined the New Jersey National Guard (NJNG) full time. Based upon his artillery background he found himself as a 4.2" and later an 81mm mortar platoon sergeant. Later he was responsible for working with new enlistees at Fort Dix to get them ready for Basic Combat Training (BCT). The program was eventually instituted throughout the United States to all NG organizations. He later became the battalion retention NCO. Joe retired from the NJNG in 2007. After retiring he worked as a contractor working with the NJ Honor Guard Program. In 2011 he was the Honor Guard Coordinator for NJ until he finally retired in 2014. During all this time he managed to meet and marry his current wife (Beverly) and they had a beautiful daughter.

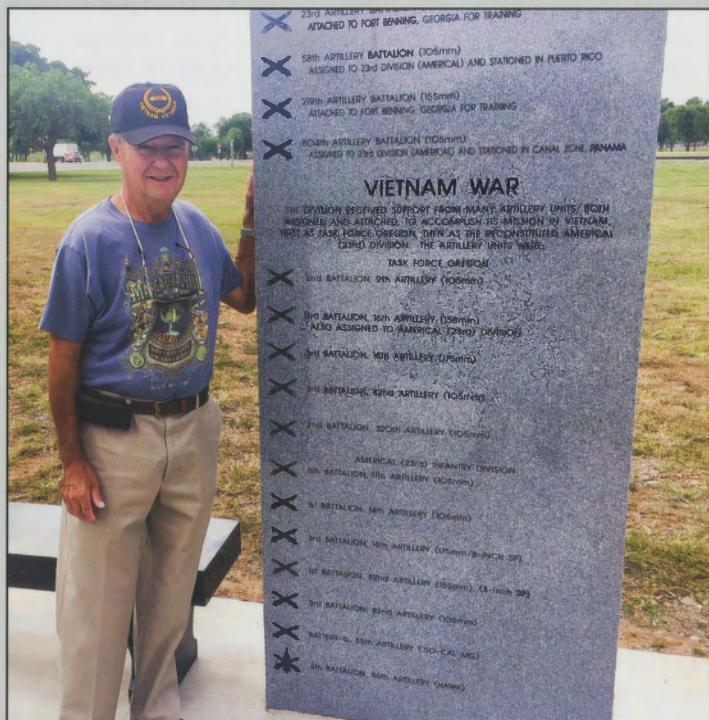
POSTSCRIPT SGT Bill Stoneman - Bill served 18 months in Vietnam, stayed in the Army, and upon his return to the states was assigned to Fort Bragg, 4/39 FA, and married his girlfriend. From there he attended Field Artillery OCS at Fort Sill, was commissioned as a 2LT and shipped back to Fort Bragg and assigned to the same battalion he had left as a NCO. This unit assignment was very unusual but happened as the battalion commander who sent him to OCS requested that he be assigned back to his battalion. From Bragg he shipped out to Germany; the 1st Armored Division, 2/78 FA in Bamberg. Next assignment was back to Ft Sill; to the FA Advanced Course then onto Fort Benning, 197th Infantry Brigade, 2/10 FA. Next assignment was to Korea with assignment to the 2nd Infantry Division, 102nd Military Intelligence (CEWI) Bn, Camp Hovey. Then back to Fort Benning, Infantry School and the Field Artillery Branch at the Infantry School and numerous Military Intelligence (MI) assignments. His last duty assignment was back to Ft



Bill and Mary Stoneman wedding

Sill; the Field Artillery School, the Fire Support Department where he retired in 1987 as a major after serving 20 years in numerous command and staff positions in Field Artillery (FA) and Military Intelligence (MI) organizations. After military retirement he worked for a number of defense contractors before retiring again in 2008.

EPILOG - Chuck stayed close to home when he got out of the Army and eventually went into the Army Reserve. Joe stayed close to home and went into the NJNG. I, on the other hand, opted to stay in the Regular Army, raise a family of Army brats with a wonderful wife and jumped from one assignment to another. A very interesting aside to this story is that a few years ago Chuck and I were reunited after almost five decades. Chuck came to Lawton/Fort Sill for a few days to see the dedication of the Americal Division Artillery Memorial at the Field Artillery



Chuck at the Americal Memorial, Fort Sill, Oklahoma

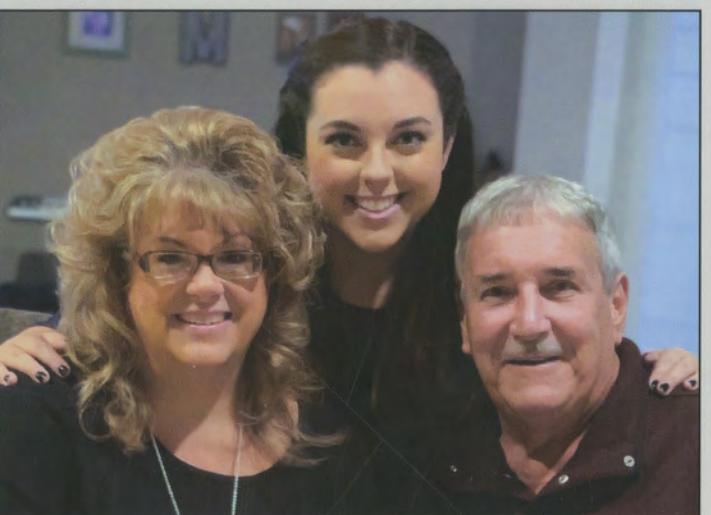


Joe and Beverly Emma with Chuck and Liz Wanko

Museum, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Then the next year at the 2018 Americal Division Reunion in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Chuck and I and our wives began discussing our lives after Vietnam. We found that we both got married in September 1970, both families had three children, Bill and Chuck both had remained in the Army, Bill on active duty and Chuck with 24 years of Army Reserve duty. We could not believe how closely our lives had mirrored each other over the five decades after the war. We continued the connection at the 2019 ADVA reunion in Providence, Rhode Island, met some really great guys, and talked war stories. That is what old soldiers do, tell war stories and enjoy the fruits of our labors. Health issues have restricted Joe from traveling but we all have maintained contact through Facebook and well as emails and phones. Hopefully when the COVID-19 threat is over, Chuck and I intend to travel to New Jersey to visit our brother Joe, because we are **Brothers Forever**.

[Editor's note- Our sincere condolences to the family and friends of William Murray "Bill" Stoneman. Bill, age 74, passed to his Eternal reward on April 16, 2022.]



Joe and Beverly Emma

The Miss Black America Show Visits The Americal Division

By Dale Meisel

During the Vietnam War, the USO sponsored many groups to tour in-country to entertain the troops and to help build morale. Most notably, of course, was Bob Hope and his entourage. This is a story of the Miss Black America show visiting the Americal Division, but it really is a much more nuanced story, as we shall see.

While I was serving as First Platoon Leader, 23rd MP Company, with the 11th Infantry Brigade at LZ Bronco, the Provost Marshal, Lieutenant Colonel Everett I. Perrin, Jr., pulled me back to Chu Lai to be the PM Operations Officer. That was in October 1970. I came back kicking and screaming (to myself), as I much enjoyed being a platoon leader, working with our soldiers, and being my own boss. Being 50-plus miles from the Americal Division flagpole was a bonus.

As I neared the end of my tour, LTC Perrin tasked me with one final operation. Miss Black America 1970, Stephanie Clark, and her troupe were coming to Chu Lai at the end of January 1971 to perform for the Americal's soldiers. I was charged with the security of the show.

The Miss Black America show presented a special challenge to security and safety. In preparing for the event, I learned that the audience would be comprised mainly of soldiers from the three infantry brigades, many coming directly via helicopter from the bush. Here was an audience potentially armed to the teeth—and hostile. I was not happy. Too many chances of disaster!

Morale in the Army at this time was dismal—and in the Army in Vietnam even worse. Maintaining any kind of positive morale in a combat unit was challenging, at best. The stateside anti-war movement and the search for racial equality combined with a virulent drug epidemic to create a deadly climate.

The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., in April 1968, was the catalyst for rioting in more than 60 American cities. Racial unrest and even pitched battles between blacks and whites then erupted across the Armed Forces in the several years following.



In what might have been the beginning of the disorders, in July 1969 black and white Marines in Camp LeJeune fought each other, leaving one white Marine dead and a dozen injured.

The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute states, "Other military installations erupted into racial conflicts such as Sheppard AFB, Texas; Osan AFB, Korea; USS Kitty Hawk and USS Constellation; Bamberg and Mannheim, Germany; Fort Knox, Kentucky; and Fort Dix, New Jersey.

"Many younger African-American soldiers developed a new emphasis on race, which was reflected in self-imposed separation, displays of racial pride and solidarity, and quick reactions to what these soldiers felt were racial slights or discrimination, whether by individuals or the Army."

The Army in Vietnam was not exempt. There were reports of fights—battles, even—between black and white soldiers in Da Nang, Long Binh, Cam Ranh Bay and elsewhere. We MPs were all aware of the prisoner takeover of Long Binh Jail by black prisoners in August 1968, to include capturing the stockade commander and setting buildings on fire.

A study by LaSalle University stated that, "By 1969 the Army was at war with itself."

The anti-war movement, whose actions were felt half a world away in Vietnam, also helped to fuel the military morale crisis. As many as 50,000 people had marched on the Pentagon in October 1967 in hopes of "levitating" it. It stayed put.

Campuses seethed with discontent. The radical Weather Underground wanted to initiate a violent, armed struggle. In 1971, the infamous Jane Fonda and her traitorous trip to Hanoi was still a year in the future.

Compounding the challenges to good order and discipline in Vietnam was the easy availability of illegal substances plaguing our soldiers: marijuana—we called the long cigarette version, "Chu Lai 100's," amphetamines in the form of a supposed weight reduction liquid—Obesitol, heroin more potent than what was then available stateside, hashish and other drugs. We MPs collected huge quantities of the stuff and regularly had to burn it outside the Provost Marshal Office.

Perhaps the most devastating results of the confluence of these events were the combat refusals where troops refused to board helicopters to the bush. When I was with the First Platoon at LZ Bronco, I received a call from an infantry unit for just such a situation. I refused to respond—it was a command, not a Military Police, problem. I am sure there were many other such incidents, usually kept quiet.

We MPs can recall responding to reports of fraggings. Some of them were simply unit harassment—a smoke grenade or CS grenade tossed into a crowd or placed under a garbage can. Some were more far more serious—the most serious was a battery commander killed by a grenade rolled under his hooch.

The soldiers of the Americal Division felt the effects of



I coordinated with the engineers and had barbed wire re-strung along the perimeter and new wire strung at the top to restrict entrances, as I wanted to control where and how the soldiers entered. Certainly, this move was a calculated risk on my part. If there was a rocket attack, dispersing the crowd would have been very nearly impossible.

I tasked the three brigade MP platoons to send me a number of their MPs, especially every black MP they could. That order made the platoon leaders unhappy. I didn't blame them.

My plan was to place the black MPs down in front, between the soldiers and the stage. The only white MP the crowd would see was me, as you can observe in the photo. Other white MPs we would use behind the crowd.

We checked every G.I. entering. As mentioned, many of the soldiers came directly from the field. We made each one lift up his jungle fatigue shirt to check for weapons. I am guessing we had 5,000 people there.

Miss Black Alabama, Miss Black North Carolina and Miss Black Utah accompanied Stephanie Clark, as did band members. It was primarily a musical show. Miss Clark had won her crown, in part, by her talented singing, and she had a beautiful voice.

Not that I was watching the show very closely; I was primarily interested in watching the audience. The performers did not hold back in their advocacy. According to one study, they "openly displayed their ideology of black power." Stephanie Clark wanted to "stand as a figure for black nationalists and black power ideologies." At one point, I looked at the crowd and saw 5,000 angry fists raised in the air. A bit intimidating.

But, despite my concerns, the event went off without any trouble. I was relieved.

Whether the show met its goal of easing racial tensions among soldiers is unclear. The effort did demonstrate that the Army was willing to listen to its black soldiers and bring culturally relevant entertainment to them.

(Author's Note: This story, in slightly different form, first appeared in the 23rd MP Chapter's newsletter, *The Blotter*.)



all of these events. A month or two before the Miss Black America show, there had been a demonstration by black soldiers on Chu Lai Base. There might have been fifteen or twenty of them—no more.

The soldiers marched down the MSR, heading towards the PX, right past the Provost Marshal Office, raising their fists in protest. I happened to look out my office window and actually saw them walking down the road.

The march was over before we MPs could even respond. The command group was furious at this breach of discipline. They directed our office to pre-place concertina along the road so that, if there was another march, we could roll the concertina out as a roadblock.

Another measure the command group took was to ban "dap sticks." These were walking sticks sold in the villages and favored by black soldiers. They could also be used as clubs.

It was into this environment that the Miss Black America show headed to Vietnam.

The Miss Black America pageant had first been held, more or less, as a local event just two years prior in 1968 in Atlantic City. It began, in part, as a protest to the Miss America pageant which had yet to have a woman of color participate.

The pageant founder also wanted to present a positive image for black women. A few years later, it had become a national event with network television coverage. The third Miss Black America was Stephanie Clark, a 19-year-old college student attending Ithaca College, New York.

As one study notes, "The fact that the Miss Black America [show] ended up in Vietnam was due to the requests of black GIs who believed that they deserved entertainment that acknowledged their culture...and a precedent of utilizing military entertainment as a way to boost morale."

Undoubtedly, these were good reasons. But I knew that the Miss Black America show coming to Chu Lai was potentially—and literally—explosive. I got to work on the planning.

I surveyed the Americal amphitheater, the natural bowl in Chu Lai on which wooden benches had been built and a stage positioned at the bottom. It required some upgrading.



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