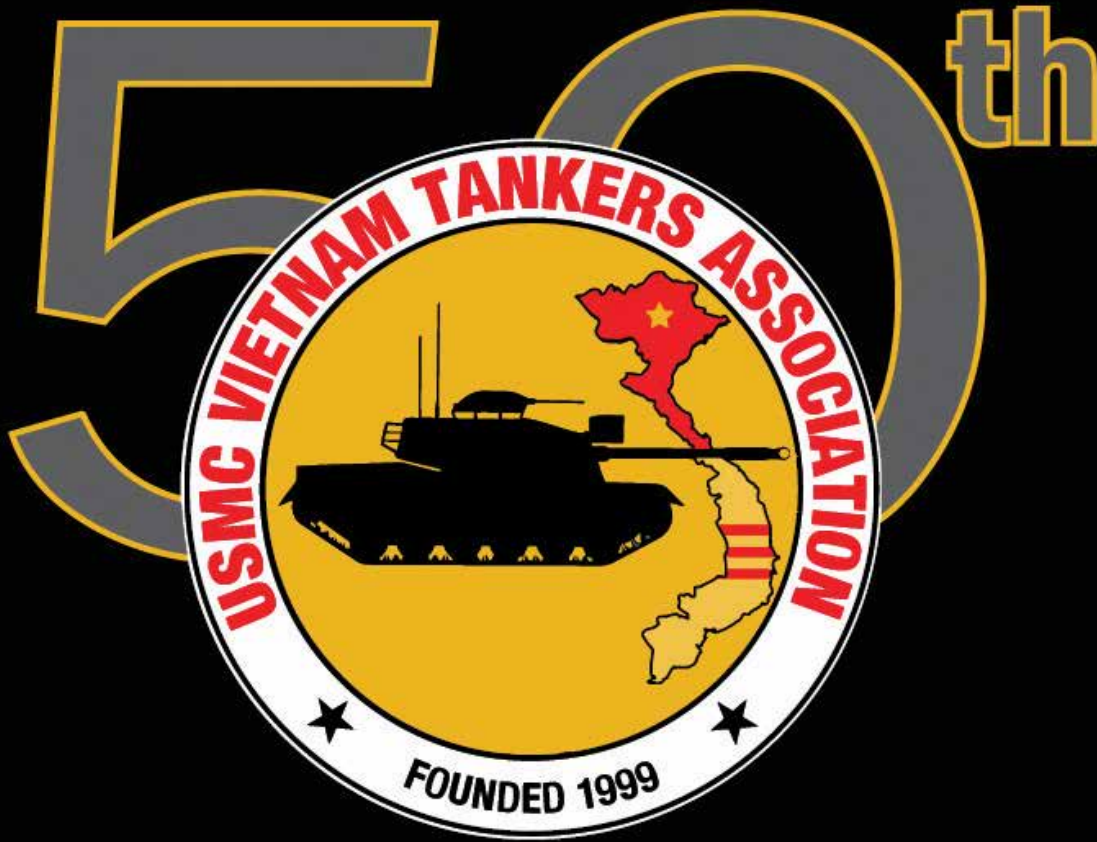




# Sponson BOX

*Voice of  
the USMC  
Vietnam Tankers  
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



## VIETNAM WAR REUNION

2015 - Washington, DC

Front



Back



Actual Size

## NOTHING SAYS “TANKS” LIKE A SPROCKET and TRACK

Working with the Pentagon’s official mint Bob Peavey created a large size (3”), one of a kind medallion to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War. We struck just 200 of these beautiful display pieces. After the 2015 reunion in Washington, DC we now have just 50 medallions left to sell. After these beauties are gone, there will be no more available. Please note that this is NOT a standard “challenge coin” but rather a larger art piece that you will want to proudly display. We are also showing them in a beautiful display frame.

**Medallions—\$25 each.**

**Display Frame—\$10 each.**

**The Display Set—\$35 each.**

Please add \$5.00 for shipping & handling for each coin or display set order.

Send your check made out to the “USMC VTA” to:

**USMC VTA**

**c/o Fred Kellogg**

**15013 NE 16th Street**

**Vancouver, WA 98684-3605**

Please note: Before you send a check, please either email Fred at kellogg@comcast.net Or call him at (360) 609-3404 to assure availability of the medallions.

## Letter from the President

WASHINGTON, D.C.: We did it again! We just completed another fantastic gathering of Vietnam warriors. And from all of the words of appreciation that so many attendees expressed, I truly think that this was the best VTA reunion that we have ever had. The center spread of this issue has a four-page color photo recap of the event. I want to thank the Board Members who stepped up and took on major responsibilities that resulted in several attendees comparing the program to a “hand-made Swiss clock” that ran with perfection. We are also grateful to have had several members help with some the heavy loads and all of their efforts are greatly appreciated. A tip of the hat goes to Jim and Bonnie Raasch for their unflagging devotion and help with the fund raising auction and for Jim with the Welcome Table.

**2017 REUNION ANNOUNCEMENT:** During the Farewell Banquet in DC, we announced that the 2017 USMC VTA 10th Biennial Reunion will be held in Saint Louis, Missouri. The tentative dates are Sept 20 – 25. Stay tuned for more details.

**PAY YOUR 2016 DUES NOW:** Please help save the association additional mailing fees by paying your annual dues today. We are providing a return mail envelope for your convenience. Please note that it does not matter what date that you joined the VTA ; all annual dues are payable on January 1st of each year. If you are currently having personal financial difficulty and if you find that \$30 per year is a burden, please contact John Wear and discuss this situation with him. Perhaps we can come to an accord. All Life Members can dig out their check books and make a donation, which would be greatly appreciated and tax deductible.

**YOUR STORIES:** For me it is so gratifying to have a story appear in this publication and then, after it is read by the membership, all of a sudden it opens a flood gate of other stories! I wish that this phenomenon happened more often. Then, again, one question that comes to my mind is why more members don’t feel compelled to participate in the well-being of our association? While the generous monetary contributions from a few of you is greatly appreciated, it would be spectacular if we ended up getting so many stories submitted from every one that we were forced to publish a monthly Sponson Box to accommodate them all.

With regard to your own personal story, It does not have to be all “guts & glory.” It can be funny or sad. It can be serious or nonsensical. Since the “statute of limitations” on almost all crimes has long past, we could write and confess a wrong doing in our story without the fear of jail time. We can also write stuff that may be considered irreverent or even blasphemous by today’s Jarheads ... and the best part is that we can continue to live without the fear of having our hair cut off and being sent back to Vietnam!!!

Semper Fidelis,

“America will never be destroyed from the outside.  
If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves.”

Abraham Lincoln





associate member and I hope that you all have a great reunion,

Lloyd "Fitz" Fitzpatrick

#### Oldest KIA in the Vietnam War

My good friend and VTA member, Clyde Hoke, sent me an e-mail with a video about Vietnam vets that was narrated by Sam Elliot. When they talked about the oldest man killed in Vietnam, he was 62 years old. That age rang a bell so I went to the Virtual Wall website and looked him up. The name was Kenna C. Taylor and he was from Shadyside, Ohio. I thought, "That's the next little town south of me!" I found that not only was he the oldest KIA of the Vietnam War, but he was the only KIA from Shadyside Ohio. And, if that wasn't "small world enough," he was KIA on 9/21/70, 45 years to the day, so I got my old tired ass up and went to the American Legion in Shadyside and had a drink for him. Sad part is nobody in there knew anything about it !!! It's a good thing that we have each other, brothers till the end.

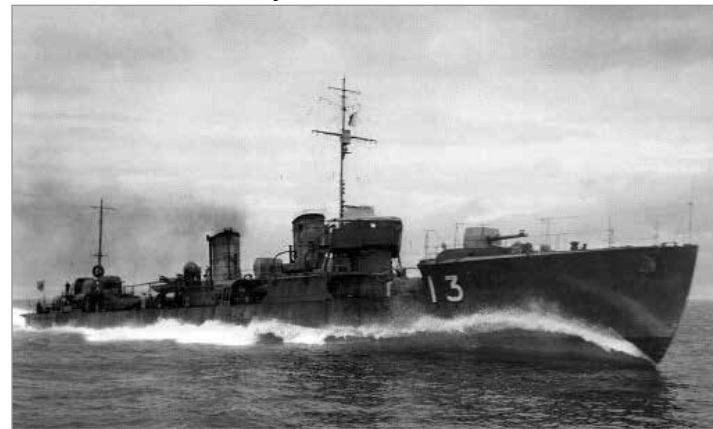
Todd Phillips

#### Forgotten Tracks

My name is S/Sgt Jason D Slye. I'm the Company Master Gunner with Delta Co, 4th Tanks at MCB 29 Palms. I am interested in purchasing a copy of the book, Forgotten Tracks. I wanted to make sure copies are still available.

*Comment: The S/Sgt got a book sent to him that week. In addition, we have about 30 more copies to sell to you-all. Please contact Pete Ritch.*

#### USMC WW 2 History



I was watching an old WWII movie the other night about a flight of B-17's going to Hawaii just before Pearl Harbor was attacked. After the planes got to Hawaii, one of them was sent on to the Philippines. On the way, it stopped at

Wake Island just before the Japanese made their final assault. I went to Wikipedia to check things out and discovered the following bit of history: The first Japanese ship that was sunk during WWII was a destroyer that was sank by Marines with 5" guns during the Battle of Wake Island! Semper Fi!!! Photo attached.

John Hunter

#### From Our Korean War Marine Tanker Buddies

GG Sweet tells me the story of his rapport with Capt. English this way: Whenever the company was committed to action, English would hold his nightly meeting with his platoon leaders and would ask, "Whose got 5 tanks loaded up and running?" Sweet would always pipe up, "I do." Most of the time we did have all five on the ready line, there were times when Sweet would borrow A-41 or A-42 to make up his five ready without defining his "I do" fully.

At the conclusion, English would bestow Sweet's five with the next day's mission. GG always came back with his confident but somber look as he gave Plt Sgt Sleger and his TCs the sad tale of our assignment. Plans were made and when it came time to break up his high level platoon meeting, S/Sgt Swinicke would chime in, "You know, Mr. Sweet, if I didn't know better, I'd swear that you volunteered us again!" And so the next morning, when we moved out, there would be Swinicke with his steel pot peering out from the cupola, his 5 gallon of "jack" on the side of his turret and he and his crew (Flippo, Thompson, Trofholz and Eichman) ready to face whatever challenges lay ahead.

The Sweet/Swinicke ritual prevailed during their entire tour together. Many years later, when Swinicke lay dying in the hospital, his ol' lieutenant, long since flipping hamburgers in Wisconsin, traveled cross-country to his side to provide comfort to one of his warriors in his last moments. I don't think there's any question that when Swinicke entered the Pearly Gates, he was wearing his Marine green steel pot and holding a 5 gallon can in each hand!

Roger "The Loader" Chaput

#### Update on Tom Glitch

From Tom Glitch's wife, Jackie: Thanks for the note. It's been a very bad year medically for Tom. He's been in the hospital once or twice a month for approximately the last six months. On his last visit (Nov 28-Oct 10) they decided to readdress the med schedule that he has been on (34 pills a day). So they discontinued some meds and started wean-

ing him off two more. Unfortunately they sent him home before seeing what his reactions were going to be. So back in the hospital on Oct 14. He's currently there at the Zablocki VA Hospital and we hope that this gets straightened out quickly, as the Kalanicks are stopping here on Friday for a few days before continuing on to DC for the reunion. Tom and I hope that you have a great reunion. Should be fantastic, especially in DC. We appreciate your thoughts and prayers.

Jackie

#### Early Outs?

I was involved in a web discussion about "early outs" that the USMC offered to returning Vietnam Marines back in the late 1960's. As the war was winding down and in order to do a RIF (Reduction In Force) the USMC was letting "short" Marines out of their enlistment contracts:

After reading Will Clifford's comment about 13-18 month "early outs" during the Vietnam War, I have to respond with my own personal story: After my 12 months and 29 days in-country, my Vietnam rotation date was Feb 15, 1969. That specific date left me with six months and 2 weeks in my enlistment. Coincidentally, I had been accepted to the U of Northern Colorado for their summer school program, so I was guaranteed an early out of three months in order to go back to school, but I really wanted the six-month early out. So, when I got to Okinawa, the troop handlers who were in charge of our group of Marines returning to CONUS informed all of us that the USMC was letting different MOSs out at different lengths of service remaining. And that the 1811 MOS (tank crewman) were getting out with under 6 months. Since I was so close, I approached the troop handler and I asked him if he could keep me in on Okinawa for the two weeks doing working parties, etc. so I could get out on my return to El Toro MCAS. His reply was, "No way! They would throw me in the brig!"

So then I asked the clerk who was processing our orders if he would stamp my paperwork with the notation, "Due to Separate" so I could get out when I got back. His reply was, "No way! They would throw me in the brig!" So I offered him \$100 (which was close to the monthly base pay of a PFC back then) to stamp my cover sheet. He took the money and stamped it with very large purple letters. So, I got on the airplane with a huge smile since I knew that my mission was all but accomplished. When I got to El Toro we lined up and, when it was my turn, the clerk processing the

paperwork took one look at the stamped message, flipped through the pages, ripped off the cover page and stapled on another cover page. Of course, I almost shit my skivvies and asked, "What are you doing?"

He handed me the unstamped orders and replied, "You got two weeks more than the maximum for us to let you out. You're going to 5th Tanks at Camp Pendleton."

Rats!!!

After I took my 30-day leave and added another 10 days "emergency" leave to it, I reported back to 5th Tanks with just over 2 months remaining on my enlistment. That is, when you took into consideration my 3-month early out for college. And yes, I was bored out of my skull for those interminable two months!

Back to Will Clifford's comment: I would have been so lucky to have it be 13 or 18 months!!!

John Wear

#### DC Reunion Traffic



**Lee Tannehill:** Just wanted to let you know what a great time we had in Washington DC! Looking forward to St. Louis in 2017! I know how much work goes into these events! Thanks to all of your team!

*Editor's Comment: After the auction, a lot of the reunion attendees asked, "How did we do?" We are happy to report that the total income number was \$9,024. We think that due to our ability to accept credit cards for payment, we added approximately \$2,000 to the previous high total amount. Just so everyone knows, we intend to tighten up the auction in St. Louis and hold a "Silent Auction" in the Torsion Bar (hospitality room) for some of the items which should make the "Live Auction" move a lot faster and to be shorter in duration. >>*

1st Time Attendee **Michael Giovinazzo**, “A” Co., 1st AT’s writes: The recent USMC Vietnam Tankers reunion, in Arlington, VA was magnificent. I have never attended any function that was as well planned and carried out. No detail was overlooked. This reunion was a testament to the hard work of the officers of the VTA and volunteers. From the recognition devices on the name tags of first time attendees to the bus tours, the auction and banquet, it was flawless.

As an Ontos crewman and first time attendee, along with my wife and sister, we couldn’t have felt more at home. All the attendees we met were great. I can only regret not attending the VTA’s reunions sooner. You can be assured that we will be in St. Louis in September 2017.

Thank you all for making this reunion what it was. You are all a credit to the organization, the Marine Corps, and to yourselves.

1st Timer **Ed Hiltz**: I wanted to take this opportunity to give you and your staff my heartfelt thanks for a wonderful time that I had at this year’s reunion. This was my first and I was so happy to meet up with other Marines I haven’t seen or talked to in so many years. Everything was well organized and I appreciated all your time and effort that went into this.

**Ken Zebal**: Thank you (and our board) for a great reunion. Your efforts (they were obviously many and tireless) are much appreciated.

**Robert Skeels**: It was an honor to see you all at the reunion. The country is blessed to have men of such character ... Well, let me think on Larry (Parshall) a bit ! Enjoyed it, see you at the arches in St Louis

**Ric and Judy Langley**: A wonderful time, incredible location and hotel. Thanks!

**Craig Newberry**: We left D.C. yesterday after two wonderful weeks. My bride, Janiece, our granddaughters and I each had a great time at our reunion! I applaud the reunion plan; there was enough structured and unstructured time in that location that should have made the vast majority of our brothers happy. We saw and did many historic things while we were there. I congratulate the board for their efforts! I sure wish that I had Bob Peavey’s eye for artistic detail; I thought our shirts and coins were absolutely fantastic. Thank you for your selfless efforts in leading our great organization and donating the significant number of hours it requires.

Another 1st Timer—**Lee Dill**: I enjoyed myself immense-

ly yesterday, but I am one tired puppy today. I did not know Ron Knight from An Hoa, but I really enjoyed his company and his view of things. The reason for this email is that, if there are two large size t-shirts left over, I’d like to purchase them. The design is excellent, far better than Sgt Grit. BTW you are a hoot. Enjoy Colorado and thanks for the books.

*Editor’s Comment: We ran out of DC reunion t-shirts. Sorry.*

**Pete Ritch**: Upon boarding my flight from ATL to Tallahassee, I thought I saw a young lady who looked like Lauran, Jan’s daughter, from our “Fallen Hero’s Program.” I did not say anything to her until I took the seat across the aisle from her, on Delta Flight 2058 to Tally.

She asked me, “You were at the USMC Tankers Reunion, right”?

We chatted across the aisle all the way home. Apparently, when Jan asked Lauran to escort her to the reunion, they agreed that they did not know what to expect. She stated that they were amazed at the welcome they received and by how much everyone made them feel like family. She was very grateful to you and the Association for providing closure (after almost 50 years) for Jan. I told her that it was our honor to have her and her Mom at our reunion and that they will be part of the VTA forever. Lucky me.

*Editor’s Comment: At the end of the DC reunion we asked Jan if she would like to become an Associate Member of the VTA (as we try to ask any widow of our fallen brothers) and, lucky for us, she accepted. She said that the main reason that she did so was that she wanted to attend the 2017 reunion in St Louis.*

Charter Member Howard Blum: Just a quick note (before I forget) to thank you and all the other members responsible for making the 2015 USMC VTA reunion a wonderful event. The reunion events were done very well and clearly reflected the hard work by those involved. I enjoyed getting together with those I served with and got to know others who share our common experience. Again, my thanks to all.

1st time attendee **Dick Lorance** writes: Bruce, I just wanted to thank both you and Nancy for being so kind to us at the reunion. Being that it was our first time, neither of us knew what to expect. We both had a very good time in D.C. and are looking forward to St. Louis. Our eldest daughter lives near there. I tried to mingle with the guys (and girls) in order to meet people and to listen to their stories. It was great time!

### Tori Gets A Marine

Guy Everest writes: During the action-packed auction at the DC reunion, I kept bidding on the Marine-uniformed Barbie & Ken doll set in order to give them to my granddaughter. All the while, another VTA member had the same idea for their grandkids, one of whom is a Junior Marine. The other bidder finally won the bid and, although I was sad for not getting the dolls, I knew they went to a good cause. Later, Jimmy Dieter from Corpus Christi called my room and told me that he wanted to see me. For some background: Like me, Jimmy was a career police officer. He and I met during the Las Vegas reunion in 2007 and we have been buddies ever since. That morning in DC, he handed me the Teddy bear that he got specifically for my granddaughter, Tori. What a great gesture! And to top it off, my granddaughter was ecstatic to get her first Marine!

### This also happened in Washington, DC

**Tom Fenerty** writes: On November 9, 2015, when most attendees were arriving to celebrate the Marine Corps 240th Birthday on the next day, the 2/9 hospitality room was crowded and bustling with conversation. Dan Schuster, who put this whole thing together, hollered for attention and introduced a Lt Col from the ‘historical society’. The colonel began speaking about ‘historic tours’ and eventually brought up a return tour to Viet Nam. His speech was short and he concluded by asking how many men would be interested in a return trip.

## Thank Me Thank You

BY FRANK “TREE” WREMKEWICZ

I read an article the other day and I wrote what I thought might be a corollary to that article. When I finished the first draft I found that what I had written was a rather dry rendition without much real feeling.

I have this problem that when I deal with these types of issues I immediately throw up a wall. No one gets in and no one gets out. That translates into a more analytical type of work rather than a personal reflection. The article I read was about veterans feelings when some-

one would say “thank you for your service” to the vets who spoke with the author of the article. It was the writer’s analysis of what these particular veterans thought about this thank you attitude.

I immediately responded in kind. My thoughts matched the writer’s response in a similar fashion, analytically. The problem was, when I read the article, my real response was emotional and not analytical.

So, I write again to try and write what I feel, rather than what I think. I do not expect everyone to feel and respond the same way. What I hope

There was complete silence... not a hand was raised... and then the entire room burst out in laughter. The spontaneous laughter fed on itself and continued for some time. It was a sight to behold.

### A Generation’s Legacy

Mostly we were 18; I was 17, just out of John Bartram High School.

Look at your sons, grandsons, nephews, and try to imagine them being drafted. We did what we were asked to do. We were strong; we were brave; we were scared; we were killed and maimed; and we were scorned and abandoned. We were not America’s elite—they stayed home.

We were the soul of America. Not one of us came home with post-traumatic stress disorder—it was just another psycho Vietnam vet gone nuts. We were all a little crazed, so stay clear and don’t engage.

Shame on you, Jane Fonda, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, and those of a like mind. Go to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and read some of the names (you won’t have time to read them all) and bow your head. I often wonder what became of those people who vilified us. Some wounds never heal.

John Herninko, Marine Corps, Harleysville,  
jrherninko@comcast.net

From the Philadelphia Inquirer on Veterans Day 2015

for is that each reader may be able to open up long enough to see their real response.

When I returned from Vietnam via medevac, I came through the “rear entrance to the world.” I faced none of what the returnees in large groups endured. None the less, the television news ran many hurtful encounters of returning veterans being humiliated by the general public. Those who came to see the returning soldiers did so specifically to spit on those veterans, oftentimes quite lit-

(Continued on page 38)

## The Guest Column

### An open letter to my ex-lover, the USMC

BY PETER LUCIER

Voted Best Defense Council of the Former Enlisted To my ex-lover. It's not you, USMC. It's me.

No, that's not true. After so much dishonesty, and talking around each other, I have to be honest. It's you. But it isn't that I don't or can't love you anymore. It's that as a young man, I took you on as a lover. But I don't think a lover is what you need right now.

I'll always cherish our time together. You didn't just help me find myself, you showed me a new way to be. The violence you taught me wasn't just about destruction, although the two of us were pretty good at that. It was about a fierceness of purpose. We attacked problems together, in an unspoken agreement of trust to the point of killing or dying for those next to us. In you, these two halves of myself, purpose and brotherhood, found balance and meaning

I remember when we first met. I was nervous, but isn't that always the way? At boot camp I wasn't sure if you knew that I existed. Back then I thought you were brash, crass, arrogant and rude. But you told such incredible stories, stories about Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, the Chosin Reservoir, Hue City, and Fallujah. I fell under the mystical spell of your charisma, your unbroken string of victories, reaching far back into the past, your warrior spirit.

I remember the day I knew I loved you, the day I gave into your insane demands. We were running a LFAM, at SOI. I saw each part of you moving perfectly. Your strong geometries of fire, the clean lines cut by your left and right lateral limits, the perfect grace of your coordinated movements. We live fired together that day, and again that night, and for many months after we shot and moved together, lovers drunk on our own youth and excellence.

It was not an easy life. You demanded austerity, strict discipline, total commitment. You told me frankly I'd be putting myself in danger, and would be expected to perform in dangerous situations, without excuse. But like so many young men before me, going back to the Spartan apogee and before, having been thoroughly instilled with love of Corps and country, I accepted the sword that you offered, and I took up the heavy burden.

You taught me about "Message to Garcia." Your stories had that distinctly American flavor of Protestantism, of cynicism and idealism clashing at high speed; man as a fallen, depraved creature, but through relentless hard work, he could redeem himself. And if work could redeem, maybe, just maybe, all mankind could be redeemed. Maybe if we worked hard enough, we could remake the whole world in our image. Maybe there was nothing we couldn't do. We were beasts, but we might be gods.

We went to war together. We were challenged. The enemy pushed back against us. They offered us lessons. The land was not new. Its valleys and mountain contained stories older than ours. There was knowledge and wisdom in that very old place, where empires across the ages had been buried, but the people lived on.

A great leader in our brotherhood arose, and challenged us. He told us we had to engage our minds, before we engaged our triggers. He said it wasn't enough to have a juvenile sense of invulnerability, we had to also have an adult sense of responsibility. It wasn't enough to celebrate our seemingly unbroken string of victories, our tradition and heritage. We had to learn, to adapt. But we didn't listen. In our hubris, perhaps we believed the myths that had sprung up around us. We went on as we always had, running faster and faster, our arms outstretched, running to the stories of our past.

We lost.

When we came home, I felt like my blindness had fallen away. War had given lie to the stories you told. They had been tested in fire and found wanting. But you still talked as you always had, before the war. You fell right back into your old habits. We ran the same ranges together, but our shooting and moving, seemed empty now.

So you see why I had to leave. I think you are in trouble, Marine Corps. I think you have hard times ahead of you. It kills me to leave you now, when I see you drowning. But I can't help you, not as a lover. So I'm leaving. I will study the ways of the enemy. I will learn the lessons he tried to teach us. And when I know what I need to know, I'll return.

I'll come with a new story. It will be a painful one. Young boys will always come to you, looking to test themselves as I did. And they'll fall in love with you, just like I did. But I will leave a warning for them. A warning called Afghanistan. The new ones who come to find you will be forced to face our failure, yours and mine. Even more than your victories and glories, they will shout our shame as they march, and drill, and train, when they wait in line for chow, as they clean their rifles, and before they get into their racks at night. This will be our new story. Love, always love. But caution. Temperance. In place of redemption, we will strive for wisdom. We will teach them to value efficacy as much as we valued effort.

I don't expect you to change. I am not sure anyone ever really changes, and you are too beautiful the way you are. You won't become something new. But you will become something better. Then, when you are strong and whole, maybe we can shoot and move together, as lovers again.

Peter Lucier was a Marine infantry rifleman (2008-2013) who deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. He currently is a student at St. Louis University.

# PHOTOS FOR THE WALL

*Editor's Note: The folks at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund are gathering photographs of all 58,200+ men (and women) whose names appear on The Wall. They are digitizing them and are planning to have the photo images available when a visitor makes an inquiry after the VVMF Education Center is built. The below names are KIAs from the US Marine tank and AT battalions who need to have photos found and submitted. Please look in your USMC photo albums and maybe in your USMC Recruit Platoon Books. If you want to contact John Wear if you find a photo then we can get the photos to the right folks.*

### 1st TANK BN

**Robert C Reynolds** Sandusky, OH May 6 1967  
**Stanley S. Klecz** Wildwood Crest, NJ 18 May 1967  
**Thomas E McKee** Palm Springs, CA 15 June 1967  
**James H Bush Jr.** Guyton, GA 18 Dec 1967  
**Clarence W Obie III** Staunton, VA 22 Dec 1967  
**James L Fuchs** Vermillion, SD 6 Feb 1968  
**Jimmie M Couto** North Reading, MA 13 Feb 1968  
**Anthony Montano** Los Angeles, CA 16 February 1968  
**Samuel J Frieson** Chicago, IL 6 March 1968  
**Charles F Rubado** Brasher Fall, NY 19 July 1968  
**Charles F Wright** Vallejo, CA 23 August 1969  
**Frederic L Schrecongost** East Grand Rapids, MI 26 April 1969  
**David N Harrow** Columbus, OH July 10 1969  
**David C Schoenewald** Phoenix, AZ 4 Dec 1969  
**Everett C Pugh** Washington, DC 1 March 1970

### 3rd TANK BN

**Henry L Whaley** New Haven, CT 30 March 1966  
**Lee G Johnson** Tulsa, OK 30 July 1966  
**Walter J Decota** Pascoag, RI 17 Aug 1966  
**Earl Matthews Jr** Florence, SC 9 Sept 1966  
**Roger L Parker** Bellefontaine, OH 13 Jan 1967  
**George A Jones Jr** Houston, TX 17 January 1967  
**Walter V Hulings** Baltimore, MD 4 March 1967  
**Michael L Scisney** Indianapolis, IN 13 April 1997  
**Robert A Taylor** Atlanta, GA 13 April 1967  
**Bruce W Knosky** Linden, NJ 14 May 1967  
**Donald F Schafer** Allen Park, MI 19 May 1967  
**Coleridge William Jr** Washington, DC 24 May 1967  
**Raymond J Ludwig** Wilmington, DE 27 July 1067  
**Anthony H Bennett** Tulsa, OK 16 Aug 1967  
**Joseph M Hallas** Youngstown, OH 16 August 1967  
**Harold D Tatum** Sandy Springs, GA 10 Sept 1967  
**James R McClelland** Irwin, PA 11 April 1968

**Glenn E Davis** Cahokia, IL 5 May 1968  
**Joseph P Noel** Portage, PA June 1 1968  
**Clifford M Evans** Shelton, WA 9 June 1968  
**David A Gauch** Euclid, OH, 14 Jan 1969

### 5th TANK BN

**John F Sewell Jr** Severn, MD, 21 September 1966  
**Estill L Childers** Slater, MO 24 Sept 1966  
**John H Cash Jr** Sanford, ME 12 May 1968  
**Joe R Boswell** Steele, MO 25 Jan 1969

### 1st ANTITANK BN

**Wayne Hyde** Sikeston, MO 4 June 1966  
**Victor Tarasuk** Rachel, WV 22 Dec 1966  
**Joseph M Donovan** Auburn, NY 15 March 1967  
**Edward E Davies** Lovington, NM 22 Aug 1967  
**James A Wall** Columbia, SC 6 Jan 1968  
**Larry K Powell** Forth Worth, TX 7 Feb 1968  
**William C Marsh** Amarillo, TX 25 Feb 1968

### 3rd ANTITANK BN

**Carlos Figueredo** New York, NY 28 Jan 1966  
**Juan Torres** El Paso, TX 12 Nov 1966  
**Jay Paul** Philadelphia, PA, 20 Dec 1966  
**Raul Orta** Parlin, NJ 1 Feb 1967  
**Bernardino Santiago-Vazquez** New York, NY 12 Feb 1967  
**Reynaldo S Fernandez** Odessa, TX 19 May 1967  
**Alan C Lynch** Cheltenham, PA 29 July 1967  
**Leroy Davis Jr** Detroit, MI 10 Sept 1967  
**Alton J Fennell** Warner Robins, GA 8 Jan 1968  
**Charles L Suthard Jr** Alexandria, VA 6 Feb 1968

### 5th ANTITANK BN

**Paul Thorik Jr** New Britain, CT, 29 April 1968



## GUESS WHO Photo Contest

### Last Issue Winner

**Editor's note:** On Tuesday, Oct. 13 at 9:59 PM, I got an email from Mike McCabe saying: "Just thought I would throw in the name of Paul Tate at the Tuy-Loan Bridge for the Guess Who? photo contest. I'm also the one who took the picture. And in case you don't know, Paul was known as "The Weasel." He was with 3rd Plt, Bravo Co, 1st Tanks. Our Platoon Leader was Lt. Rod Henderson, also known as "Lt. Fuzz", and the Platoon Sgt. was Gunny Garza. Weasel got his name for being good at "weaseling" out of stuff.



Can you guess what the tank is in the photo and when it was developed & tested? The first person to contact John Wear at 215-794-9052 with the right answer will receive a yet unnamed mediocre prize.

## VTA Scholarship Recipient for 2015-16



excellence, Jordan worked part-time as a cashier at a local pizzeria; coached youth gymnastics classes 8 hours a week; and, volunteered as a summer camp counselor for the County Public Schools Environmental Program.

Jordan's school honors include being a member of the Student Government Association; Key Club (all four years); French Honor Society; National Honor Society; track team captain her junior and senior years; captain of UCSC Soccer Club; captain of the school soccer team; and, last but not least, vice president of her school's Class of 2015.

The Vietnam Tankers Assn. has awarded a \$1,000 academic scholarship for academic year 2015-16 to Ms. Jordan Marie Brown of Abingdon, Maryland. She is the granddaughter of VTA member Chester L. Ruby, Jr., and will be a freshman enrolling at Clemson University in the fall.

We received four scholarship applications this year. Jordan Brown was in a league of her own, far surpassing the other applicants in her qualifications. Among her many achievements are a graduation GPA of 4.04, which ranked her 14th out of 222 students in her graduating class. She was on the principal's honor roll every year of high school. While achieving such academic

What follows is Jordan's outstanding essay, "Why We Should Honor Our Veterans":

*Those who choose to serve and protect should be honored always. Selfless soldiers like my grandfather have put their lives on the line in order to stand up for our country and keep us all safe and free. The bravery and perseverance these individuals have is absolutely amazing and should be glorified by all those whom they are protecting. Every single moment these men and women had no idea if they would see another morning. There could not possibly be a greater*

*example of courage. They do what they do because of their love for our country. Too many of us overlook the significance of our American Veterans. Those simple constitutional freedoms we take for granted, are secured because of veterans. We should want to express our gratitude, not just on Veteran's Day, but at every opportunity we can.*

*Touring a college last year with my grandfather, we were stopped by a student on the campus. He saluted my grandfather and said, "Semper Fi". Granddad was, of course, wearing his Marine Corps hat, which is a staple of his wardrobe. They exchanged where they served and had just a quick chat. My grandfather wore a smile that whole afternoon, and I could see how proud he felt. Honor can be shown in even the smallest of gestures. It means acknowledgement; it means saying aloud, "I know what you have done for me." We need to acknowledge the sacrifices these heroic men and women have made for our country. Their patriotism is a model for how all Americans should love and respect their country.*

*Freedom should never be taken for granted. Everyone should be thankful for those who have paid the price in order to "let >>*

freedom ring" in our country. Too often, we forget that in order to protect those simple freedoms we hold close, it meant having to travel very far; then, our dedicated men and women become too distant in our minds. Our nation would not be what it is today without those brave veterans.

Most people have no understanding of how serving in a war can impact a soldier. They have no idea how truly challenging and horrific war can be. To this day, many veterans suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, including my grandfather. His stories make me so proud, but sad at the same

moment. He was not much older than me when he served his country. That fact amazes me. He is a true hero to me and should be honored every day. All veterans deserve to be honored, even in the smallest of ways, ways that speak the words, "We know what you have done for us." ■

## VTA Scholarship Program Report

These are the VTA scholarship awards that we have given out since 2011-12. I've gone through my records and have that info for you. As an explanation: The \* by their name means a second award, \*\* means a third, and \*\*\* means a fourth.

2011-12: Brittany Kelley

2012-13: Brittany Kelley\*, Page Carr,

Katherine Mulligan

2013-14: Brittany Kelley\*\*, Page Carr\*, Katherine Mulligan\* (we had no new applicants that year)

2014-15: Josef Perry, Haley Carter (already a senior), Page Carr\*\*, Katherine Mulligan\*\*

2015-16: Jordan Brown, Josef Perry\*\*, Page Carr\*\*\*

By the end of August 2015, we had not heard from Katherine Mulligan for 2015-16. This late in the year, we may not hear from her at all. So, since 2011, VTA has awarded \$14,000 in \$1,000 academic scholarships.

Jim Coan

VTA Scholarship Chairman

## Deactivation of Charlie Company, 2nd Tank Battalion

Gentlemen,

Based on what we saw (large crowd) from our deactivation ceremony of D Co, Scout Plt & TOW Plt this past June and the interest we have received about C Co, I wanted to get this information out as soon as we could. We are planning to conduct a ceremony marking the deactivation of C Company. If you know of any former C Company Commanders or former members of the company, please forward this information to them.

Our tentative date/time for this ceremony is Friday, 4 March 2016 at 1000 at the 2d Tank Bn ramp, uniform will be uniform of the day. Although much of the company structure is already gone, we expect our current and final C Company Commander (Capt Dan Whitt- now deployed as the Black

Sea Rotational Force Combined Arms Co Cmdr) and the last deployed C Co tank platoon returned from Romania in time for this ceremony. We would be honored if you could attend.

LtCol Rob Bodisch, USMC

Commanding Officer

2d Tank Battalion, 2d Marine Division

**John Wear writes:** Back in June of this year, a dozen VTA members were able to attend the Tiger Comp 2015... and we ran a nice featured about it in the most recent Sponson Box magazine. During the same week as Tiger Comp 2015 there was also a Deactivation Ceremony for Delta Co, 2nd Tanks. The above invitation is sent to any and all USMC VTA members. If you plan to attend the March 4th event, please let

Master Guns Sanchez the 2nd Tanks POC know. Maybe you could also reply to me so I can help coordinate the impending visit by members of the VTA.

The other tidbit of information that is yet to be released is that the location of Tiger Comp 2016 has not been decided yet. As soon as we know, we will let you know.

**2nd Tanks POC:**

Ramon A. Sanchez

Master Gunnery Sergeant

Operations Chief, 2d Tank Bn, 2d MarDiv

PSC BOX 20091, Camp Lejeune, NC

28542-0091

(910) 451-6373 (W) DSN 750

(910) 372-2678 (BB)

NIPR: ramon.a.sanchez@usmc.mil

SIPR: ramon.a.sanchez@usmc.smil.mil

## A Letter Home

### A LETTER HOME FROM VIETNAM



ious for me to get home. She said that that's all the boys talk about. It is still a little too early for them to get too anxious because I've still got 85 days left over here. As you can tell, I am not anxious at all. I just wish I were going home right now. I'll bet my two boys are so big that I won't recognize them at first. They want to go to Disneyland, go fishing and look

for a truck. And who knows what else they want to do. I guess that I'd better get plenty of sleep on the plane because I don't think I'll get much the first few days home.

As Laura may have told you, I had a pretty close one over here. I was the only one left out of 5 men that wasn't seriously wounded or killed. Anyway they are trying to make a hero out of me for it. They put me up for the second highest award, the Navy Cross. It will take a long time for it to be approved because it will have to be reviewed by seven different awards boards all the way to Washington, DC, so it will probably be 6 months or so before it comes back approved or disapproved. I don't want to ever get into a situation like that again.

That one is the last one.

In a lot of your letters you often mention operations with tanks and wonder if I might be there. Well, I haven't missed any yet. The one when I lost my retriever crew was a mile south of the DMZ and I hope that I don't have to go back up there because it is a real bad area. From the looks of things now, it looks like we might just have a few small operations and patrols around here for the next couple of months so things look pretty good. I just wish they would make up their minds, either pull out or go get them bastards. I am tired of playing cat and mouse. Well Mom, it is getting late. Tomorrow is another day. I do hope you're all well and hope to see you this summer. So-long for now. May the Good Lord watch over all of you.

Love Always,

Harold (Riensch)

**Editor's Note:** We have added this new section to our magazine. If you or your loved ones have been fortunate enough to have kept any correspondences that you sent home, we'd love to share them with the membership. Please contact John Wear with your letters. The next issue of our magazine is just about ready for the printer so you need to respond NOW! Please... ■

Dear Mom, Dad and Roger,

I'll bet this letter comes as a surprise to you since I haven't written for so long. I do hope you're alright and that you aren't trying to kill yourselves getting the fencing done on the Hartzell place. The fence around that pasture has never been worth much. I'll bet that it is really taking a lot of posts.

From the letters you've written it sounds like you're really (have) been getting the rain. It wouldn't be bad if it would dry up so you can get the field work done and the rain off & on all summer. But that would be too much like the way we want it, but it never happens that way though. I'll bet some of the people around there are going crazy trying to be the first ones in the field. It seems like it's always "I go first," isn't it?

Well, tomorrow I'll be another year older. It seems like time is starting to move faster. It seems like not too long ago I was 21 and thinking about getting married but that's the way that life is, I guess. Mom, I want to thank you for the wonderful birthday card you sent me. It is real nice.

From the letters I get from Laura, they all seem to be alright. She seems tired of the job of hers. Seems like they are all anx-



# What We Learned from the War in Vietnam

## Vietnam at 50

### The Loss of American Innocence

When Neil Armstrong took his small step for man in the lunar dust in July 1969, Americans saw it as proof there were no Earthly limits. Nothing then seemed beyond the reach of American power, prestige and knowhow. It took Vietnam to expose the hubris in that sentiment. The American Century was at its zenith. Unrivaled U.S. wealth and prosperity, predictable fruits of the postwar Pax Americana, lifted national influence to new heights globally. Hollywood, rock music, blue jeans and hamburgers carried American culture, taste and values to the far corners of the world. Yet with images of Apollo 11 fresh on the mind, Vietnam forced Americans to accept limits to U.S. power and to acknowledge their reach had exceeded their grasp. With apologies to Robert Browning, that troublesome realization was not what they believed a heaven was for.

Fifty years later, the Vietnam War remains an enigma. Its legacy distorted by folklore, myth, political spin, cloudy memories and the perverted history of feature films and popular fiction. Yet it remains clear the war changed America in profound ways still not understood. It changed who we are and how we see ourselves. It fundamentally revised our view of the world and the world's view of us. It reshaped our institutions, particularly the military. It altered not only how we fight wars, but when and why we choose to fight. Stars and Stripes is commemorating the Vietnam War at 50 annually with a series of stories and special projects intended to add context and understanding to the history of that war and to the changes it wrought. The project examines the fighting abroad and the protests, politics and turmoil at home. It includes the voices of veterans who fought and those of others who marched at home for peace. More than 58,000 Americans



In the photo: Grunts from Alpha, 1/1 take refuge behind F-32 and H-51 in Hue City, Feb 1968.

and at least 1.5 million Vietnamese died in the war that divided the country as nothing else had done since the Civil War.

"No event in American history is more misunderstood than Vietnam. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now," former President Richard Nixon wrote in his 1985 book "No More Vietnams," a selective history and apologia for his role in the tragic war. Americans fought fiercely and gallantly in Vietnam. The Medal of Honor was awarded to more than 250 individuals. U.S. troops won nearly every significant battle. Yet it was all in vain. Many fighting men would feel betrayed by political leaders and people at home who turned against the war. At home, the war taught a generation of young people not to trust their government. In an astonishingly short period of time they taught their parents and even some political leaders. "The biggest lesson I learned from Vietnam is not to trust our own government statements. I had no idea until then that you could not rely on them," former Sen. J. William Fulbright told the New York Times in 1985, a decade after the war ended.

The government also didn't trust its people. Security agencies spying on civil rights leaders and political dissidents added people who spoke out against the war to their surveillance lists. Later Senate investigations detailed widespread illegal intelligence gathering on U.S. citizens. Anti-war and civil rights protesters were also portrayed in government-run campaigns of character assassination as anti-American or Communist sympathizers, sometimes with violent consequences. At the 1968 Democratic National Convention, Chicago police savagely attacked and beat anti-war protesters. A federal investigation later would term it a police riot. In May of 1970, National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters at Kent State University in Ohio, killing four and wounding nine. Just 10 days later, police killed two and wounded 12 when they fired on African-American students protesting the war at Jackson State College in Mississippi. Kent State triggered a nationwide student strike that closed hundreds of colleges and universities and became a symbol of how the war divided the country. In a Newsweek poll three weeks after the shootings, 11 percent of the respondents blamed the National Guard and 58 percent the students. The shootings at predominately African-American Jackson state were largely ignored.

When the war began in the Sixties many had already begun to question a U.S. international policy shaped by the cold war narrative of the Red Menace and the Domino Theory. Domestically, American society was under pressure from many sides to become more inclusive and fair. The civil rights movement forced a reluctant country to confront its values and its shameful past. The sexual revolution and the women's rights movement sought to fundamentally change how Americans lived, loved and worked. It reshaped gender roles

and widened a growing gap between the younger and older generations. The assassination of President John F. Kennedy stunned the country and exposed deep and dark divisions. The subsequent murders in 1968 of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy destroyed lingering illusions about an idyllic America and raised troubling questions about our violent national character. The mostly peaceful civil rights movement was fiercely and violently resisted. Police brutally suppressed peaceful demonstrations, and not just in the south. Civil rights workers were murdered or beaten, black churches were bombed, black men lynched. Race riots in the '60s rocked New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles. Americans were shocked by television images of National Guardsmen and U.S. paratroopers, locked and loaded, patrolling the streets of burning American cities.

America's disaffected youth recoiled from society and their discontent gave rise to an anti-authoritarian counterculture that sought to reinterpret the American dream. Peace and love replaced duty and honor. The popular refrain "Don't trust anyone over 30," defined the boundaries of the generation gap. Entertainers such as Bob Dylan, Phil Ochs, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez and others made rebellion part of popular culture. Dylan caught the emerging tenor in his 1964 song "The Times They Are A-Changin'". The Harvard psychologist Timothy Leary became a counterculture guru by advocating mind-altering drugs such as LSD. He popularized the phrase "Turn on, Tune in, Drop out." He was fired by Harvard, but he was seen as something of a philosopher by the "sex, drugs and rock and roll" culture of the '60s. So much so that even today a common joke is: "If you can remember the '60s, you weren't really there." Despite the obvious excesses, mainstream society began to embrace causes of the youth movement, particularly its anti-war sentiment. Peace marches that began with a few thousand students grew into marches by tens of thousands from all walks of life. Nixon sought to deflect criticism of the war and growing distrust in government. He spoke in 1969 of the "silent majority" of Americans whose views supported him and the war but whose voices were being drowned out by a more vocal minority.

That was the summer Apollo 11 landed on the moon and confirmed our belief in American exceptionalism. Americans constantly boasted that if we could go to the moon, we could do anything. Many historians argue that a series of U.S. presidents and their military and political aides believed it too and erroneously assumed military might would win in Vietnam. "Tell the Vietnamese they've got to draw in their horns or we're going to bomb them into the Stone Age," warned Gen. Curtis LeMay, the Air Force chief of staff, in May 1964. U.S. warplanes dropped more tons of explosive on Vietnam than fell on Germany, Japan and Italy in World War II, but his hollow threat would later be lampooned by critics of the war. In just three years, that overconfidence retreated to a position of curious optimism. Walt Rostow, President Johnson's national security adviser, tried to deflect bad news about the war in 1967 by saying: "I see light at the end of

the tunnel." That light, his critics joked, was an oncoming train. Even the curious optimism faded. Two years later, Nixon, under pressure to end the war vowed: "I'm not going to be the first American president to lose a war."

Nixon later claimed victory in Vietnam but blamed a hostile press and an irresponsible Congress for "losing the peace." In the book "Chasing Shadows: The Nixon Tapes, the Chennault Affair and the Origins of Watergate," journalist Ken Hughes said this year that newly released transcripts of FBI wiretaps indicated then presidential candidate Nixon ordered the sabotage of the Paris peace talks in October of 1968, apparently to bolster his election chances that November. Over the years, news coverage of the war shifted from supportive to an increasingly grim portrayal of the fighting. As the reporting became increasingly negative, as casualties continued to mount, public doubts grew dramatically. One of the most enduring legacies of Vietnam and its negative impact on public opinion and policy is the Vietnam Syndrome, the name to the paralyzing effect on U.S. foreign policy brought on by the fear of becoming mired in another quagmire, a questionable war with no clear objectives and a defined end game. Every president since the war ended has had to deal with the syndrome.

The Vietnam War was perhaps the most publicized war in American history and certainly the first televised war with ghastly images nightly on the evening news. "Television brought the brutality of war into the comfort of the living room. Vietnam was lost in the living rooms of America – not on the battlefields of Vietnam," Marshall McLuhan, the highly regarded Canadian philosopher of communication theory told the Montreal Gazette in 1975. That coverage of the Vietnam War and its impact on the public became a serious concern. Early in 1968 polls showed 61 percent of Americans supported the war. By year's end, 53 percent opposed it. By the time Armstrong landed on the moon, 58 percent opposed it and support for the war would continue to fall. "Vietnam was the first war ever fought without censorship. Without censorship, things can get terribly confused in the public mind," retired Gen. William Westmoreland, the commander in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968, would tell Time magazine in 1982. For some, the key lesson learned was that it was the coverage of failed policies, and not the policy failures themselves, that caused Americans to lose faith and confidence in government.

The military now tightly controls access to a battlefield. With the policy it can and at times has limited what could be seen and by extension, what could be reported. Critics argue the policy supports the old adage: "Truth is the first casualty of war." Although support for the war dwindled, until Saigon finally fell April 29, 1975, many still refused to believe we could lose. Today, many scholars contend the war marked the loss of American innocence. It deeply divided a nation unified by World War II and the division and distrust of government continues to grow.

[Source: Stars and Stripes | Terry Leonard | Nov. 11, 2014] ■

# V. A. News & Updates

For more VA information please go to our website  
[www.USMCVTA.org](http://www.USMCVTA.org)

## How To Prevent the VA From Lowering Your Disability Rating

Tip By: Nancy D. Gabey

There are several conditions where the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will propose a reduction in a veteran's service-connected disability rating. It is very important for all veterans to know that a proposal is not yet a decision; therefore, veterans have time to challenge the proposal to reduce their rating and to provide medical evidence as to why a rating should not be reduced at all, or not as much as VA proposes. Many VSOs suggest that veterans not send the "Notice of Disagreement" form to "appeal" the proposal, as a veteran can only formally disagree with a decision or appeal an actual decision. If a veteran asks for a personal hearing within 30 days of notification of a proposal to reduce their rating, the VA will not reduce the rating until the veteran has a chance to present appropriate evidence.

If the VA continues paying at a veterans' current rate until a hearing has taken place (if necessary) and the veteran is not successful in convincing the VA not to reduce their rating, this may create an overpayment that the VA will definitely recoup from the veteran as soon as humanly possible. For certain conditions, when a veteran gets a high rating on a disability, a VA decision letter will oftentimes indicate that "since there is likelihood of improvement, the rating is not considered permanent and is subject to future review."

This means the VA will contact the veteran at some point in the future to re-evaluate the status of his/her disability. Disabilities such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or migraine headaches may improve with medication or sit-down talking therapy of some sort and is therefore, oftentimes, subject to future scrutiny and examination by the VA. It is very important if a veteran is service-connected for a condition the VA says is subject to future review that the veteran continues to see a medical provider to report current symptoms, which will factor into any future evaluation of the particular disability.

Another example of when VA will propose a reduction is when a veteran is service-connected for a cancer. When cancer is present and for a certain time after treatment stops, a veteran will be rated at 100 percent for this disability. However, if the cancer goes into remission and the veteran is no longer undergoing any treatment such as radiation or chemotherapy, the VA will rate the veteran on the residuals of the cancer. What does that mean?

For example, if a veteran is service-connected for prostate cancer and was 100 percent during treatment and for a

certain time after the treatment ends, and the cancer goes into remission, the VA will propose a reduction to a percentage that reflects the residuals (side effects) the individual has such as urinary leakage, urinary frequency, erectile dysfunction, bowel urgency, the use of absorbent materials, and other factors related to treatment.

It is very important to read the letter and understand what percentage is given for residuals (side effects), and that the veteran report to his doctor all residuals, so when a veteran receives a proposal for a reduction, the veteran will know whether or not it accurately reflects residual symptoms and, if not, have medical evidence to submit to request a higher rating.

Another example of a VA proposed reduction is if the veteran is receiving 100 percent disability under Individual Unemployability (IU), and the veteran does not return the form the VA sends every year asking for verification of employment status. If the veteran ignores the "IU Letter" and does not return the form to the VA, the VA may send the veteran a letter saying they are going to reduce the current rating to the combined rating held before the veteran was awarded 100 percent under I.U.

The same holds true for letters the VA sends randomly to veterans receiving additional compensation for dependents (veterans rated at 30 percent or higher). This letter will ask a veteran to verify there has been no change in their dependent status. If the veteran does not respond, the VA will send a letter saying they are removing the dependent and that the veteran owes the dependent rate portion of their compensation back to the date they last had confirmed dependent information.

It is very important for a veteran to always report any change in dependent status to the VA, such as a divorce, death of a spouse, child who marries, death of a child, etc. Also, and of great importance, the veteran should always make copies of any documents sent to the VA. Many veterans have great success in sending documents to the VA with a certified stamp. That will show proof the VA received or did not receive the veterans' documents.

## VA Wants All Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange to Apply for Benefits

Published: August 24, 2015

By Rick Johnson

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. The first U.S. combat troops arrived in Vietnam in March of 1965. More than 58,000 Americans died in the Vietnam conflict. Many

who survived are fighting diseases the U.S. government now recognizes were caused by a very powerful toxic chemical used in the jungle war zone.

Since 2010, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recognized a list of diseases, cancers and illnesses caused by the chemical Agent Orange. The VA is now making a renewed push to ensure everyone knows about the benefits available to veterans sickened by Agent Orange.

A variety of illnesses are on the list, including, but not limited to: Type 2 diabetes, prostate cancer, respiratory cancers, chronic B-cell leukemia, Hodgkin's diseases, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, Parkinson's disease and Ischemic heart disease. Many Vietnam veterans aren't aware of the Agent Orange presumptive diseases. Furthermore, some veterans choose not to go to the VA for their treatment or some veterans have never thought to apply. Yet other veterans aren't sure how to apply. Claiming a disability from exposure to Agent Orange is an expedited claims process since the illnesses are "presumed" to be connected to Agent Orange exposure, meaning Vietnam veterans don't have to prove an association between their medical problems and their military service as it relates to exposure to Agent Orange.

### More Agent Orange Exposure Potentially Revealed

Marine Corps veteran Lt. Col. Kris Roberts is the first veteran known to have won compensation for exposure to Agent Orange while stationed at MCAS Fatima, Okinawa, Japan, and now he is urging the military to come clean about what really happened at the air base.

For the first time in VA compensation history, the U.S. government has awarded compensation to the ailing former marine at the center of allegations that the defoliant Agent Orange was dumped on Fatima Air Base in Okinawa.

On Aug. 10, the Board of Veterans' Appeals ruled that Roberts, chief of maintenance at the installation in Okinawa in the early 1980s, had developed prostate cancer due to "exposure to hazardous chemicals." The presiding judge based the decision on evidence including medical reports, buddy statements and "photographs of barrels being removed from the ground."

According to publicly available Department of Veterans' Affairs records, more than 200 U.S. vets believe they were poisoned by Agent Orange while serving in Okinawa. Their sicknesses include multiple myeloma, Parkinson's disease and peripheral neuropathy — illnesses for which the Department of Veterans' Affairs compensates Americans exposed to defoliants in Vietnam, some areas of Thailand and the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas.

Any military member stationed at MCAS Fatima, and who later developed any of the presumptive illnesses, should contact the Rowan County Veteran Service Office at 704-216-8138.

The presumptive illnesses are listed below:

- AL Amyloidosis — A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.
- Chronic B-cell Leukemias — A type of cancer which affects

white blood cells.

- Chloracne (or similar acneform disease) — A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
- Diabetes Mellitus Type 2 — A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.
- Hodgkin's Disease — A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
- Ischemic Heart Disease — A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain.
- Multiple Myeloma — A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma — A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue
- Parkinson's Disease — A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement
- Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset — A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of herbicide exposure.
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda — A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure to herbicides.
- Prostate Cancer — Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.
- Respiratory Cancers (includes lung cancer) — Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
- Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma) — A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

## Claims Expert: Make official VA Appeal your Last Resort

By Alex Keenan

The recent U.S. military (ret.) columns dealing with the Department of Veterans Affairs appeals process for benefits claims struck a nerve. I've received many responses with valuable insights I feel are worth sharing. For example, retired Army Sgt. Maj. Jeff Howard, the veterans service officer for Adams County, Idaho, wrote in to point out that my advice on appealing a benefits decision might limit a veteran's ability to

*(Continued on page 34)*

# What Members Are Doing

## Three Mini-Reunions!!!

**John Hunter writes:** Here are some photos covering three different mini reunions.

Torrance, CA



John Hunter and Richard Tilden at Torrance, CA in November 2014.

Omaha, Nebraska



This is 3rd. Platoon, B Company 1st Tank Battalion VN 1965-66. The photo was taken in Omaha, Nebraska, in June 2015; our 50th Anniversary for Vietnam.



This photo is the necessary "tank at any tanker reunion," an M-60, could not find an M-48. John Hunter and Richard Smith in Nebraska.

Washington State



(L to R) Robert Willoughby, John Hunter and Stan Williams in Wala Wala, WA. I had not seen Bob in over 50 years. Stan was able to drag him out to see me!

## The 240th Marine Corps Birthday



In the photo: The USMC 204th Birthday lunch in San Diego. This is what make being a Marine so great!

## Rick Lewis writes:

1. Left side: Maj. Mike St. Clair was a young Recon Marine with 3rd Mar Div. in Vietnam. Became an officer and at one time was The Director of DI School in San Diego.
2. 1st LT Bob Stimson was the Executive Officer India Co 3/26 during those days in September 67 when the battalion was just about wiped out. The book "Ambush Valley" tells that story.
3. That's me.
4. Across from me the SgtMaj. Bill Paxton one hell of a Marine served with 2/4 in VN. He was the President of

the USMC Drill Instructor Association. He was also the lead in getting the Drill Instructor Memorial build. Right now he is heading up the project to place the Iwo Jima Memorial at Camp Pendleton due to happen in Feb 2016. And by the way this is the memorial was the one built to show the what it would look like when the final monument was to be built. Bill say's the memorial for Camp Pendleton will be about 1/2 the size of the one in DC.

5. LtCol. Antony He too was with 3/26 in that horrific battle and was WIA. He is only one of a few Marines to have held 16 ranks. He went form a PVT. — Lt Col in his 34 year career.

6. Master Gunnery Sgt. Len Maffioli, He is a Marine tanker in WWII. He landed on Iwo Jima and they lost four tanks. End of war got out. After Korea starts, he comes back in. He and other Marines are delivering trucks loaded with supplies when they are ambushed. He becomes a POW for three months. He and the gang of 19 are able to escape back to US lines. He then goes home gets out. Vietnam starts and again he comes back in and is with 3rd Tanks 1964-65. He is 91 and sharp as a tact. He is a member of MCTA.

This gathering made a great day! We had a cake made and cut it with a Mikes K-bar.

Bruce Van Apeldoorn Replies: Thanks for sharing the above photo and story Rick. I didn't do lunch ... but I did go to breakfast and dinner with fellow Marines.

Yesterday one of my Marine Vietnam Veteran buddies and I ran 3 miles with NROTC Cadets from the University of Rochester. I should say we stayed close but just could not quite keep up to their 9 minute mile pace.

Last evening was the annual ceremony at our city's Vietnam War Memorial. We have a complete color guard and firing squad. It was well attended and covered by three of the four local TV stations.

Tonight is the celebration of the Marine Corps 204th Birthday at the meeting of Chapter 20 of the Vietnam Veterans of America. Last year there were over a hundred in attendance. About 15 Marines but everyone else was on their feet for the singing of the Marine Corps Hymn.

Finally, this Saturday is the Marine Corps Ball in Syracuse.

This will be a year to remember as the celebration started in DC with our most excellent reunion. I could not imagine what my life would have been without earning the title of United States Marine.

Greg Martin Adds: Every Tuesday and Thursday I play a game called "Zilch" with a bunch of old farts at the VFW in Everett, WA. Well this last past Tuesday it was the Marine Corps Birthday so I wore my Marine Corp Third Tank Battalion t-shirt in order to inform everyone who are clueless as to what day it was. WTF anyway. Two of the guys are Marines, one Army, one Navy and one Coast Guard. I am the only combat war veteran. So our dice game goes on no different than the other times and no one seems to give a shit. I have never seen anything displayed at our VFW post about the MC Birthday but I don't give a fuck because I know.

I stop by my "Cheers" bar that is near my home in order to visit friends. There is another Marine friend there so I tell him "Happy Birthday" and he returns the greeting. Then I need to explain the birthday stuff to everyone else.

A bit later I decide to stop at a new Vietnamese restaurant that recently opened and I saw a Navy Corpsman "Vietnam vet" who I know. We had a nice chat and we wish each other a Happy MC Birthday. Like most "docs" he considers himself more a Marine than a sailor. Again "whatever." I then go to a table in the dining area and order food. It happens to be really good food at a very good price. I tell myself that I will be back again soon. Before I finish, a group of people behind me get up to leave and one guy stops and asks me if I am a vet. I stand up, shake his hand and say "Yes".

He thanks me for my service and I return the greeting. After I finish my meal, I notice that did not get a check at my table so I go up to the register counter to pay my bill. They tell me the guy who stopped at my table had paid for my dinner and told the cashier, "Tell him thanks". I turned so they could not see me tearing up. I then gave them a nice tip and left. It wasn't the money but the recognition and the thanks that made this MC Birthday special, more than most. ■

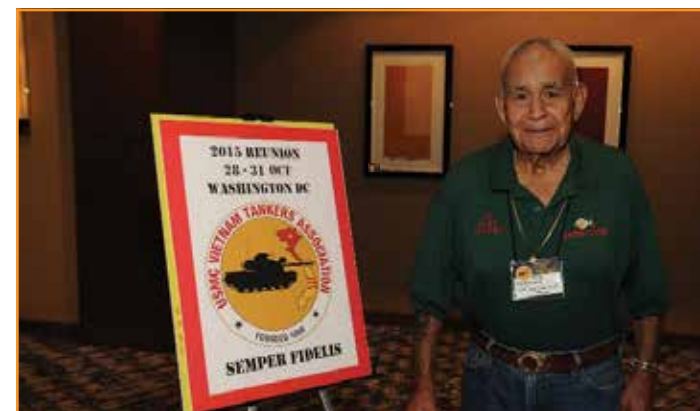
# Above & Beyond

*Recognizing those members that have made financial contributions above and beyond their normal membership dues to help our organization grow and prosper. Thank you!*

- |                     |                       |                     |                      |
|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Anderegg Michael    | Fierros Robert        | *Limanek Peter      | Schrivner Douglas    |
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| Auclair Gregory     | Funtes Ramon          | Maddox Gerald       | Shollenbarger David  |
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| Baccarie John       | Gehrman David         | Manson James        | Skeels Robert        |
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| Bonderud Robert     | Hambight Rhea         | Morrison Jon        | Tubbs Charles        |
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| *Brightwell Hank    | Hancock John          | Newberry Craig      | Turner David         |
| Brummitt Dennis     | Harper John           | Nichols Tim         | *Tyson Joe           |
| Brusha Joseph       | Harrigan Joe          | Olenjack Stanley    | *Van Apeldoorn Bruce |
| Buning Richard      | Hayes Thomas          | Owen David          | *Van De Bogart A. F. |
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| Carr Frank          | Henderson Rodney      | Peterson Gary       | Venturi Sandino      |
| *Carroll William    | Hightshoe Douglas     | Phillips Todd       | Vernon Joseph        |
| Castillo Mike       | Hika Eugene           | Picou Mary          | Vrakelos Chris       |
| Chambers John       | Hildabrand Theodore   | Porier Johnny       | Wahlsten Bruce       |
| Chassereau Joseph   | Hiltz Charles         | Price Stan          | Walker Robert        |
| Clock Darrell       | Hoekstra Beverly      | *Quinter Kent       | Wallace Terry        |
| *Cole Ben           | Hokanson Carl         | *Raasch James       | Walters David        |
| Colucci Ronald      | Hollister Gordon      | Ralston David       | Ward Huey            |
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| Cramer Monty        | *Hughes John          | Remkiewicz Frank    | *Wendling Jan        |
| Curti Stephen       | *Hunter Terry         | *Riensch Harold     | West Charles         |
| *Cutchins Joe       | Jarnot Fidelas        | Ritch Peter         | White Jerry          |
| Dahl Kenneth        | Jewell James          | *Roberts Randy      | Whitehead Kenneth    |
| Davis John          | Jugenheimer Richard   | Ruby Chester        | Williams Stanley     |
| *Davis Bill         | Kalanick Ron          | Russell Dickie      | *Wokaty Daniel       |
| Deroma III Florindo | Kellogg Fred          | Ryle Louis          | *Wolfenbarger Guy    |
| *Didear James       | Kelly Thomas          | Sanders Don         | Woodward Stanley     |
| *Dill Lee           | Kennedy Raymond       | Santos Ladis "Joe"  | Yohn Karl            |
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| English Richard     | Kopf Fran             | Schossow Harold     |                      |
| Evans Edgar         | Landaker Joseph       |                     |                      |
| Everest Guy         | Langford James        |                     |                      |
| *Everhard Cappy     | Langley Richard       |                     |                      |
| Ewers Douglas       | Langlitz Harlan       |                     |                      |
| Fanning David       | *Lenox David          |                     |                      |
| Farrell Danny       | *Lewis Rick           |                     |                      |

*If perchance we may have inadvertently missed your name, please forgive the oversight and do let us know of the mistake. Also please note that the \*next to the name are the 22% of the total Life Members who reached into their pockets to help. Again, Thank You!*

## REFLECTIONS FROM A GATHERING OF WARRIORS USMC VIETNAM TANKERS ASSN 2015 REUNION WASHINGTON, DC



Joe Martinez welcomes us to DC



Carol Carlucci (Center) greets first time attendees Lee Dill and Ed Hiltz



Nancy Van Apeldoorn (Left) with Major Jack Skyler and his bride



Fred Kellogg, Ron Knight and "Belmo" at the Welcome Table



The Third Herd, Bravo Co, 1st Tanks: (Left to right): Paul "Weasel" Tate, Mike Shaw, Harland Langlitz and David Walters



Hank and Helene Brightwell did a yeoman's job as the staging place for box shipments



SgtMaj Bill "JJ" Carroll conducts the election of officers



Our beautiful ladies conduct their own "meet & greet" event



The Tyson men: Joe Sr, Joe Jr and little "Joe-Joe"



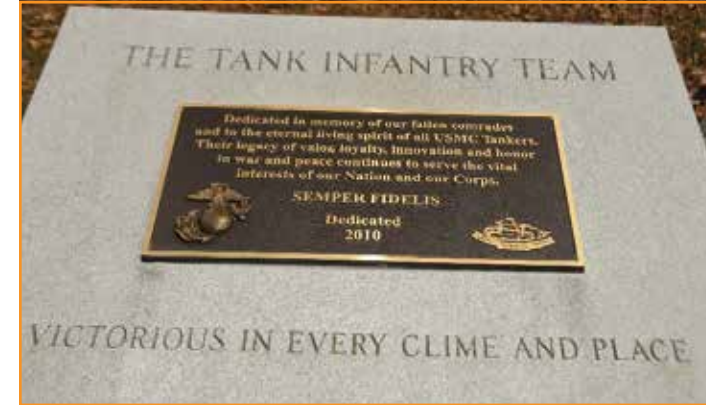
Dennis Brummitt, Justin Donley, Bob Skeels, Ed Hiltz, Lee Dill and John Hughes explore the Memorial Garden



First time attendee, Steve Rasner (left) winner of the free room drawing... on the bus to Quantico with Earl Sparks



Dave Lenox laughs after someone asks him to "Pull my finger"



The USMC Tankers Memorial



Presenting our memorial wreath at The Wall



We visited the hallowed grounds of the National Museum of the Marine Corps



Tun Tavern served up some good chow for John Wear, Howard Blum, Jeri and Guy Everest



Guy Everest, Belmo, Rick Lewis and Jimmy Didear with the VTA wreath



Bob Peavey hosts the Fallen Hero family and Johnny Russo



Rea Hambricht, "Doc" Gene Hackemack, Larry Parshall and "Turtle" Wendling



"Hughie" walks off a "Phorg" and into a virtual Vietnam



Clyde Knox and his son Adrian had a great time



Rick Lewis and his family at the Marine War Memorial



Tom McKeown pipes in the Marine Corps Birthday cake



John Wear with Top Langford's daughter, Karen and his granddaughter, Lauren (a US Army major)



Steve Falk presents his Fallen Hero, Sgt Steve Severance



Rick Lewis and our guest of honor Col Jim Gruny



Harold and Laura Riensche enjoying the banquet



Louie and Shannon Ryle with Wally and Toneia Young



Mike Castillo and his bride



Bruce and Nancy Van Apeldoorn

# RECALLING THE EVENTS OF MARCH 24, 1969

BY HAROLD B. RIENSCHÉ

May 25, 2015

After 46 years trying to forget, only due to the urging of my wife I'll try to recall the situation leading up to and including the events of March 24, 1969, involving the B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion retriever and crew.

recovery operation and provide the necessary leadership in dealing with the retriever's operation and any take-charge mindsets on the scene who might hinder the retriever crew in effecting the recovery.

After many delays and frustrating efforts, we finally arrived at the location of the submerged tank. What a sight: turret, engine armor plate cover, and air cleaner boxes visible above the stinking muck and slime that it had sunken into.

We successfully recovered the tank at the expense of much grueling work and efforts of the retriever crew and those assisting us. We finally resorted to some unorthodox measures to free the tank. As I look back over the years I served in USMC tracked vehicles and in my civilian occupations, which included heavy equipment, I think that was the most challenging and difficult recovery operation I've ever participated in.

It was nightfall by the time we arrived back at the amtrac base. I made the decision to stay there for the night, refuel, clean ourselves up, and rest. The next day, March 24, 1969, we arrived at the Cua Viet River and were preparing to cross when we received notification that 3rd platoon, B Company needed assistance. They were on an operation with ARVN forces west of Con Thien. The information we received was that one tank was disabled and in tow, one tank was limping along and questionable, and the operation was ending. They had to get out of there before nightfall. So, it was unhook, stow the tow bar, make a quick inspection of the track, and we headed north.

Arrangements had been made that we would pick up an ARVN security detail along the way. After we left the main road heading west from Con Thien about mid-point to our objective, we met a large column of ARVN troops on foot headed toward Con Thien. We stopped, waited, expecting someone to approach us with the security detail. No one approached us or cared to speak to us. They all kept marching, smiling and waving to us as they went by. Figuring we were probably three >>



On the tank ramp in Dong Ha

On March 23, 1969, the B Company retriever (B-43) was tasked to recover a submerged tank in the sand dunes near the beach some distance up the coast north of the amtrac base. The crew of the tank retriever consists of four men: tank commander, driver, crane operator, and rigger. It was suggested that I, as the B Company maintenance chief, accompany the crew to oversee the

or four clicks from 3rd platoon's location, confident that they were moving toward us, we continued on. It was late in the afternoon by now. Our plan was to reach 3rd platoon, hook-up the disabled tank to the tow bar. Should a second tank require towing, we'd use our second tow bar hooked to another tank to tow it, which is faster and easier than the crossed-cable method. We expected to all be out of there before dark.

The only obstacle that lay before us was crossing a dry rice paddy that had not been used in years. Like all paddies, they are never totally dry and are always mushy. After crossing the paddy, we continued on to the top of a large, low hill mass that was nearly flat on top and covered with tall grass four to five feet tall. We proceeded by following tank tracks that appeared to be recent, and we assumed that they were from 3rd platoon left upon entry into the area. We estimated that we were, now, about a click away from 3rd platoon's location. However, we did not have them in sight. We continued on and immediately detonated a mine.

The explosion blew apart the track and the last two sets of road wheels on the right side. We assessed the damage and radioed the company of our situation. The crew was just beginning the process of dismantling the damage in order to short track it. Cpl. Foster was still sitting on the driver's hatch with both feet on the front opening of the driver's compartment. He appeared to be in deep thought. I said, "Hey Mike, would you rather stand watch first, and I'll go down? Because one of us has to be up here on the gun?" He immediately sat upright, turning to look at me, saying, "Naw, we'll take care of it Chief; you stay here." And he dismounted the retriever. I took my position for standing watch in the TC's location attempting to make radio contact with 3rd platoon to inform them of our situation.

Within moments, we suddenly were receiving a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire from all sides. Bullets were ricocheting and fragmenting all around me. I instantly dropped down and attempted to look through the periscopes to locate the enemy. They had all been hit; I was unable to see through them. I grabbed an M-16 rifle that we had in the cab and began returning fire from the TC's hatch. Midway through the second magazine it jammed. I was unable to quickly clear it. At that point I was being overcome with panic and fear; a vision flashed in my mind of my wife and three boys huddled together

with Laura holding our baby boy who was crying; a scene I had witnessed often while serving at military funerals during my San Francisco tour of duty. I felt at that moment that this was it; I would not be coming home. I cried out, "Oh God, please help me." And, I immediately felt a wave of calmness sweep over me.

I made radio contact with B Company and 3d Platoon informing them that we were under attack and needed assistance, while simultaneously attempting to use the .50 caliber sky mount machine gun. The ammo belt had been struck in the initial burst of enemy fire, leaving a distorted cartridge and link just outside the gun. That required clearing the gun, breaking the belt, and then reloading the gun to get it into operation. While returning fire with the .50 caliber at various locations in the tall grass where I saw movement, several enemy rounds struck and penetrated the ammo can tray and ammo can. The belt got jammed up in the can and caused the gun to fail to feed. I realized that the .50 was not effective for covering the rear area of the retriever because I couldn't depress the barrel enough to get in close due to all the obstructions of the crane boom, antennas, and the pintal-mounted M60.

I jumped up out of the TC's hatch and moved across to the crane operator's location and removed the M-60 machine gun from its mount. I took a quick look over the side for the location of my crew. Mike was laying there, his chest on a road wheel and reaching up with his left arm looking up at me. I heard him utter with his last breath something that sounded like, "Get some for me" and he collapsed and was dead.

I utilized the M-60 while standing and moving around on top of the retriever, delivering three to five round bursts of fire directed at locations in the tall grass where I detected movement or from where I would receive fire. While loading my third belt of ammo I was able to slip on the TC's helmet, and I radioed Lt. Ritch (3rd platoon) requesting any assistance he could give. I could not wait for a response and I resumed returning fire. Suddenly, the M-60 quit as I noticed the barrel falling from the gun. I caught the scorching hot barrel with my bare left hand and reinserted it into the gun. While I was in the process of catching the falling barrel and reinserting it, I noticed an enemy soldier emerged from the grass directly behind the retriever from the blind spot caused by the boom, and he immediately disappeared from my sight

line under the rear spade. He obviously must have fired a couple of long bursts of AK fire underneath the retriever. As I learned later, that is where the remainder of the crew had managed to take cover. I continued firing where the grass was being unnaturally moved until the M-60 again jammed. I tried to quickly clear the jam, but soon determined that I couldn't do it quickly without tools.

I was very concerned about the location of the soldier I had seen at the rear of the retriever; I threw several hand grenades around the rear and sides of the retriever. We had an M-79 grenade launcher aboard, and I began firing it at movement out farther than I could throw hand grenades. After using all the M-79 rounds that we had, I again threw hand grenades and expended all that were in the ready box at the crane operator's seat. As I was opening a case of grenades and removing them from the round sleeves that the grenades are in, I noticed an enemy soldier rise up out of the grass approximately 25 yards from the left rear of the retriever cab. As he arose, he simultaneously brought up his AK to take aim at me. I quickly drew my .45 pistol from my shoulder holster and fired. I saw his head snap back and the rifle fall from his hands as he continued falling over backwards back into the tall grass out of sight. I followed up with a few more shots into the grass where he had fallen.

I continued opening grenade sleeves and realized that I was not receiving any more small arms fire. I paused and gave a 360° view of the area. I could see no unusual movement in the tall grass. Next, I moved quickly about on top of the cab looking over the sides for any enemy or the rest of my crew. The area appeared to be clear and I dismounted to look underneath the rear of the retriever. I saw Cpl. Walkley lying on his side cross ways from track to track about mid-point of the retriever. I could see that he had been hit numerous times. I couldn't see anyone else. I called out to see if anyone was still alive. An immediate response came from Sgt. Ammon: "We're under here, Chief. Satch\* is dead (\*our nickname for Cpl. Walkley). I'm hit bad, so is Dorris (PFC Dorris)."

I asked, "Can you crawl to the front?" "No, can't move." I told them to hold on and I would back the retriever off of them. Before climbing aboard, I moved Cpl. Foster's body off the track and road wheel, several feet to the side. While I was moving Cpl. Foster, I realized that I had extreme difficulty trying to close my left hand to grip anything. Large blisters had formed on my palm and on

my fingers and thumb. I took my K-Bar and punctured the blisters to drain the fluid.

Once aboard the retriever, I notified B Company that I had two WIAs and two KIAs, and I needed a medevac chopper now. My two wounded were serious. We were losing natural light fast. It would soon be dark. I moved to the driver's seat and prepared to back up the retriever.

About that time, I saw the first tank that was approaching us. It turned out to be a flame tank and he radioed me saying he had me in sight and where did I want them. I told him to light up that little higher mound to his right front (which was my left front)—because I'd gotten an awful lot of fire from there. I had seen several NVA run towards there. He stopped when he was within range and gave it a short burst. When that beautiful tongue of fire went out and lit that area up, I felt somewhat reassured that our whole area was going to be silent for a while. For some reason, Charlie doesn't like napalm. I backed the retriever up off of my wounded so I could attend to them and recover Cpl. Walkley's body.

In the process of getting that done, a second tank arrived; it was a gun tank. We were able to get the wounded out from underneath the retriever. A little while later, a medevac chopper was in the air, and I had radio communication with it. He asked if it was a secured LZ and I said, "It's as secured as it's going to get right now." And, he said he couldn't land unless it was a secured LZ. I explained to him that I had two seriously wounded and two KIA. "They have to go." He again stated, "I can't land unless it's a secured LZ." I said, "You land it or I will." He requested a smoke grenade at the LZ site, so I threw a smoke grenade out where it would be clear to land. He set it down. We quickly loaded our two wounded aboard and they took off. My two dead Marines remained with us through the night until the next day.

It was dark when the medevac chopper left. We periodically had light from flares from a gunship operating in the distance, plus artillery flares. A short time later the rest of Lieutenant Ritch's platoon was able to make it to our position. We set up a small perimeter and spent the night there on watch in our vehicles. L/Cpl. Sermons (Rick), 3rd platoon mechanic, came over and stood watch with me on the retriever.

The next morning at first light, with help from >>

each of the tank crews, we went to work getting the retriever short tracked and prepared for the trip back to Dong Ha. Tow bars had to be moved and connected for tank-to-tank towing. These activities were well underway when a reactionary force arrived from B Company to assist us. A chopper arrived and evacuated

the bodies of Cpl. Foster and L/Cpl. Walkley. There was now a lot of activity on that hill. However, we were soon organized and prepared to leave. The return trip was basically uneventful. I drove B-43 (aka the Bodacious Bastard) all the way back to Dong Ha. I don't think it ever ran that well.



Gunny Riensche receiving the Navy Cross on September 9, 1970



## MARCH 24, 1969

BY PETE RITCH

On March 24, 1969, the heavy section (B-33, B-34, and B-35) of 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division was supporting a search and destroy operation south of the DMZ, between Gio Linh and Con Thien. The Liaison Officer for the operation was a U.S. Army Major and the infantry unit was a Company of ARVN from the 2nd ARVN Regiment.

It was mid-afternoon and we had completed an uneventful sweep of the area just west of Gio Linh and were heading back to the base camp, when B-34 hit a mine.

I requested the Army Liaison Officer to order the ARVN to set up a security perimeter while our tank crew repaired the track. He replied that he would have the ARVN set up a perimeter immediately. B-33 and B-35 remained nearby. The ARVN grunts just kept marching past us as if we weren't there. As the end of the ARVN column neared our position, I made a second request that the ARVN set up perimeter security. Again, I was told that they would be ordered to do so. A couple of minutes later, I told the Liaison Officer that the ARVN column was almost out of

sight and that no perimeter security had been established. The tank crew completed the repairs and our three tanks moved out. As our tank column limped along, we could only go as fast as our slowest tank, B-33, which had hit a mine. Again, the tank crew repaired the track with only the security of our other two tanks.

When we first reported the mine damage, the B Company tank retriever, under the command of Staff Sgt. Harold Reinsche, proceeded north on Rt. 1 toward Gio Linh and our position. As he turned off of Rt. 1 and headed west toward our position, S/Sgt. Reinsche informed me that the ARVN infantry was passing him going the opposite direction. A minute later he told me that he had passed the end of the ARVN column. At this point in time, none of the four (4) Bravo Company vehicles had any ground troop security.

As we finished the repairs to B-33, we heard an explosion and could see a plume of black smoke just to our west, over a small ridge. S/Sgt. Reinsche informed me that he had hit a mine and that the crew had dismounted to assess the damage. The next thing we heard was small arms fire. S/Sgt. Reinsche reported that they had been ambushed. I dispatched B-35, our only undamaged tank, under the command of Corporal Chris Vargo, to the Retriever's position.

I stayed in radio contact with S/Sgt. Reinsche and Cpl. Vargo and could hear the fire fight in process. At one point, S/Sgt. Reinsche told me that he was the only one left and

that he was running out of ammunition. Cpl. Vargo radio'd that he could see the retriever and was delivering .30 cal. and .50 cal. machine gun fire to the area surrounding the retriever. The firing from the NVA ceased.

B-33 and B-34 limped to the retriever's position and arrived just after dark. I ordered all four vehicles to button up and shoot anything that moved. We had "Spooky" flare ships overhead that kept us in semi-daylight conditions all night. The TC's on the four vehicles remained in radio contact until daybreak.

At dawn, a Marine infantry platoon reached our position and set up a perimeter. We placed our two (2) KIA Tankers (Sgt. Wachley and LCpl. Foster) on a medevac chopper and completed repairs to the retriever. A search of the area revealed that there were seven (7) NVA KIA on or around the retriever. There were also blood trails heading away from the ambush site. S/Sgt. Reinsche had exhausted all of the ammunition from his .50 cal. machine gun, his M-79 grenade launcher, and his .45 cal. pistol, defending his crew.

We moved east to Rt.1 and the retriever headed south toward Dong Ha, and my three tanks returned to Gio Linh. I went directly to the Army Major's bunker and proceeded to chew him up one side and down the other. He never said a word. I guess he had never been cussed out by a Marine 2nd Lt. before. Immediately after leaving his bunker, I threw up.

For his heroic actions Staff Sgt. Harold Reinsche was awarded the Navy Cross Medal.

## 3rd Tanks Retriever Ambush of 3/24/69

BY BOB SKEELS

1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division

I'll give you what I can remember from my reaction force effort to assist S/Sgt. Riensche on March 24, 1969 as best that I can remember. You have my personal daily Vietnam Tanker's diary so I'll go with what I wrote on that day as fact but, as is always the case, some parts are hazy (as for example, your exact map coordinate position from Gio Linh outpost and the size of the force that I took out there on reaction to assist). On the other hand, given the intensity of the situation, there are facts that you just could never forget.

I remember getting the radio transmission late on this day at our small "B" Company, Third Tank Battalion

command post just outside of Cam Lo, Vietnam on a small hill at Vinh Dai. Pete, you had been on a third platoon patrol sweep either in grid square east or west of Gio Linh Combat Base and you had two tanks down with anti-tank mine hits. Staff Sgt. Harold Riensche and his tank retriever (also known as an "OX") with his tank maintenance crew members was on his way out to your position and was ambushed near your location.

I can still see the fire and intensity in Sargeant Al Soto's eyes when we got the radio transmission that day as he said, "Do you want me to take the lead on my tank, Lieutenant?" >>



I think that both he and S/Sgt Riensche were close friends and both would be the top choices as to someone you would want to go to war with if given the opportunity to choose tough, very confident, combat-hardened Marines!

So, I think our total reaction force consisted of three or four tanks with no infantry. I do not remember having APC's attached to me. We blasted through the gate of our compound and down the dirt road, past the shacks lining the street of Cam Lo village as we headed to the dirt road on Route 1 North toward the DMZ at the full speed of 45 MPH. It was early evening and, due to the clouds of thick dirt and dust, I could not see a thing from my tank except the grill and fenders on Soto's lead tank that was maybe five meters ahead. I wonder if my First Platoon tank crew members Larry Parshall and Mike Bolenbaugh will remember this? I clearly remember hoping that no Cam Lo resident Vietnamese kids were playing on that road on that early evening. We'd have squashed them like June Bugs.

We raced up Route 1 for maybe eight miles, to somewhere near the Con Thien combat base and then we headed east for maybe ten miles (?) to your position and the ambush site, which was somewhere near the Gio Linh outpost. It was getting dark and, as we got close to your position, we hit two anti-tank mines. Our Tiger Doctor, Larry Parshall, assembled a crew and hurriedly tried to "button" back up the two tanks with new track from the gypsy rack and from the track blocks hanging on the grunt rails. We continually monitored the radio frequency as to your situation. I seem to recall that there were several ARVN daytime patrols that were headed back to their base at Gio Linh and they simply walked by us in column. I had asked them if they could provide us some security, but my request went ignored

as they hurriedly "beat feet" back to the safety of their perimeter wire.

It seems that from monitoring the radio frequency, that you got your mined tanks rolling again and continued on to S/Sgt. Riensche's position that night by calling in for a flare ship and illumination by arty fire missions. It seems like you made contact with the retriever very early in the morning. I finally limped into the ambush sight at maybe 9:00 AM. The sight was clear except for the ten to twelve dead Viet Cong/NVA. I walked a 360 around that perimeter to check the dead VC and I tried to imagine the intensity of that firefight that S/Sgt. Riensche and his crew endured and the courage of his reaction to save his crew; it made all of us in our reaction force feel just the worst depression possible that we had failed to assist him and his crewmember's situation that day.

I am now 71 years old now and remember the events as clear as day. I've always wanted to try to find him throughout life to let him know that we tried to get to him to assist his situation. There was not a lot of debriefing going on in those days, so I don't think he's aware of this reaction attempt by First Platoon, B Co., 3rd Tank Bn., 3rd Marine Division. Anyways, he exemplifies the very, very top best of the Marine Corps throughout its history. I look forward to giving Harold a very strong salute when I see him at the reunion in October, 2015. Maybe other 1st Platoon members will remember this reaction and chime in: Larry Parshall, Mike Bolenbaugh, Mark Andersen, Dale Sandifier, Dale Reichert, Wayne Smull, Gilbert Ramirez, Tommy Lewis,

Sgt. Myrick, Captain J.T. Miller.

## The History of Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks Retriever June '68 – April '69

BY JOHN HARPER

I got in-country in June of 1968 and took over the Bravo Co. retriever. As most of us know, the 3rd Tank Battalion maintenance men referred to our retrievers as the "Ox." We went to the C-2 artillery base for about two weeks to

support the Marine self-propelled arty that was stationed there, and then we were sent to Khe Sahn to support more self-propelled arty that were scheduled to pull out of that firebase.



(L to R) Unknown, Harold Riensche, John Harper

Almost as soon as we got to Khe Sahn, I was choppered to Dong Ha to pick up some parts that we needed. While I was gone, a wrecker truck that was scheduled to be overhauled got a flat tire. The Motor-T lieutenant wanted our retriever to lift the truck with our boom and carry it through the field outside of the base so that the flat tire would not be ruined by driving on it or towing it. One grunt officer said that there were mines in the field and a warrant officer said that there were no mines. The retriever driver said, "Screw it!" and drove the retriever into the field and, wouldn't you know it, they hit an anti-tank mine which killed him. The hapless driver had just 19 days left in his tour and he had a six-month-old daughter waiting for him at home. When I got back to the base, I chewed out the warrant officer.

We spent the next two weeks at Khe Sahn and we then were sent east to Camp Carroll. We did not have a lot to do at Carroll. We pulled a few tank power packs and fixed one self-propelled arty piece. Then they decided that the wrecker truck could pull power packs so they relegated the retriever to sit and wait on the company tank ramp. I then



volunteered to ride on a tank as the platoon maintenance man and the loader for the next six months. I was called out of the field when the company decided that the retriever needed to go up north to Gio Linh. S/Sgt. Riensche asked me if I wanted to go but, since I had been out in the field for six months, I volunteered to stay with the hot chow and cold beers.

The next evening, we heard that the retriever had hit a mine, so we went to the comm. bunker to listen and see what was happening. Harold reported two KIAs and one WIA. Then we heard that the retriever was on the way to another position where they were to pick up a "wounded tiger" (broken down tank) and tow it back to Dong Ha. The story was that the ARVN were to meet the retriever half way and escort them to the downed tank. When the retriever met up with the ARVN, the South Vietnamese soldiers just kept moving east, passing the retriever and leaving them alone. It is my understanding that the crew of the retriever felt that, since they were half way, they may as well keep moving without the ARVN. Since the ARVN had just traveled down the road, the retriever was probably safe to drive on it as well. Wouldn't you know it? They hit a mine.

The following story was told to me by the Bravo XO: Harold stayed on top standing watch with the machine guns while the rest of the crew jumped down to short track the vehicle. All of a sudden the NVA attacked and Harold began firing the .50 until the ammo box got hit. Then he fired the M-60. All of a sudden the barrel of the M-60 fell out of the gun. Barehanded, Harold grabbed the red hot barrel and reinserted it into the gun. He continued firing the M-60 until its ammo can was hit. He grabbed hand grenades and his pistol and kept up the return fire. During the attack, the crew crawled under the retriever for protection. Satch, the driver, was on a small rise and absorbed most of the NVA fire.

Later the "Ox" was driven to Dong Ha where my >>



crew was ordered to get to the 3rd Tanks maintenance facility (at Dong Ha) to repair it. Parts were donated by many units; we put it back together in five days. We had to use welders and machinists for the job. When we were just about done, one of the welders requested to become part of the crew and he was approved. Also, while the repairs were being made, I made sure that all parts were well lubricated. When we were ready to move out, one of the battalion maintenance officers ordered us to pressure grease the entire vehicle. Like most USMC equipment, we could not get the power greaser started, so we ended up staying an additional

### VA Information

(Continued from page 19)

use all tools at his disposal — tools that may avoid the need to file a formal appeal.

“I am very careful when counseling a veteran,” Howard wrote. “I rarely use the word ‘appeal.’ In fact, if the veteran chooses the appellate route first and loses his appeal, his options are limited.”

Rather than formally appealing after receiving an initial denial of a claim from VA, Howard said, a veteran can choose a “Request for Reconsideration” a process that allows the submission of new information, such as doctors’ notes, physical therapy notes and/or required photos and statements from family members and friends who know of the veteran’s medical condition.

“I have found that photos and statements are the most effective when proving that a duty assignment confirmation was needed,” Howard said.

If the reconsideration request is denied, the next avenue available is a request for a review by a decision review officer.

“My personal dealings with the DROs have been positive,” Howard said. “For example, one veteran was denied an increase in rating on a hip replacement even though his primary care provider and orthopedic surgeon submitted additional evidence.

“Twice, he submitted a request for reconsideration and was denied both times. He was eventually awarded 100 percent temporary disability for one year after the hip replacement but was denied a claim for permanent increase.”

At that point, Howard said, the veteran submitted a request to a DRO — and won.

The Code of Federal Regulations governs in black and white, he said, so it’s no surprise that the initial VA rater denied the claim, he “had no choice,” Howard said.

The bottom-line advice from a man who works VA cases on

night at Dong Ha. That night, the welder and the Alpha Co. retriever crew partied heavily. For whatever reason, they started playing “hot potato” with a frag grenade. It is my understanding that the last man to have the grenade in his hand with the spoon still attached was the welder. I was told that he set the grenade on the table and the party broke up when most of the retriever crew left for their hooch. I was sleeping in another hooch and I was awaked by the sounds of screaming as the welder died. I did not even know his name. ■

a daily basis on behalf of veterans “Only when the request for records consideration is denied and a DRO has denied the claim is it time to file an appeal to the VA Board of Appeals.”

If you intend to file a claim with the VA and have never used the services of a county veteran service officer, I recommend doing so. I’ve written about these dedicated individuals before; their sole mission is to help veteran and retirees in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of VA claims.

In fact, the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers has been officially recognized by the VA to perform that mission since 1993.

The NACVSO has a web site with a wealth of information on VA benefits, the claims process, legislative news, and many more links that could be helpful to veterans and retirees.

### VA Compensation Statistics

As of:	Category	Number
30 Sep 11	Number of U.S. Veterans:	22,234,000
31 Mar 12	Number of veterans receiving VA disability compensation:	3,422,674
31 Mar 12	Number of veterans rated 100% disabled:	338,658
31 Mar 12	Number of veterans receiving VA pension:	301,892
31 Mar 12	Number of spouses receiving Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC):	338,176
31 Mar 12	Number of veterans compensated for PTSD:	513,589
31 Mar 12	Number of veterans in receipt of Individual Un-employability (IU) benefits:	293,384
30 Sep 11	Number of VA education beneficiaries:	923,836
31 Mar 11	Number of VA Voc. Rehab (Chapter 31) trainees:	60,294

Source: National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. ■

# Flamethrower ► Inhumane Weapon of War

From “The Shout Heard ‘Round The World” by Richard Huard

October 25, 2014

Between July and November of 1917, one of the greatest disasters of the Great War unfolded near the Belgian town of Ypres, where the British and their allies fought the Germans for control of some ridges running through Flanders. Better known as the Battle of Passchendaele, hundreds of thousands of men occupied trenches, dugouts and underground tunnels on the front lines. Among the British forces there were many seasoned infantrymen who could claim to have seen all the technological terrors so far gathered together on World War I battlefields—machine gun fire, poison gas, strafing and bombing by aircraft. But for many soldiers, they would face a weapon for the first time that the Germans had introduced just two years before.

The flammenwerfer—or, in English, the flamethrower. The results were horrifying. Carried by specially trained assault teams, German flamethrowers were highly effective weapons that would either drive men from their defensive position, or simply incinerate them. “When the nozzles were lighted, they threw out a roaring, hissing flame 20 or 30 feet long, swelling at the end to an oily rose, six feet in diameter,” Guy Chapman, a British infantryman at Passchendaele, recalled years later in an account about one such assault. “Under the protection of these hideous weapons, the enemy surrounded the advance pillbox, stormed it and killed the garrison.”



German soldiers with Grossflammenwerfer flamethrowers in World War I

Fire on the battlefield is nothing new. Fifth-century Greeks during the Peloponnesian War developed a bellows-powered

device that squirted flaming liquid at an enemy. Medieval sieges almost always included hurling “fire pots” over the walls of fortified towns or castles in an effort to start a conflagration. The order “set fire the village” is as old as military history. But during the 20th century, engineers and scientists placed flames under advanced technological control in an effort to make fire-spouting weapons portable, reliable and reasonably safe—a different kind of “friendly fire” that would not kill the operator while he was doing his best to kill the enemy with a weaponized inferno. The result is a device with as much psychological impact as lethality—perhaps the chief reason why United States, Great Britain and other world powers used the flamethrower from World War I through the Vietnam War. Even today, Russia still has flamethrowers in its inventory. “The most dramatic hand weapon of World War II and the most effective for its purpose was the flamethrower,” Edwin Tunis wrote in “Weapons: A Pictorial History,” his classic compilation of weapons through the ages. “It is hoped that it is less frightfully inhuman than it seems.”

In 1901, German inventor Richard Fiedler developed the first flammenwerfer. He worked steadily with others from 1908 to 1914, refining the weapon’s design and creating two versions for battlefield use. The kleinflammenwerfer was a man-portable flamethrower consisting of a two-tank system, one holding

flammable oil and the other a pressurized inert gas that sprayed the mixture out of the nozzle of a long wand. The grossflammenwerfer was a crew-served weapon with large tanks mounted on a cart or a litter. It shot flames farther and for a longer time. Early flamethrowers could hit targets ranging from 20 to 40 yards away from the operator. Debuting in 1915 during a battle near Malancourt, France, the flammenwerfer troops pinned down British troops while German infantrymen assaulted their trenches. British generals and politicians cried foul, labeling flamethrowers “an inhuman projection of the German scientific mind.” The German high command was so impressed with the results of the attack it ordered formation of Totenkopf Pioniere—“death’s head pioneers”—who served as flamethrower-wielding shock troops in as many as 650 German assaults during the Great War. >>

Allied forces did not lose time developing their own flamethrowers, although they probably used the weapon far less than the Germans did during the war. Despite the Germans' technological prowess, their flamethrowers had all the vulnerabilities that would mark the weapon system throughout the century.

Although it happened far less than Hollywood movies portray, one shot to the fuel tank of a flamethrower could result in the operator literally going up in flames. "I saw a large Hun about to aim his flame-thrower in my direction and Company Sgt. Maj. Adams with great presence of mind fired his Very pistol at the man," wrote Capt. P. Christison, 6th Cameron Highlanders, who saw a German flamethrower operator incinerated at Passchendaele, because of a well-placed shot from a flare gun. "The round hit the flame-thrower and with a scream the man collapsed in a sheet of flame."

During World War II, all sides used flamethrowers, including the U.S. Marine Corps. During the "island hopping" campaigns of the Pacific Theater, many Marines believed flamethrowers made the difference between their lives and death. "We could not have taken the island without the flamethrower," said Bill Henderson, a Marine Corps veteran who fought on Iwo Jima, in a Marine Corps oral history of the battle. "It saved lives because it did not require men to go into caves, which were all booby-trapped and promised certain death to all who entered." The Marines' M2 flamethrowers were heavy and cumbersome, making it difficult to run when wearing the device. The unit also made the Marine a high-value target—easy to see and easy to shoot. One Marine Corps flamethrower unit on Iwo Jima had a 92-percent casualty rate—leading a military statistician to estimate the average lifespan on the battlefield of a Marine flamethrower operator at four minutes. Later, the Marines adapted flamethrower units to the Sher-

man tank, reducing the number of times that an individual operator had to expose himself to enemy fire on the battlefield. When soft-hearted Americans protested the use of flame weapons against the Japanese, Gen. George C. Marshall, then chief of staff of the Army, defended them. "The vehement protests I am receiving against our use of flame-throwers do not indicate an understanding of the meaning of our dead."



An M-4 Sherman tank fires its flamethrower on Iwo Jima

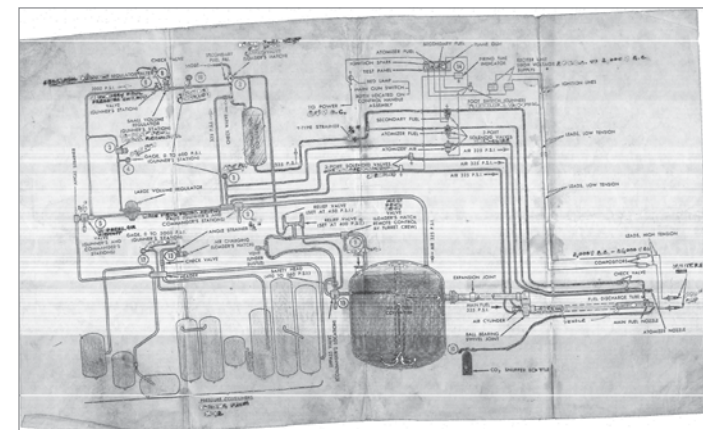
During the Vietnam War, for better or worse, flamethrowers and other incendiary weapons became widely regarded as inhumane weapons of war. In 1978, the Defense Department issued a directive that ceased the tactical use of flamethrowers and their further development. However, no international agreement bans flamethrowers. From 1999 to 2000, the Russians employed flamethrowers against Chechen rebel forces during the battle for Grozny. Russian tacticians concluded that the flamethrower was effective as much for its psychological effect as its ability to flush insurgents or snipers out of enclosed or fortified positions. The Russian use of flamethrowers was also one reason why, in 2003, the United Nations declared Grozny the most devastated city on the planet.



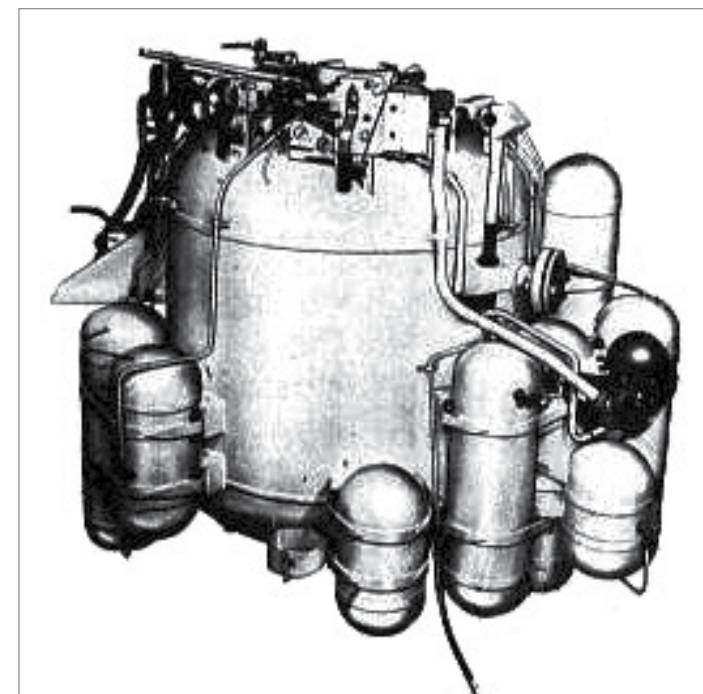
Flame tank F-31 from 3rd Tanks heads out of the main gate at Con Thien for the morning road sweep to The Washout.

The following information may be something that those of the lucky few who served as crewmen on an M-67A2

flame-thrower tank might truly appreciate and the rest of the world may find interesting. The below image shows the "plumber's nightmare" of how the flame tank's main gun system was put together. The drawing was sent in by Gunny Wes "Tiny" Kilgore, USMC (ret.).



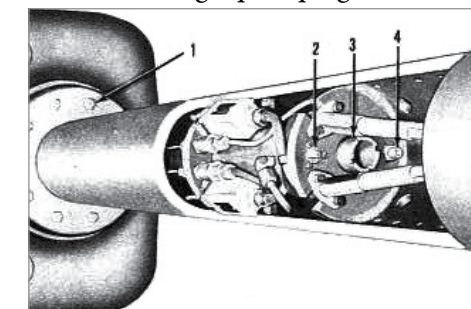
The main bottle of this long-ago mothballed Patton tank held 360 gallons of napalm. If the main gun was fired with one continual shot, those 360 gallons would last approximately 60 seconds. The math works out to six gallons of "burning death" per second. From my experience, the flame tank usually fired off a series of ten-second bursts each time that it fired. One of the ideal ways to deploy the napalm was to fire off a "dry rod," where the gunner would fire off a ten-second burst of unlit napalm to "soak" the intended target. Then a second rod would be fired that would be ignited and the whole area would be engulfed in flame.



The napalm was propelled to the target by compressed air. The compressed air was stored in a series of nine high pressure bottles that surrounded the main napalm bottle. A large truck-borne compressor was used to force the air into the bottles at 3,000 per square inch. The compressed air was then regulated to 340 psi as it passed into the napalm bottle. This process was called "charging the bottle." When the load of napalm and compressed air was released by the gunner, it fired out of the main gun tube. Based on the way the load was hand-mixed and based on the prevailing wind, a napalm "rod" might begin to break up as soon as it left the gun barrel or, if you were lucky, it could hold tight until it reached its intended target. The best "rod" of napalm that I ever saw fired went about 100 yards to its target ... even though the "official" flame-thrower tank manual claimed that the tank could fire up to 300 yards. Never happen!



As the napalm left the main bottle, it passed through a "shroud" of atomized gasoline (4) that was sprayed into a combustion chamber (3) that was located about half way up the main gun barrel and ignited by two very large igniters (2) that looked like huge spark plugs. >>





In the photo: If you look really hard, you can see John Wear who has squeezed his skinny 135 pound body behind the radios and wormed his way behind the main bottle in an attempt to replace the very poorly designed safety valve that had blown out on his flame tank. As it turned out, after 24 hours of futile labor, the tank drove to the 3rd Tank Maintenance tank ramp at Dong Ha and the battalion shitfisters worked another 24 hours in an attempt to make the repair. Then, Tom "Sparrow" Moad, an 1811 who had two pipe wrenches, finally figured it out and made the fix.

**Continuing with the story:** Many gun tankers referred to flame-thrower tanks as "Garbage Burners", but we flame tankers called ourselves "Dragon Tanks" or "Zippos."

Some popular names painted on the flame tank gun tubes were: Devils Disciples; Crispy Critters; Aftermath; Ring of Fire; Baby Burners; Light My Fire; The Cremator; The Green Machine. But we never could get the "lifers" to allow us to name one of our dragon tanks "Napalm Sticks to Kids." ■



Guy Wolfenbarger



Flame Power!

**Thank Me Thank You**  
(Continued from page 9)

erally. That was appalling. I then and there decided I would talk to no one, not family, not friends, just nobody. I surmised that if I did talk, most would not understand. The conversation would raise red flags to them and possibly bring out the "how many babies did you kill?" kinds of

questions. That in turn would lead me into a justification of the war, angry words, loss of friendship, or deeply hurt family relations. Further, I volunteered to join the Marine Corps and I believe I do not have to justify my actions or the war for that matter to most who had already made up their minds about the war a couple of years earlier. I was lucky,

no one made that kind of comment, at least not to my face.

Fast forward some forty years to today. Suddenly, because of the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and back to Iraq, it is now most fashionable, in fact patriotic, to "thank a veteran" for the veteran's service. On more

(Continued on page 46)

# A SHORT STORY OF A TANKER'S MARINE CORPS CAREER

BY JIM RAY, LT. COL. USMC (RET.)

Here is a short story about the unorthodox career that 2/Lt. (later Lt. Col.) Jim Ray started off with as a tank platoon commander in Vietnam. I enlisted in the Marine Corps for a 3-year-tour and left as a Cpl (E-4) to go back to school. I returned to the Corps as an ex-enlisted "retread", after finishing up at the University of North Texas in May 1965 through OCS and TBS at Quantico. I got to Vietnam in August 1966 out of the Tank Officers School at Camp Pendleton and was assigned as Platoon Commander 2d Platoon, "C" Company, 1st Tanks initially at ChuLai. Below is a snapshot of what the Officer's Mess looked like in the field. The difference between the enlisted and officer heads was the platoon commander's 1-2-3 shovel was painted blue.



"C" Company had already moved up to Marble Mountain and 2nd Platoon remained at Chu Lai, reporting directly to Battalion HQS. We spent most of the time guarding the Air Field loaded with A4 Skyhawks, but got our first opportunity to go into action in the field as a platoon, which also included five Ontos in support of the KMC's on an operation. This is how it came down to us:

The operation was a good opportunity for us to work together as a platoon, as we moved about 20 miles across country where no tanks had been through before, and through the same area Operation Utah had taken place the year before. While the operation didn't amount to much, we did catch a few sniper rounds, some of which caught my

CLASSIFICATION				CONFIDENTIAL				SEND MOD CLEAR		SEND CLEAR	
FROM				TO							
S-3, 1TK BN				CO, H&S, 1TK BN				PLT CMDR, 2 PLT, CO C			
WARNING ORDER - A-66											
PREPARE TO DEPLOY UPON ORDER TO BINH SON AREA IN SUPPORT 2D ROKMC BRIGADE.											
FOR EST. 10 DAY OPER. FOLLOWING UNITS TO DEPLOY: 2D PLT, CO C ; CO, H&S CO											
PROVIDE ONE RIFLE SQUAD, ONE M-51 VTR W/CREW, ONE M-54 6X6 W/DRIVER.											
2LT J. M. RAY DESIGNATED DETACHMENT COMMANDER.											
DAY	MONTH	YEAR	TIME SIGNED	SIGNATURE AND RANK OF RELEASEE							
01	OCT	66	1430H	Richard S. McPherson CAPT, S-3							
COMMUNICATIONS CENTER USE ONLY						COMM CENTER OR RELEASER USE (INSTR - 11)					
TIME FILED	COMM CEN NO.	HOW SENT	DATE - TIME GROUP	CONFIDENTIAL							

personal attention, because they sounded a lot like the ones I heard as a boot pulling targets in the rifle range butts at Camp Mathews in 1957. A monsoon hit us on the way back and we learned a lot about using tow cables and the tank retriever to pull Ontos and tanks out of the mud.



We moved up to Marble Mountain soon after, via an LST manned by a Japanese crew, and rejoined our parent company. The CP was directly across the road from MAG-16 and adjoined the 3/1 CP, which was the battalion we primarily supported. We participated in several county >>

fairs, at one of which we unearthed the VC flag pictured above from a spider hole. One of my jobs on a few of the county fairs was to be tagged as the "Armored Officer", assigned responsibility for a piece of the encirclement of the hamlet and assumed command of the amtracs and Ontos, as well as our tanks. For the most part, we usually operated as a two-tank "light" section and a three-tank "heavy" section and even, sometimes, bringing along a flame tank from H&S Company. These exercises were mostly in support of 3/1 maneuver companies and platoons and, when the battalion crossed the river, we would patrol the TAOR looking for any enemy movement.

The biggest event in my tour as platoon commander happened when I was checking out the pineapple trays and sipping bloody mary's in Hawaii on R&R with my bride. Fortunately, the Marine Corps does a good job top-to-bottom rank-wise, and my senior tank commander, Sgt. (later Captain) John Bartusevics took care of business with the heavy section in rescuing two 3/1 platoons that had been overrun by an NVA sapper outfit. PFC Rick Lewis (later 1stSgt), now serving on the VTA board, was in on that one as well. This action was reported on in some detail in the book "Marine Corps Tank Battles in Vietnam" by Oscar E. Gilbert.

One of the dismal examples of our strategy was the number of times we went through the same hamlets time after time. One example was what we called the "Viem Dong crossing", which was a wide open area just north of the "horseshoe" formed by the Song Ha Xua river, which later Marines called the "Riviera." We often used it to move inland from the beach, after going south in the surf to avoid land mines. There was a leper colony there that the VC often used as their sick bay and, we not only pulled cordons around it, we must have moved through the area dozens of times. A year and a half later Chesty Puller's son 2/Lt. Lewis Puller lost his legs as a platoon commander there to a land mine on the way to setting up yet another cordon around that very same leper colony.

I published my Vietnam memoirs and pictures at the Texas Tech Vietnam War Archive. They can be accessed at: <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/>. Enter 12690101001 in the "Search VNCA Site" box. This will lead to 2 PDF's. The first covers my tour as a platoon commander and the second as the Battalion Civil Affairs Officer.

I moved up to the Battalion HQ staff in February as the S-5 to take charge of the Civic Action Program in the ham-

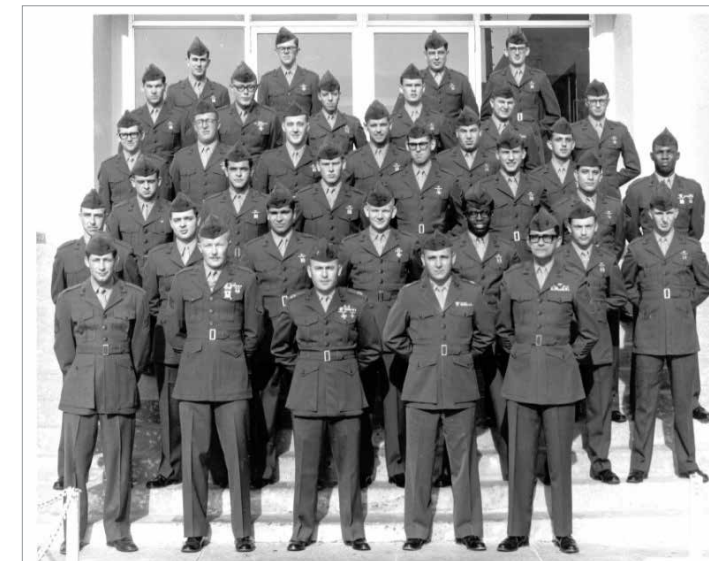


let of Phong Bac that 3d Tanks had started. Phong Bac was south of DaNang and was located at the Route 1 bridge over the Song Cau Do River, which made it the southern-most strongpoint protecting the 1stMarDiv HQ and the airfield that was often probed at night and was subject to mortar attacks. My main job was to break bread with the natives and maintain and build upon what 3d Tanks had started. I worked with the Hamlet Chief to organize an agricultural cooperative and worked with the Seabees using hamlet labor to build an elementary school, sick bay, and outdoor movie theater used for showing cartoons and as a hamlet meeting place.



What we were doing at places like Phong Bac was a bigger part of the picture that most of us knew little about then, because Lt. Gen. Krulak was jousting at the time

with Gen Westmoreland on our strategy. He believed we were better off doing in Vietnam what we had done in the Banana Wars, by integrating ourselves with the natives. We would then maintain tight combat control over the coastal 90% of Vietnam where the resources and people were located and let the VC/NVA come to us, rather than chasing around after them in the bushes and taking casualties, like we did at Khe Sahn and the Hill Fights, where the names of about 30 of my TBS classmates ended up on the Vietnam Wall. The sad thing was, the civilians running the show neither did what Krulak suggested or what



Westmoreland wanted to do, which meant we continued to stumble around the countryside just like the French had done. I spent several hours escorting Lt. Gen. Krulak, Maj.Gen. Cushman, and Maj. Gen. Nickerson around the various projects we had underway in the hamlet. I rotated back to CONUS in September 1967.

From this point on, my career took a very different turn from how it had started. The Marine Corps had just taken delivery of the first of the modern IBM mainframe computers known as the "360" series. They sent an MC Bulletin out looking for officers with academic backgrounds in fields like engineering, math, and accounting, to get trained in computer science and go on a "data systems" tour. Without going into much detail, I was now a captain select with an accounting degree and, instead going to Camp Lejeune to be a Tank Company Commander, I found myself trained in Computer Science at Sheppard Air Force Base and sent to Cherry Point as the 2d MAW Data Systems Officer. It soon became clear that computers were to be a big factor in warfare and the Data Systems

field became a primary MOS. I went on from there to also command the data centers at El Toro and Camp Pendleton, implement SASSY in the 3dFSR and, along the way, did a tour with MCTSSA. There I worked with Air Controllers as the Software Officer on the Automated DASC/ASRT projects which employed computers, radar, satellites, and wireless communications to drop ordnance in bad weather on grid coordinates sent in by maneuver units in the field from an early version of the cell phone. All of this was a joint effort with the other branches, which was the pioneer work leading to such technology as GPS, cruise missiles, laser-directed ordnance, internet, and the vast array of mobile devices now commonplace. I retired on 20 years in 1983.



All that I had learned in the Marine Corps led me to Northrop Grumman in Los Angeles where I spent 10 years heading up the logistics, manufacturing, and engineering software departments that helped build the B-2 Stealth Bomber. After my second retirement, I spent another 5 years with the Computer Sciences Corporation where I managed to hit just about every other aerospace company including British Aerospace, Lockheed Martin, Pratt Whitney, and Raytheon as an account executive and aviation IT subject matter expert. It really wasn't all that shabby a career for an 18-year-old-kid who had been badly in need of getting squared away at MCRD San Diego. One thing I never forgot though was my combat tour in Vietnam as a tanker. I carried my 1802 MOS to the end and nothing else I did later in terms of importance remotely compared with the responsibility of completing combat missions and getting my men back to their families in one piece.

Jim Ray  
Lt. Col. USMC (Ret)  
[rustictrail@tx.rr.com](mailto:rustictrail@tx.rr.com)

## Looking for

### SGT BOBBY G CORSI

My uncle, Bobby Corsi, was a US Marine tanker in Vietnam. He was KIA on August 22, 1966, which was just a few months after I was born. I am trying to find information on him and I was wondering if any of your association members may have known him? He was the reason I became a Marine.

Sgt. Corsi was with Bravo Co, 1st Tanks in mid-1966.

Paul Richmond  
1815 Woodside Dr  
Marysville, Ohio 43040  
Cell: (614) 506-8911  
Email: paul.richmond43040@gmail.com

*PLEASE NOTE: If any of the VTA membership remembers Sgt Corsi and/or has a story to share, please contact John Wear  
Phone: 215-794-9052  
or email the story at Johnwear2@verizon.net*



Gary Wallace wrote: This photo is of Sgt. Corsi (holding the K-Bar) and me.



### LOREN A BRANDT

During the 2015 DC reunion, while we were touring the National Museum of the Marine Corps, a gentleman walked up to John Wear and asked, "You were with Marine tanks in Vietnam? Did you know a Captain Brandt?" It turns out that this gentle-

man's father was a Marine tank officer named, Loren A Brandt. Captain Brandt (and later Major) served with USMC tanks in Vietnam in 1965 and then in 1967 or 1968. His son would love to hear from anyone who knew his dad. Plus if you have a story to

share, please contact John Wear as well.

Terry Brandt  
11423 W Citrus Grove  
Avondale AZ 85392  
Phone: 602-739-0554  
Email: trybrandt@gmail.com

### DAN BEAL

Also while we were touring the National Museum of the Marine Corps, a museum docent, a retired Marine major, asked John Wear if anyone of our

group knew an old buddy if his, Colonel Dan Beal. He said that Col Beal had been a tanker back in the day ... and that Col Beal's son had also been

a tanker. If anyone knows Col Beal or his son, please contact John Wear.

### POSSIBLE IDENTIFICATION!

Adam Zoltek writes: I couldn't believe what I saw on page 20 of the most current issue of the Sponson Box. I have pics of that tank. It's from Charlie Co, 3rd Tank Bn., Charlie 12 = Serial Number 201873. I am not sure who was on the crew. I know S/Sgt Hicks

(he may have been a Gunny—not sure of rank) and Sgt. Ray Schierich (not sure of spelling) went out on the retriever to help this hapless vehicle. I thought it might be in the Dong Ha area. I'm not sure about the "Street without Joy" area down by Hue City. I had been in

contact with Ray Kinkaid over the past few years, but recently we lost contact. I got a Xmas card returned to me last year indicating that no one lives at that address anymore. I am not sure what happened. I have similar pictures sent by Ray Schierich. I will look them up



and see if there were names or a tank #. I was the "C" Co. armorer from Oct '66 to Sep '67. I hope some of this info helps. The last I knew, Ray S. lived in the state of Washington and Ray K. lived in Nampa, Idaho.

Adam Zlotek  
6960 Wellington Dr.  
Derby, NY 14047  
(716) 947-9150

*Editor's Note: Bob Peavey is working on finding out more information on this tragic incident. He may have a story to share in a future issue of our magazine. If anyone has more information, please contact Bob at (770) 365-3711.*

### MARINE KILLED IN HOI AN IDENTIFIED

On March 6, 1986 PFC Samuel Jerome Frieson, MOS 3551, removed the lock from the door of the tank crewman's hooch and opened the door so L/Cpls Mendez and Van Apeldoorn could retrieve their platoon's mail. Within a few seconds there would be an explosion at the door of which PFC Frieson would take the bulk of the blast. On March 15 PFC Frieson would die from his wounds.

I have been attending VTA reunions since Philadelphia in 2005 but our 2015 reunion in Washington, DC will be my most memorable. Just weeks prior to the reunion I was contacted by Dick Lorance with a piece of information that would lead to the

Jim Coan also writes: While proofing the most recent S-Box, I read where you (Bob Peavey) are working up a story on the "C" Co. tank that ran over the 500-pound bomb up by Quang Tri. When I was at Camp Lejeune in 1968-69, I was the CO of Charlie Company, 2nd Tank Bn. My company gunnery sergeant was Gunny Keith. He spoke to me a few times about that incident in late August or early September of 1967. Keith was the platoon sergeant, bringing up the rear of a heavy section of three tanks going down this road when the second tank in the column was blown up by a com-

mand-detonated 500-pound bomb that was buried in the road. He said the turret was blown completely off. All the crewmen in the turret were essentially vaporized. Body parts of one crewman, assumed to be the driver, were found.

*Editor's note: The last issue of the Sponson Box featured several stories about the ROK Marines and their untoward and cowardly behavior. One incident cited was when a Marine sat on his bunk and a booby trap went off. Here is a follow up to that story and an appeal.*

identification of the Marine we both had contact with minutes prior to and minutes after the explosion. In a discussion with Dick, he told me that the Marine's first name was Sam and that he was from Mississippi. I immediately headed to the Virtual Wall website to start a search.

Most of that evening I continued to limit the number of Marines on the Wall with the first name of Samuel. Then came the task of reducing the list to those who were cooks (3551) and assigned to 1st Tank Battalion. Only PFC Samuel J. Frieson, listed at Panel 44E Line 57 on the Wall, met that criteria.

I participated in the VTA's History Project recording my experience in

the blast. It should be titled "Samuel Jerome Frieson."

I plan to attempt to make contact with the Frieson family members and pursue a change of the recorded cause of death to a more appropriate category. The official cause of death is listed as "NON-HOSTILE, DIED OF ILLNESS / INJURY, GROUND CASUALTY-ACCIDENTAL SELF-DESTRUCTION."

Should anyone know PFC Frieson or have any information about him please contact Bruce Van Apeldoorn Phone: 585-613-6564 or Email: bvanapeldoornsr@gmail.com ■

*Editor's Note: In early 2014, I received a rather thick envelope from Lt. Col. Jim Cowman, an 1802 from Clovis, NM. The package contained 56 hand-written personal stories detailing events of Jim's three tours in-country. None of the stories are more than two pages, so I thought that, after I transcribed a few of them to a Word document, I'd share them with the membership.*

## The Casket

The 1st Tank Battalion, 1st MarDiv moved north from Chu Lai to Da Nang in latter 1966. The Tank Bn. had a decent reputation, resulting from their work with a small village named Tic Ty that was near Chu Lai. When the battalion arrived in Da Nang, they were assigned to the village of Hoi An near the Division CP. The civic action team worked in Hoi An and, as the Bn OIC, I would accompany them, as would Dr. Laurence, the squid doctor attached to the Bn.

One day the team reported to me that one of the village elders, a most important person, was very ill. Dr Laurence and I made our plans to visit the elder the next day.

During our visit, it was quite obvious that the elder was dying. His leg was infected with gangrene and, unless the leg was amputated, the end was near. While the doctor was explaining that the amputation would save the elder's life, I noticed a long, narrow, red-paper-lined wooden box lying next to the rack that the elder was suffering on. I inquired what the box was and I was told that it was the elder's coffin. His funeral was planned and the coffin was ready. No "lifesaving" amputation was going to interfere with the programmed event! So the doctor and I returned to the Tank Bn., pondering the ways of the East. Several days later, as I recall, we attended the funeral we could have prevented.

## Three Purple Hearts

One of the "rules" which governed the Vietnam conflict concerned the Purple Heart medal. When a Marine was wounded for the third time, we literally had to stop the war and get him out of the area and start him on his trip home. While serving with Hotel Co, 2nd Bn, 5th Marines, the "third heart" rule sent quite a few deserving Marines home early. One particular story deserves to be told.

In July of 1967, Hotel Co. was sent in on a hill somewhere between An Hoa and the Liberty Bridge. We had been there several days. As CO, I would walk perimeter several times a day to check on things. The young Marine machine gunner featured in this story, I've forgotten his name, manned a machine gun position on the NW area of the small hill.

I checked the position, made small talk with the machine gun team, and started walking back to the company CP. I had not gone more than 20 yards when an explosion blasted the machine gun position I had just left! Such booby trap devices were all too common in that area. The gunny came running down the path to see how bad it was. I followed him, when my head cleared.

What happened follows: When I had left the position, the Marine with two Purple Hearts had left the hole to take a leak and he tripped a booby trap. When I got there, he was paralyzed from the waist down and had shrapnel in his back. No others were injured. A medevac chopper was

called in and the company corpsman did what he could for the injured Marine. To everyone's surprise, the Marine was no longer hurt badly. He could move his legs. He knew he was going home, he was smiling! He had a camera and his buddies were taking pictures! As I recall, he even sat up and posed! The chopper arrived and was photographed as it came in. The wounded Marine was photographed as he was loaded aboard. His camera was the last item thrown aboard.

As far as I know, he made it and has a most unusual photographic record of his third Heart. He had promised to mail me a photo taken of us during the event, but we never heard from him again.

## Hunks of Sugar Cane

Returning to Vietnam as a Liaison Officer (LNO) of the Marine Corps Development Center (MCDEC) in early 1971, where I was representing the Commanding General (CG) MCDEC of the III MAF, I rated a telephone utility repair truck that was provided by the U.S. Navy. The truck was primarily used for hauling weapons and ammunition for live-firing demos provided to the few USMC units then remaining "in country." As the LNO for MCDEC, my mission was monitoring the many MCDC "projects" being evaluated in Vietnam. Many of these projects included all matter of items from dog food to flak jackets. The firing demos involved the XM174 grenade launcher and a Stoner weapons system that I had "liberated" from the 1st Marines, which is another story.

The telephone utility repair truck was a gem, but we managed to keep it running. By "we", I mean me and the S/Sgt. assigned by MCDEC. Having been warned by the major, who I relieved, we had created and practiced "quick exit" drills which included driving with the doors ajar so we could get the hell out of the truck in a hurry, even to the point of executing a neat forward roll, coming up with the pistol in hand. By the by, that same major was OIC in Beirut, when the barracks were bombed years later.

Returning from a firing demo usually meant driving through several well-populated areas and, in some of these areas, Marines were not among those considered as "well-liked." One day, while driving through one such area, something flew through the open window of the passenger side and hit me in the chest! Thinking that it was a grenade, I immediately panicked. All of the well-practiced "quick exit" drills were forgotten! I applied the brakes with enthusiasm, fumbled for the thrown object and, in general, made a fool of myself. Had it been a grenade, all would have been lost. But, it was a hunk of sweet-tasting sugar cane some Marine-loving kid had thrown into the truck

# All I Wanted To Be Was A Tanker

BY FRANK "TREE" REMKIEWICZ

When in boot camp, I just wanted to be a combat arms Marine. Yes, all 6'7" of me wanted to pound ground in Vietnam. I thought that was my true calling. As is the case most of the time, the Marine Corps had another idea. The Marine Corps decided I should be an 1811, Tank Crewman. I could not have been more unhappy. That is, until I arrived in-country and then I saw the true wisdom of that decision. As per the usual training, I attended Infantry Training Regiment (ITR) and then on to Tank School at Del Mar. If I am typical, this is when most of the long-lasting Marine Corps friendships begin. Those I became friends with were mostly Southern Californians, but they were tankers. Stephen Dowdell was one of those individuals. Steve and I were pretty ordinary guys, but our families happened to live close to each other. Steve lived in Duarte and I lived in Whittier. That generally amounts to about 10 minutes by the 605 Freeway. As Tank School continued, we became close friends and generally shared many thoughts and many beers. At the conclusion of Tank School and, since we both passed the course, we went on leave to our respective hometowns.

Steve and I were together the next time, when we were mustering to board an airplane at El Toro Marine Air Station. We were now headed for Okinawa, but we realized that this was merely a short side trip to Vietnam. We suffered through the long air flight and, when we arrived in Okinawa, we managed to sweat through about three or four very long days, until it was time to depart for Vietnam.

As it would turn out, a large number of us were about to become mid-Tet replacements. Most of our Tank School class was on board the "big silver bird" and we all knew one another. It turned out, another friend of mine, Ernie Fluelen was with us. After he and I returned from Vietnam, Ernie stood with me at my August, 1970 wedding, but right then he was headed to First Tanks.

We landed in Da Nang in June and were immediately split between First and Third Tank Battalions. The split was about 50/50. About 15 of us, including Steve and me, headed off to Quang Tri and Third Tank Battalion. We travelled in a "six-by" truck to our official duty station. Quang Tri was less confusing than Da Nang, but our presence was still an anxious confusion as we "tripped through" reporting into our official duty station. After we made the routine

personnel check-in stops, including a brief one with Lt. Jim Coan, it began to sink in we were actually in Vietnam.

We spent one or maybe two days and we were now off to a place called Dong Ha. Once there, we were to report to the captain of Alpha Company and we would be assigned to a platoon. I have to say, it was good to have Steve and some of the other stateside buddies close by, since we all were both confused and anxious, with a sense that made more sense when there were more of us to be anxious and confused.

When we arrived in Dong Ha, all of us were assigned to a platoon and to a tank with the exception of one. Steve had drawn the short straw and didn't know he had done so, until that day in Dong Ha. It seemed there was a need for one Marine Military Police officer. It turns out that this was Steve. He protested and discussed and begged and pleaded not to be sent off to some strange MOS that he knew nothing about. And how could "they" pull a fully-trained and ready-to-fight tank crewman? It was all to no avail and, as crazy as everything appears to be at times, this made sense to someone and then Steve was gone.

The next 12 months flew by with all of us coming and going to and from Leatherneck Square, Gio Linh, the Rockpile, Camp Carroll, Con Thien, C-2 and the Wash-out. Road sweeps and operations and rains and more rains, and mud and all sorts of events, good and bad, passed. Each time that we ended back in Dong Ha for a day or two, Steve would drop by the tank park. He wanted to know how we were doing, but mostly, he wanted to hear about the sweeps and firefights that we were in as if to at least get a sense of what it was like to be a tanker. I believe there is no "tighter unit" than a tank crew and, quite honestly, there is no one else I would trust but a tanker. Steve knew this, sensed this, and just wanted to be even just a small part of it.

Come July of 1969, most of the folks that I had arrived with were "short timers." They said that we had to untie our boots to brush our teeth, and our thoughts turned to rotating back to the "World." Alas, it turned out there was one last operation to do before we rotated home. We were headed out west of Charlie-2 with Kilo 3/3 to sweep an area that was reported to have continuing nighttime enemy activity. With so many crewmen headed home, the problem arose of sheer numbers. We did not have enough tankers to crew the number of tanks necessary to do the sweep. In fact, >>

I pressed a friend of mine into driving for me on this last operation.

The day before we left, Steve Dowdell, former Military Police Officer, became a bona fide tank crewman and was immediately assigned to one of our tanks. Steve was chompin' at the bit and rarin' to go. To his great delight, the MP command had turned Steve loose because, as shorthanded as they were, Alpha Company 3rd Tanks staffing was even worse off. Therefore, Steve was granted his year-long wish and reassigned to a tank unit. He was thrilled to now be an official tank crewman and he could not be more delighted. He felt home, safe, and comfortable with his old friends. He knew he was headed into the bush, but he was with the friends that he knew would be there for him.

Steve ended up as a gunner on Lt. Ralston's tank, at least I think so, and off we all went with Captain Wunsch heading up a "light" company of tanks with Kilo 3/3 in tow. The first couple of days of the operation were relatively quiet. On the third day in the early morning, we "played catch" with about 40 or 50 NVA mortar rounds before we headed toward the day's sweep.

We broke camp with a few minor injuries and only one or two tankers had to be medevaced out. The day passed uneventfully and we pulled into some high ground to bivouac for the night. While setting up, three or four NVA

soldiers were seen jogging just out of the immediate reach of our main guns. Many of us discussed what the presence of those NVA meant? The possibilities were that 3 or 4 or 5 NVA might translate into mortars? RPG team? or what??

The answer to our speculation hit us with full force that night. We ended up with a whole lot of rocket propelled grenades, I think they were B-40s, coming right at us. It was a night unlike any other night I had experienced. When the smoke cleared, several facts appeared almost instantly. The last Marine tank officer to die in combat was our Captain Wunsch. The last corpsman in the 3rd Tank Battalion's history in Vietnam was also killed that night.

And one more: The guy who just couldn't wait to be a tank crewman; the guy who waited almost a full tour to be what he always wanted to be, was killed. Steve Dowdell was sitting in the gunner's seat when an RPG penetrated the tank's turret and killed him instantly. Ironic as it may seem, Steve was the last tank crewman from 3rd Tanks killed in Vietnam-- the man who could hardly wait to go on at least one operation, and that one operation was both his first and last. His name is chiseled into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. on Panel W20 Line 64. The story behind the name was, like all the names that are there, unique. ■

### ***Thank Me Thank You*** *(Continued from page 38)*

than one occasion I have worn some article of clothing that identifies me as a veteran. On those occasions some folks have uttered those rather hollow words, "Thank you for your service". My immediate reaction is I am embarrassed by that tribute. For those who were too young to even be alive at the time I cannot imagine what motivates them to say that. They have not the faintest clue what we did, why we did it, or even when it was. I will usually not respond as I feel my anger starting to move

up that PTSD scale. Interestingly enough, when I nod my head or say you are welcome, I find the person who said it goes away with a remarkably justified smile.

As for those who are our age, I have a completely different reaction. I almost immediately return to those days forty years ago when there were no thank you's and there were no smiles. I can still see the angry faces and hear some of the most vile comments. That in turn generates some very mixed emotions. For those who could not care less at the time; now, suddenly when it is not inconvenient, want to thank someone, anyone, it

rings hollow. I think they must mistake me for a veteran from one of the more recent, popular wars.

Forty plus years ago I joined a group of warriors. Those warriors were once again called into action. Quite frankly, warriors do not need thank you's. For me, I found a group of men and women who draw their strength not from outside the Corps but from inside. For warriors, duty, honor, esprit de corps, honesty, and integrity, these are the things I (we) hold closest, yesterday as well as today. ■



Heading for R&R?



Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks retriever on Route 9 west of Camp Carroll, 1969

Fond memories...



Indeed...



This is my new favorite t-shirt



Get Some!!!



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have met and survived the challenges of combat."**

**Colonel James E. Johnson, USMC**

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