



Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™

It's just six months before we see you in Washington, DC!!!



Forgotten Tracks available again Page 2

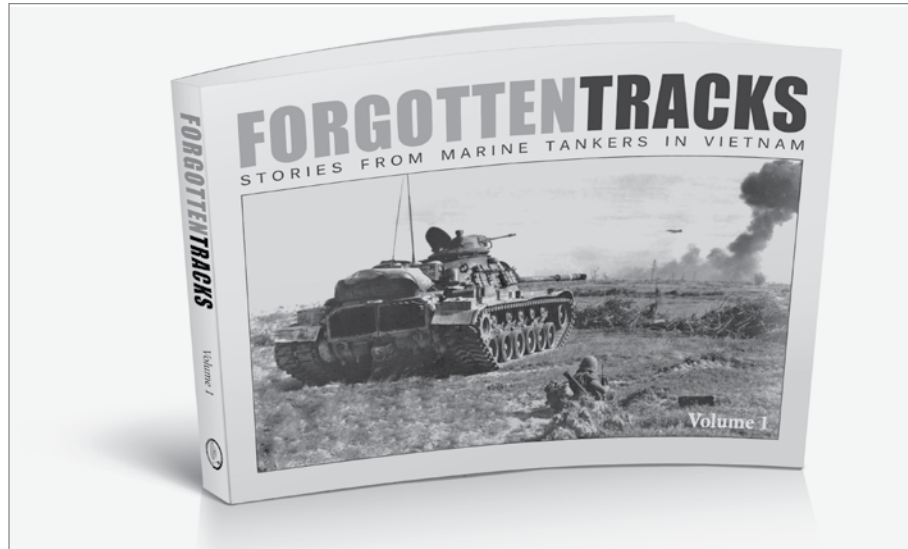
Featured Stories: Outside of the Wire on May 13th, 1968 Page 30 - 39

Washington Reunion Section..... Page 42 - 47

“FORGOTTEN TRACKS” - SOLD OUT!

AN ADDITIONAL 100 COPIES NOW AVAILABLE

Due to the overwhelming response of USMC VTA members and friends, the entire original printing of “Forgotten Tracks, Volume I” was sold out just before Christmas Day, 2014. The Board of Directors has authorized



an additional 100 copies printed and they are now available for sale. If you are interested in purchasing a copy of “Forgotten Tracks, Volume I”, please send a check made out to: USMC VTA, in the amount of \$34.95 and mail it to Pete Ritch, 833 E. Gulf Beach Drive, Eastpoint, FL, 32328; or, you can go to the USMCVTA website and order a copy on-line by using our PayPal link and your credit card.

Copies of our book are now housed in the archives of the Library of Congress, the USMC Museum & University Archives, and the Texas Tech University Vietnam Archives. In addition, a copy of the book was sent to Leatherneck magazine for their review.

The feedback from our members has been very positive. With our book, we have been able to capture and memorialize many of the stories of members for future generations.

If you have any questions or would like more information regarding “Forgotten Tracks, Volume I”, please contact Pete Ritch at 850-734-0014 or on-line at goldendog@mchsi.com.



PERSONAL INTERVIEW SIGN-UPS

During the 2011 reunion in San Antonio, we were not able to interview almost everyone who signed up for an interview session. If you were one of the few whom we were not able to give your interview, and if you would like to be interviewed during our 2015 reunion in Washington, DC, please do not wait until the DC reunion to sign up. Go ahead and contact Pete Ritch right now by phone (Home) 850-734-0014, or by email at goldendog@mchsi.com. Pete will add you to the new 2015 reunion interview schedule.

In DC we will have one full day available for interviews, and we have already received several requests for time slots. We have begun to assemble a group of tankers who were on “Operation Starlite” for a group interview session, and Bob Skeels has contacted several of his 1st Platoon, Bravo Co, 3rd Tanks crewmen who participated in a “Turkey Shoot” of NVA that never made it into the “official” USMC command chronologies.

The USMC VTA History Project wants to record your stories & your photographs. More importantly, once we obtain and chronicle our experiences, not only will they be shared within the USMC tanker community, but they will be included in the archives of the U.S. Library of Congress, the Marine Corps Museum and Marine Corps University.

The goal of USMC VTA History Project is to assure that we (and our stories) will never be forgotten.

Letter from the President

It is just six months before we gather together in Washington, DC. It should be another exciting and meaningful reunion for all of us. If the attendance trend keeps going in the same direction that it has been going since our founding in 1999, this will be our biggest reunion yet. If there ever was a time that any even slightly reluctant member considers attending, this should be the year. As many of us have said in the past, most first-time attendees say, “God willing, I will never miss another VTA reunion!”

When you consider that we are losing 10 to 15 VTA members each year as they are permanently transferred to “The Great Tank Park in the Sky,” then in 20 - 25 years there will be virtually none of us left alive. This is an even more compelling reason to attend our reunions ... before it is too late to do so.

In DC this fall, the VTA History Project will be continuing our highly successful personal & group history video recordings. Please plan to participate with your own personal interview. We will also be offering computer image scanning of your treasured photos. In order to get them up on our website and to be made available for the Sponson Box, please make sure that you bring your Vietnam photo albums and scrap books with you. And we all seem to enjoy sharing them in the Slop Chute hospitality room.

Upon reflection: There are things that we find ourselves being forced to do and there are things that we simply want to do. According to my own rusty, dusty, brain housing group, for me to be able to remember and to voluntarily write my own personal experiences as a Marine tanker in Vietnam, it is very important that I can share those stories with my family and my friends. There is an old world proverb that reads: “When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground.” Please don’t allow your own personal library to be destroyed before we can record it for posterity.

Semper Fidelis,

John

“What would you do if you knew you couldn’t fail?”

Eleanor Roosevelt



women, kids, Marines, sailors and even a soldier squeezed in with many Spanish speaking people that were all jammed in together. Days went by. Nights went by. Everybody used the same trench for their sewer. At intervals, U.S. military personnel were herded outside behind a huge wall and rifles were pointed at our heads and we were told to not make any noise or we would be shot. (As it turns out, the U.S. Navy Provost Marshal was inspecting for U.S. personnel and the Mexicans wanted to hide us from him). Like many Old Corps Jarheads, I had sewed a \$20 bill into the lining of my trousers. I made friends, of sorts, with a guard and I agreed to give him the \$20 (which was equal to several months guard pay) if he would unlock the inner and outer wall gates for 5 minutes, allowing me to run barefoot for the border. My escape & evasion training paid off. I made it to the border when all hell broke loose! There were guns everywhere--armed U.S. Navy provost people, armed Mexican border guards--but I made it across the border. I used the Provost Marshall's phone to call my USMC CO and reported that I and dozens of other Marines and sailors had been held prisoner in a Mexican prison. My CO ordered the Provost to provide me transportation back to Pendleton ASAP. The Corps verified the facts. An armored column was prepared and proceeded to the border. It included gun tanks, napalm flame tanks and some 6x's to haul the prisoners home. Facing the threat of Tijuana being burned to the ground, the Mexican authorities released our men. The border was temporarily closed. And a reward was placed on my head. Now some 60 years later, I'm in my 80's. And recently a visiting nurse in my home asked if I was the same USMC she studied about in JAG School at Pendleton. Gung Ho, awaiting transfer to Guard the Streets of Heaven.

Don Kun

--From the Sgt Grit's newsletter

Thank You

Thanks so very much for running the piece on Buddy Spivey. It looked great!! Wonderful layout!! What you do is amazing!!! Thanks yet again for all your hard work, my friend!!!

Phillip McMath

Little Rock, AR

Phone: (501) 868-7172

On the evening of the seventh day...

On the evening of the seventh day the Lord looked over His creation and saw that it was good. He said, "Let there be a breed of great warriors to protect the people from

evil. They shall ride beasts of iron and steel and speak with breaths of fire and destruction. They shall be feared by all that is evil. The people shall call these warriors who are masters of their beasts."

TANKERS

And on this day Satan stood at attention.

Submitted by Ron Davidson

A Tank Car



A Tank Bar



When the Marines Tried to Recruit 73-Year-Old President Ronald Reagan, His Response Was Classic
As much as Ronald Reagan is remembered for his love of country, he is also remembered for his dry sense of humor. His response to a recruitment letter from the Marine Corps – received while he was president – was classic Reagan. In May of 1984, after the 73-year-old president received the letter, he replied in quintessential Reaganesque style:

Dear General Kelly,

I regret that I must decline the attached invitation to enlist in the United States Marine Corps.

As proud as I am of the inference concerning my physical

fitness, it might be better to continue as the Commander-in-Chief. Besides, at the present time it would be rather difficult to spend ten weeks at Parris Island.

The recruiter notes that "had (I) joined six months ago, I would have a whole new life now." There is no doubt about that. As much as the other political party would appreciate the notion, Nancy is happy with the house and I am totally satisfied with my job. As for the immediate future, I have the kind of tenacity the Corps is famous for in my resolve to stay here for the next four years. Would you consider a deferment until 1989?

On a more serious note, P. X., I'm sure my invitation came as the result of a lance corporal's overactive imagination. Nevertheless, please let him know that he honored me in believing that I have what it takes to become a United States Marine.

Semper Fidelis,

Ronald Reagan

Submitted by Tom Kelly

An Update From Ev

I just sent in my 2015 dues plus a \$200 donation for the cause. I also want to let you know of my new mailing address

effective 2/1/15: 1416 Madrone Way, Woodland, CA 95695. As you know, I lost Elsie a year ago last Monday. I came down from WA to be with one of my daughters and her husband here in Inyokern, CA last May to get things sorted out. I've found that I need to be in a place where there are more opportunities to interact with my peer group. I found such a place in Woodland, CA where I will be located in a brand new independent living senior complex. My oldest daughter and husband live in Woodland as well, so I'll have family nearby.

I wanted to mention also that I have seen the movie "American Sniper" twice and kudos to Clint Eastwood for a wonderful job of telling the story of man who hated war but loved his fellow warriors. My oldest brother was a Marine Scout/Sniper during WWII and was my inspiration for wanting to become a Marine in 1951. To the idiot critics of "American Sniper", such as Michael Moore, et al, I would say if you can't stand behind the brave military men and women who protect your sorry asses, feel free to stand in front of them!

LtCol Ev Tunget

Woodland, CA

Phone: (425) 512-4874

USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn. Scholarship Program

The Board of Directors of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association has implemented an annual academic scholarship program. A scholarship will be awarded each year in the amount of \$1,000. To be eligible, the applicant must be a spouse, child, stepchild, or grandchild of a VTA member who has a DD-214 on file with the VTA and whose membership dues are current. The scholarship recipient's eligibility will remain in effect for up to four years of school, provided that the student continues to maintain an overall accumulative GPA of 3.0 or better.

Student Scholarship Criteria:

1. A minimum GPA of 3.0 at the last high school or academic institution attended.
2. Be registered to attend a minimum of half-time (as determined by the institution) at an accredited educational/technical college or university.
3. Agree to authorize the VTA to publicize the scholarship award announcement in the Sponson Box newsletter.
4. Application materials must be postmarked no later than the June 30 deadline.

The scholarship program committee will review all applications for completeness, then the VTA Board of Directors will select the scholarship winner. Determining factors will be letters of recommendation, a letter in the applicant's own words expressing current educational goals and prior accomplishments, and a 500-word essay on the topic: Why I Believe We Should Honor America's Veterans.

To obtain a scholarship application form, contact Jim Coan, 5374 E. Lantana Drive, Sierra Vista, AZ 85650, Phone: 520-378-9659, or e-mail: zzjimco@aol.com - Before the June 30 deadline for receipt of applications.

Looking For



Does anyone recognize these photos?

If you recognize any or all of these please contact John Wear (at 215-794-9052) so we can nail down the particulars.

USMC Vietnam Tankers Association
Financial Report
January 1 – December 31, 2014

INCOME	
Dues & Donations	\$15,905.00
Challenge Coins	997.00
Forgotten Tracks	4,046.12
Misc	379.48
Total Income	\$21,327.60
EXPENSES	
Scholarships	\$ 4,000.00
Sponson Box	7,755.91
Challenge Coins	119.45
Forgotten Tracks	4,081.64
Directors	7,181.10
Administration	1,981.76
Total Expenses	\$25,119.86
DEFICIT Total Income – Total Expenses	\$ (3,792.26)
CASH IN BANK 12/31/2014.....	\$33,240.02

Election of Association Officers and Directors

If you would like to run for a position on the Board of Directors of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association, you will need to submit your name and desired position in writing. Elections will be held during the business meeting of the reunion in Washington, DC. Positions available are: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and four director chairs. You must be a member in good standing to be eligible to run for office. All who want to be considered for election must submit the request in writing to the Nomination Committee Chairman: SgtMaj William “JJ” Carroll, USMC (ret), 2725 Saddle Court (Unit 4), Stillwater, MN 55082-4583 no later than August 31, 2015. If you have a question, you may call SgtMaj Carroll for details at (651) 342-0913 (CST).

Action at the Auction

For those of you who have never attended a USMC VTA reunion, we conduct an exciting and fun-filled auction immediately following one of our association-sponsored evening meals. The auction is one of our key fundraisers. All of the items offered in our auction consist of some rare and hard-to-find items that members donate to the organization. Many of these items tend to be souvenirs of our time in-country and our time served as Marine tankers. Below are just a small sampling of the items that we will be auctioning off during the Washington, DC reunion. And we have it on authority that Sgt. Major Tommy Ayers, USMC (ret) will be again serving as our auctioneer this year.

HAND GRENADES!!!
These are authentic (inert) heavy-weight metal copies of the real thing...



The real thing!!!



For the ladies...
Very rare Montana "Yogo" Sapphire Pendants



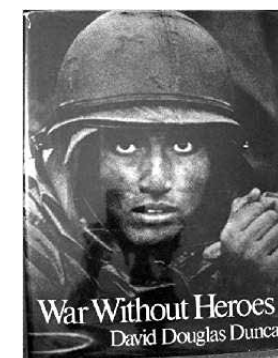
Nancy Van Apeldoorn's organization's special "Lap Robes for Veterans" project. As she did in San Antonio, Nancy will have very special lap robes for the auction.



A CLAYMORE MINE!!!
An inert copy of the real thing to serve as a desk accessory.



War Without Heroes Hardcover – 1970
by David Douglas Duncan
1st Edition. Perfection for a Collector!



PLEASE HELP

We would really appreciate it if you would scour your attics, your garages, and your basements to see if you have any treasures that we could use for our auction. We have had simple items like canteens, steel piss pots, tank comm. helmets, books about the Vietnam War, t-shirts, covers, and jungle utilities all the way up to hand-built scale models of tanks, demilled-90 mm shells, and beautiful antique plaques. We even had a tank's ballistic computer one year!!! Some members find items on E-Bay or other Marine-related websites and they obtain items for our auction which they donate to us. As most of you know, all donations to the USMC VTA are tax-deductable to the fullest extent of the law.

We have a set of TEN past issues of Life magazine from the 1960's that chronicle the Vietnam War.



A military-grade canteen



If you have a great item or two, please contact any of our VTA Board of Directors and let them know that they will be available for the auction. You can find your board members' contact information on Page 3 of this issue. If the items are too heavy or bulky to carry on the airplane and if we think it is a viable auction item, we may be able to help you with the shipping to the reunion; but we need to hear from you at least a month before the reunion...that's by September 28th



Can you correctly identify the young Marine holding his puppy? The first person to contact John Wear at 215-794-9052 with the right answer will receive a yet un-named mediocre prize.

GUESS WHO Photo Contest

Last Issue Winner

The first person to identify the above photo was Gene Whitehead who called me at 5:45 PM on January 22, 2015 to identify the vehicle as a "Husky." Gene explained that during his Marine Corps career, he attended the Tank Master Gunner School where he learned to identify all of the armored vehicles in the (then current) U.S. arsenal.



Husky: Carrier, Cargo, Amphibious, M116 and M116A1 (G299)

The Husky (formally Carrier, Cargo, Amphibious, M116) is a 1 1/2 ton capacity, low ground pressure cargo and personnel carrier, capable of operating over all kinds of terrain and under all seasonal conditions in tropical, temperate, and arctic zones. The Husky name is sometimes spelled Huskie. It is fully amphibious without preparation or fording kit. Propulsion and steering, both on land and water, are accomplished by movements of the tracks. It is sometimes referred to as a marginal terrain vehicle and has served in that role from the hot swamps and paddies of Vietnam to the snow fields of Alaska.

The Husky was developed to replace the amphibious USMC M-76 Otter and the M-28 Weasel Amphibious Vehicle. During development, the M116 was known as T116E1 and had a later variant M116A1, standardized in 1976. The M116 was originally designed by Pacific Car and Foundry although actual production of 197 units was by Blaw-Knox Company (Mattoon, IL). It was fielded circa 1960.

The Husky body is made of aluminum. The body is open at top and normally is used with top bows and canvas for cover, but it can be covered with a fiberglass enclosure for colder weather. There is a front mounted winch. The front section and rear section are covered or not using separate enclosure units.

Both the M116 and the M116A1 were assigned FSN 2350-411-2057.

Non-Standard Husky Variants: XM729, XM733, XM755

In addition to the standardized M116 and M116A1, the XM733 Assault Vehicle, Full Tracked, Amphibious (FSN 2320-999-4312) was produced by Pacific Car and Foundry for the Marine Corps in 1966. The XM733 was an up-armored version with an open top, typically armed with a .50 cal. machine gun, used as an amphibious gun-truck escort for the M116 cargo carriers, especially useful in wet terrain and rice paddies of Vietnam. Several other versions of this vehicle were produced, at least as a prototype:

- XM729: Tank, Combat, Full Tracked, Counter-insurgency, Amphibious, Lightweight (FSN 2350-921-5564). Also called LACIC (?).
- XM729E1: Variant with gunner's cupola. Called Remote Area Counter-insurgency Vehicle (RACI) by some sources.
- XM733E1: Variant with gunner's cupola. Called Remote Area Counter-insurgency Vehicle (RACI) by some sources.
- XM755: Carrier, 81-mm mortar, Tracked.
- The XM729 was a modified M116 with enclosed armor and dual machine gun turret, but was not produced in quantity. Some sources refer to these models without the experimental X prefix as implying standardization.

M116 Husky Characteristics

Engine	Chevrolet V8, 283 cid, 160hp, gasoline
Transmission	GM Hydramatic, 4 fwd speeds
Weight, Combat	10,600 lbs
Length	188.1 in
Width	82.1 in
Height	79.1 in
Ground Clearance	16 in
Track Width	20 in
Electrical	24 volt
Maximum Speed, Land	37 mph
Maximum Speed, Water	4.2 mph
Fuel Tank	65 Gallons U.S.
Range, Land	300 miles

Note: Specifications for the M116 vehicle and other vehicles in the family will vary.

The track width is large for this size vehicle, with low ground pressure as a result. This gives the M116 family excellent performance on sand, mud, and snow as well as water propulsion without a propeller. ■

What Members Are Doing

WEEKS *Alpine*
162.25, 7014
Jan 15, 69

Marine in Cat's Mouth Saved By His Swift Moving Partner

QUANG TRI, Vietnam (Special) — A tiger was killed by members of a small Marine patrol when the 400-pound cat attacked a 3rd Reconnaissance Bn. Marine in the northwestern corner of South Vietnam.

The Marine who was attacked is listed in satisfactory condition at a military hospital at Quang Tri.

The six-man recon team was on an observation mission near Fire Support Base Alpine, six miles east of the Laotian border in Quang Tri Province, when the tiger attacked. The team had completed its mission and was waiting to be heli-lifted from the area. Bad weather conditions had prevented immediate pick up and the team had posted a two-man radio watch while the others settled down to sleep.

The tiger struck silently and swiftly.

"Suddenly I heard somebody scream," said Pfc. Thomas E. Shainline of Gilbertsville, Pa., "and then somebody else was yelling: 'It's a tiger! It's a tiger!'"

Pfc. Roy Regan of Nacogdoches, Tex., who had been sleeping next to the attacked Marine recalled, "I jumped up and saw the tiger on my partner. All I could think about was to get the tiger away from him. I jumped at the tiger and the cat jerked his head and jumped into a bomb crater 10 yards away, still holding his prey."

The Marines quickly followed the tiger to the bomb crater and opened fire. They could not be sure which one of them actually killed the tiger, since they all fired at it.

Once hit, the tiger released his prey and the attacked Marine staggered out of the bomb crater.

The injured Marine was given first aid treatment and a medical evacuation helicopter was called.

In minutes, a Marine CH42 helicopter arrived to pick-up the injured Marine, the rest of the team and the dead tiger.

The injured Marine was rushed to the 3rd Medical Bn. hospital at Quang Tri, suffering from lacerations and bites on the neck.

The tiger, measuring nine feet from head to tail, was taken to the battalion headquarters.

The incident took place about 10 miles south of the Demilitarized Zone, near the spot where a young Marine was slain by a tiger Nov. 12.



Members of a Marine reconnaissance team examine the 400-pound tiger they killed while on a patrol in the northwestern sector of South Vietnam. The Marines killed the big cat when it attacked a sleeping patrol member. (USMC)

The Night of the Tiger

I remember seeing their tracks in stream beds on sweep patrols in the DMZ jungle around both mountaintop artillery fire support bases FSB Alpine and FSB Argonne (and Argonne was where the Marine from 1/4 was killed). They were sometimes just outside the lines at night harassing the small rock apes. As Echo Co, 2/4, 3rd Marine Div, we opened these FSB's in Oct. and Nov. 1968, and these other non-battlefield threats always resulted in the hyper-tightening, puckering, and full-activation of my sphincter muscle while checking night perimeter lines or while on sweep patrols at these key artillery bases! The expressions "War is Hell" and "Hostile Combat Environment" are not even close!

Submitted by Bob Skeels

"Lt Fuzz" Needs Your Cards and Letters

Rod Henderson writes: A few of you on this list know, I found out a month ago that I have a golf ball size tumor in my esophagus. It is cancerous, but the good news is it is local and everything around it shows no evidence of cancer. After a series of tests, it is labeled a uT2 stage cancer, which means it can be removed by surgery, with therapy to follow. It will be a rather long drawn out affair, 7 - 10 days in the hospital, with several weeks/months of recovery. Learning different ways of eating meals - I didn't see Snickers & Chunkys on the list of approved food, but I'll figure out how to add them! I have to have some heart checks done prior to surgery, so am looking at either March 13th (Friday, at that), or March 27th - date depends on how quick I can get the heart checks. Two surgeons, nurses, and 4 hours later, I should know how things went.

I want to get this behind me. Have consulted with Doris, Brad, & Michelle, and all agree with the decision to get it done, and go from there! My daughter, Michelle, has Crohn's Disease and had some of her intestine removed. I talked to her last night, telling what I would be experiencing, she said, "I know, dad, been there, done that." She said I'd feel like crap for several months and then get on with life! I've always viewed life as an adventure. This is not an adventure I would have chosen, but it is what it is! I shall take the journey and view it as a real challenge! Want to have this behind me by summer/fall and looking forward to DC.

This e-mail goes out to Marines from TBS 1-66, C/1/7 Vietnam vets, 1st & 3rd Tankers and the infamous 3rd Herd Marines! Be advised, I am not ready to "check in my 782 gear", and you 3rd Herd Marines - don't go getting any ideas about divvy up the "stuff" in my foot locker or Sea bag - it just ain't that time!

Will keep you advised, have always been proud to have served with all of you, and so good to have gotten in touch with all!

Rod "Lt Fuzz" Henderson
2044 Parkwood Dr.
Johnstown, CO 80534-8310
Phone: (970) 218-9740
Email: gjobrod@aol.com

"It's All About The Kids"



M/Sgt Bruce Van Apeldoorn with New York State Lt. Governor-elect Kathy Hochul at a Toys for Tots event held at the Historic German House in Rochester, NY.

A Blast from the Past!!!



This is Doc Gene Hackemack in the early 1970's. Note the spiffy hair cut and the really cool trousers.

Doc writes: NASA sent me to Eglin Air Force Base for 10 days in 1970 or 1971. I provided medical support for "manned testing" (today politically incorrect). We put three subjects into the Apollo capsule, froze it over to simulate a faulty landing in the Arctic or Antarctic to see how long one could tolerate no air supply, no heat, etc. I monitored their vital signs during their torture! As you can see, I was working hard! ■



To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

A FELLOW MARINE'S FAREWELL

This piece of metal, shaped into an anchor, globe and eagle, is the emblem of the United States Marine Corps. Only the few and the proud have had the privilege to wear this emblem. For that privilege, you must have served your time in Hell, here on earth.

You become a United States Marine for life, for there is no ex-Marine. "Once a Marine, Always a Marine." We become a band of brothers that extend through our lives and perhaps beyond.

_____ was a fellow Marine, and therefore, our brother. Only a Marine can understand our fierce loyalty to the Corps and to one another.

It is said, and who are we to contradict, that all Marines go to Heaven and those pearly gates are guarded by United States Marines. Marine _____, with this beloved emblem, our last order to you is to proudly present yourself to those Marines on duty at Saint Peter's Gate and report thereto, saying proudly, "Sir, Marine _____, United States Marine Corps, reporting as ordered, Sir. I have served my time in Hell on earth."

Farewell, Brother Marine; let us hope that when our turn comes to report to Saint Peter, that you will be the Marine on duty to pass us through those pearly gates.

SEMPER FIDELES!

Editor's Note: This is a eulogy that could be read at any Marine's funeral. It was written by a dear friend, WW 2 Marine Cpl Gene L. Gustad, survivor of the 36-day Battle on Iwo Jima.



Charles E. Fischer

Charles E. Fischer, 67, passed away on Dec. 22, 2013. Born on Dec. 13, 1946, he was a Sgt. in the Marine Corps and was a tank commander in Vietnam. He received the Bronze Star, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star, Purple Heart Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal with two stars, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Rifle Sharpshooter Badge, and the Pistol Marksman Qualification Badge. Surviving are two brothers, John and Gus, and one sister, Bertha. Charlie will truly be missed. He helped so many people and didn't want anything in return. Farewell my Brother. Love, John and Gus



Samuel Houpo Kaleleiki, Jr.



On New Year's eve, Hawai'i lost a true patriot. Kupuna Samuel Kaleleiki, Jr., affectionately known as "Uncle Sam", died at Queens Hospital in Honolulu. He was 79. The painting of Uncle Sam above by Donna Grabow [resulted] from a film where Sam is saying "You gotta focus..." captures the deep commitment of his life for justice.

Sam was a retired U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant Major having served 30 years, receiving Purple Hearts in Korea and Vietnam. Following retirement

and returning home to Hawai'i, Sam saw Hawaiian people destitute, and he committed his life to changing the situation. This led to his involvement in the cause of justice, an end to U.S. occupation of Hawai'i, and the re-establishment of the Sovereign Kingdom of Hawai'i.

Uncle Sam became a member of the House of Nobles of the Reinstated Lawful Government of Hawai'i. He also served as President of Ohana Ho'opakele for many years seeking to establish Pu'uho'oua as alternatives to prison. He helped many people on a personal level and the cause of justice for all.

A Memorial Celebration of Uncle Sam's life will take place on Sunday, January 18th, 2015, 9:00 am – 11:00 am at Uncle Robert Keli'ih'o'omalu's family compound at Kaimu, Kalapana.

Aloha Uncle Sam & Mahalo for the Inspiration of Your Life!



James Robert White



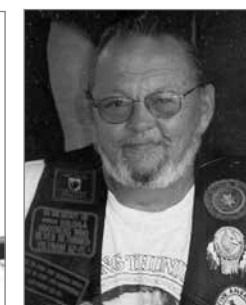
USMC Vietnam Tanker, James Robert White, age 83, of Floresville, Texas and former resident of Flour Bluff, Texas, passed away on January 5, 2015. He was born on November 19, 1931 in Leavenworth, Kansas. James served 21 years with the United States Marine Corps and retired as a Master Gunnery Sergeant. He is survived by his loving wife of 56 years, Mary Louise G. White.



George Vernon "Verne" Brickey



December 5, 1946



February 6, 2015

USMC Vietnam Tanker George Vernon Brickey, aka "Tanker," age 68, passed Friday morning, February 6th, 2015 at his residence, surrounded by his family.

He was a native of Clinton, TN, living in Guyton, GA, for the past 11 years and was of the Pentecostal Faith.

George Vernon was a veteran combat Marine of the Vietnam War (Semper Fi) and was a proud member of the American Legion. He was a Past President of the Metrolina Vietnam Veterans Association of Charlotte, NC, and a beloved brother/member of the In-Country Vietnam Motorcycle Club. He retired as Terminal Manager of Hoover Transportation.

Larry Hogue writes: Vernon and I were in Tank School in Del Mar at Camp Pendleton in March '66. We also arrived at the transit area at Da Nang at the same time in December '66. We were assigned to H&S Co at 1st Tanks. He stayed there during his time in-country and drove a jeep. I drove a 5-Ton truck until March '67 when I transferred to 3rd Platoon, B Co. and drove B-31 with TC Tom Wollney, Harlan Langlitz, and John Laguna. When I finally got my "going home" orders in November '67 while at 1st Tank Bn HQ, I met up with Vernon for a few minutes before going to the transit area to leave Da Nang. Vernon was a good Marine.



Retired Mansfield Police Lt. John Wendling



The U.S. Marine Vietnam veteran and beloved brother of USMC VTA member Jan "Turtle" Wendling, after 46 years on the job as a Mansfield police officer, John Wendling died Monday, December 15, 2014. Wendling was the last of four brothers to hang up his law enforcement badge. Jim, Jan and Joe — and cousin Gordy — beat him to retirement. Wendling spent four years with the U.S. Marines, including three tours in Vietnam. ■



A Tribute to Sergeant Major Samuel Houpo Kaleleiki Jr. ("Pineapple")

BY KEN ZEBAL

Sam was Tank Commander of A-32 and the Heavy Section Leader when we arrived at Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks on Okinawa in early '65. He was bright, knowledgeable, full of energy and, unique for a sergeant at that time, he was also good-humored. We were attached to 3/3 and went to the field and to the local ranges all of the time. We also had many mount-outs for the PI, Fuji and some un-named places. The crew of A-32 (Milo Plank, Tony Pinnetti and me) got to know Sam very well, and without exception, he was highly respected and very well liked by everyone.



Marines at Camp Las Pulgas and (that he was) on the SgtMaj promotion list. Shortly thereafter Sam became our battalion SgtMaj. He'd show up all over the place, always talking with the troops and usually end up in my office or CP. The discussions were professional but between friends where I called him "Sam" and he called me "Zebal" or "Zeeb" (he never called me "Ken"). One day Bravo Company was in the field and the company 1stSgt came walking out all by himself, including 782 gear. I asked him what was up, but the Top didn't want to talk about it and said I should ask my friend, the SgtMaj. Come to find out Sam had chased him out of the CP with his Hawaiian war club. When it came time for Sam to actually be promoted off the list to SgtMaj, he asked the CO (Col Dabney) if his wife would do the honors. After the promotion ceremony Sam told the assembled Officers and SNCOs he always wanted to be promoted by LtGen Lewis "Chesty" Puller but, in this case, being promoted by his daughter, Virginia, was perfect.

Aloha Sam, we'll see you on the other side. ■

Once we landed on the "big range" at Chu Lai in May, things were even busier. Sam rotated back to the World and to 2nd Tanks at LeJeune in July. I would have had no idea what he was up to unless it was published in the Navy Times (newspaper), but watched his promotions continue.

Later on with 1/1 at Camp Horno (on Camp Pendleton) in '77, our Bn. SgtMaj retired and the CO (LtCol Bill Dabney) asked us if anyone knew of a SgtMaj looking for a job. I mentioned that 1stSgt Kaleleiki was in the 11th

V. A. News & Updates

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www.USMCVTA.org

Vet Stereotype Study ▶ Americans Have it Wrong

All veterans aren't homeless washouts. But Got Your Six officials worry that many Americans see them that way. In a new survey by the campaign, almost half of respondents shown a picture of a homeless man identified him as likely a veteran. Researchers say that stereotype is not only misleading, but also indicates a deep and disturbing stereotype of how service members adjust to post-military life. In reality, about 10 percent of America's homeless population are veterans. Survey respondents were more likely to associate homelessness with being a veteran than with mental health problems or criminal activity, both factors that are more prevalent among the destitute than military experience. Only about one in 10 survey respondents described a picture of a successful businessman as likely a veteran. "The perception of veterans is just not aligned with reality," said Chris Marvin, managing director of Got Your Six. "A lot of the time, people just have a completely wrong image in their minds."

The campaign was founded two years ago to highlight misperceptions about troops and veterans, with a specific focus on the entertainment industry's portrayal of military service. Marvin said the new survey shifts the argument from anecdotes to troubling data, and shows the need for more realistic discussion of veterans in civilian society. The good news, he said, is that those opinions seem based more on unfamiliarity with veterans than on deep-seated beliefs about them. "We're not talking about religion or politics here," Marvin said. "We know we can change people's minds on this."

Marvin and campaign officials have been sharing portions of the results with Hollywood writers and producers, encouraging them to bring more nuanced portrayals of veterans into their scripts. "Too often we see veterans [in movies and TV] as heroes ... or as charity cases," he said. "But our study found that showing veterans as neutral characters actually carries the most weight with the audience." He wants to see more characters in film who have military experience as part of their back story, not necessarily the sole focus of their existence. Showing veterans as neighbors, local business people, or casual friends helps remove the idea of them as a separate class apart from society.

Researchers noted that, despite misperceptions, most Americans hold a positive view of service members and veterans. "But the 40 years since the end of the Vietnam War have proven that these views are not static," the report states. "This is not to say that we should expect a regression in the positive opinions of veterans — it simply reflects that the public is open to having their impressions altered." Campaign officials hope that changing those impressions will make the transition from military to civilian life easier in years to come.

[Source: NavyTimes | Leo Shane | October 21, 2014 ++]

VA Means Test Update 01 ▶ Net Worth No Longer a Factor

To align VA's healthcare program with the financial assessment requirements for other federal healthcare programs, the SECVA has approved a process change to cease collection of veterans net worth information for purposes of means testing for health benefits. Effective Jan. 1, 2015, VA will only consider a veteran's previous year gross household income (earned and unearned income) and deductible expenses to determine eligibility and/or co-pay responsibility for purposes of VA healthcare enrollment/benefit purposes. Note. This does not impact net worth development for purposes of VHA's Extended Care Services or VBA's Pension Program. Software changes to remove the net worth prompts from VistA and the Enrollment System

are expected to be released in second quarter FY 15. Until the software is implemented, VA intake staff will enter "zero-dollars" (\$0) into the net worth prompts for new applicants or when updating an existing enrollee's Means Test. Changes to the online application and VA Forms 10-10EZ/EZR and 10-10HS are expected to be available by January 1, 2015. VA will be sending letters to current enrollees who may benefit from this change. Point of Contact: Ms. Benita Miller, Health Eligibility Center Director, Benita.Miller@va.gov or (404) 828-5300. [Source: NAUS Weekly Update November 07, 2014 ++]

Awards Replacement ▶ Use SF 180, Request Pertaining To Military Records

The military recognizes that military medals are often a cherished part of family history and makes replacement

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LEARNING IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

BY FRANCIS (“TREE”) L. REMKIEWICZ

Vietnam is a far different place today than it was in 1968 and 1969. I was only 18 when I arrived in-country and my tour was abruptly ended when I was 19 years old. I then returned to Vietnam in 2008 and, although I spent all my first tour in and around Dong Ha and places north, this time our tour group covered from Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) north through Hoi An, Hue, Con Thien and then to Hanoi. Both trips contributed to some very mixed and confusing memories.

I had successfully blocked out all memories of Vietnam except for the tail-end of my Senior Trip which commenced on July 28, 1969 through August 15th or 20th. If you asked me what I remembered about Vietnam, I could only relay a partial story of a very confusing night for many of us. Then, after returning from a Vietnam trip in 2008, the memories became many and varied, some true, some fantasy, some daytime-mares as well as nightmares. After my second trip, I also began a Tour of Duty with the Veteran’s Administration that continues today.

So, what are my memories of Vietnam? My fondest memory is that it is a great day to be alive! There were too many days and nights of catching “Zzzzs” whenever and wherever I could. I still do this today. A good night’s sleep is four hours of knocked-out sleep aided by those little white pills. No memories or dreams at all, just blank time.

I have memories of the Vietnamese children—little kids who played in the surrounding dirt areas of their homes. These were children who would run up to our tank with its four-member crew and

beg for candy and cigarettes. Apparently, they were struggling for some sense of a childhood that seemed to be far too elusive even for them. Childhood would especially escape them when, in the dark hours of the evening, we might run across several of them carrying AK-47s, or serving as a mortar team, or (God forbid!) an RPG team. Children, you want to hug and love them, but sometimes you simply have to shoot them.

My memories are of the Vietnamese men who were about our age and who now seem to be few and far between today. They fought with North Vietnam; and, with age, they are apparently “over the war.” In 2008, I met a man who was close to my age but still a bit younger, and we talked through a translator. He said that he had been a soldier with the Viet Cong in, what I found to be, our identical area of operation that was just south of the DMZ. It is really weird to stare death in the face, and just as sure as I was standing there, this former VC left me with the sentence, “The war is over.” All I can say is, “Maybe for you but not for me.”

Also, during that same return trip, we travelled through Quang Tri and Dong Ha and all the places I had been inside of my tank ... and where a part of me still is. We went to Khe Sanh, the battlefield where our Marine warriors taught and learned lessons none will ever forget. A young 20-something Vietnamese man came up to me and attempted to sell me what appeared to be an American’s lost dog tags. I have vivid memories of me climbing back into the tour bus while running a 10.5 or 11 on the Anger Scale thinking, “How could anyone be so

insensitive, or just that plain dumb, to find a possibly KIA American’s dog tags and then try to sell them to me?” As a post script, I later learned that there is a huge, clandestine industry of manufacturing fake dog tags to sell to unsuspecting tourists.

Back in the World [after Vietnam], going to the airport shortly after my son was born to drop off my mother-in-law, my wife still has memories of an incident that I will replay here. My mother-in-law got out of the van and was successful in getting to the airplane. As I began to pull away from the curb, for whatever reason, I abruptly stopped the van. Apparently that did not deter the man in back of me and ...**Bam!!!** The right rear quarter panel of our brand new van was wrinkled. After the initial impact, I placed our van in park, got out and walked over to the driver’s side of the car that had hit me. I started yelling, and every time the guy tried to get out of the car, I would slam the door closed on him. It was my way of not killing the guy. After I calmed down a little bit, and when I got back into the van, my wife Kathy was aghast. She asked, “What was that about?”

I said, “There is a side of me you really don’t know”.

Speaking of memories, Kathy has memories as well—memories of me driving to work and losing all track of time and place. From time to time when I was commuting to work, I had nightmares, but they came during the day and they were so real that I would sweat and shake. I never thought a 6’ 7” Marine could fit in a tiger cage until those “day-mares” made a believer out of me. I learned that spending all the rest of one’s life “in the World” still could not eradicate certain memories.

I learned that the NVA and Viet Cong

soldiers made good “Roman candles.” A flame tank would light up a fighting hole or a machine gun emplacement and the next thing one gets is “Crispy Critters”, co-incidentally that was the name of one of the flame tanks in the 3rd Tanks arsenal. The smell of the burning flesh is an all-sensory experience seared into my memory ... vividly.

What did I learn? The post-Vietnam memory of me being threatened by a school board member. In 1991 or 1992, I was attending a middle school board meeting. My boss liked to have all his directors together at board meetings so all were in attendance. During the meeting, I vocally disagreed with one of the elected school board members about a point that he was trying to make. Then, during a 15-minute recess, that same school board member walked up to me and said, “Better get your resume up to date; I am coming after you and your job.”

He said that quite loudly in front of God and country and the gathered masses. It wasn’t but about ten minutes later that, as we were returning to the board meeting, I handed my boss one of his doors. If I had not walked out of the meeting, I may have choked that scumbag’s throat. And so it goes – memories.

What I learned in Vietnam: I learned that elementary school children deserve better than an aging veteran who is drifting back into another dimension. Eight years earlier, I fell into the neatest job I ever had. I became an elementary school principal. In year seven of being a principal, my Vietnam experience rose to the forefront of my memories. I found myself almost always being at a number 5 on the Anger Scale. And even with the most minor of student infraction, it would jump to a 9 or 10 with little or no provocation. Elementary school students should not be exposed to aging veterans

with so many unresolved emotionally-packed issues. In this case, the Veterans Administration agreed with me.

What do I think I learned from Vietnam? I learned the difference between warriors and soldiers. For over thirteen months I lived with warriors. Warriors always go where they are told to go and fight whoever they are told to fight because warriors are not politicians, they are warriors. All warriors know is how to fight, how to win, and how to protect the ideals of fellow countrymen. But most of all, warriors protect warriors. When a warrior goes down, a little piece of every warrior dies. And we all bring back only the pieces we have left. Some are able to put the pieces back together more quickly and quite successfully. Some of us haven’t yet learned what pieces we are left with, let alone how to put them back together ■

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medals, decorations, and awards available to veterans or their next of kin if the veteran is no longer living or able to make the request on his or her own behalf. Replacement medals, decorations and awards should be requested on SF 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records. This form can be downloaded on line with <http://www.va.gov/vaforms>. Each request should be filled out neatly and should include the veteran’s branch of service, social security number, dates of service; and it should be signed by the veteran or the next of kin if the veteran is incapacitated or deceased. Where to forward it is indicated by an address code on the back of the SF 180. In general, requests made by the veteran are fulfilled at no cost. This includes requests made by family members who have the signed authorization of the veteran. There may be an associated fee for requests made by next of kin, especially if the request involves archival records (records are considered archival records 62 years after the veteran’s date of separation from military service). [Source: RAO Seal Beach CA | John Ryan | Jan, 01, 2015 ++]

National Park Passports Update 05 ▶ Lifetime Pass for all Disabled Vets

Sens. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) and Susan Collins (R-ME)

reintroduced legislation 8 JAN that would give all veterans with a service-related disability a free, lifetime pass to national parks and other federal recreational areas. Such a pass is currently available only to veterans with a 100 percent disability rating from the Department of Veterans Affairs, according to a statement from Shaheen. The bill would allow all veterans disabled because of their service to be eligible for a free, lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Pass, and allow them to enjoy hunting, fishing and other recreation on Federal public lands. “Veterans who have fought and sacrificed to protect American land deserve the opportunity to enjoy it,” Shaheen said in the statement. “In New Hampshire, we are lucky to have some of the most beautiful recreational space in the country. Men and women with a service-connected disability have earned lifetime access to these national treasures.” Collins added, “It is fitting that those who have defended our freedoms should have free access to our nation’s parks and recreational lands. From Acadia and the Appalachians to Yosemite and everywhere in between, our bill would allow veterans to more easily engage in outdoor activities, which have been shown to help heal both the visible and invisible wounds of war.” [Source: The Hill | Kristina Wong | Jan. 08, 2015 ++] ■

Welcome to Vietnam

BY: JAMES COAN

*Editor's Note: Below is a thought-provoking editorial that I received some time ago. I'm not really sure when it was written, although I suspect about 10 years ago, but I have confirmed that it was published in the Washington Post at some point. The author has since also co-written a book with his Marine son entitled **Keeping Faith: A Father-Son Story About Love And The United States Marine Corps.***

My Heart on the Line

BY FRANK SCHAEFFER

Before my son became a Marine, I never thought much about who was defending me.

Now when I read of the war on terrorism or the coming conflict in Iraq, it cuts to my heart. When I see a picture of a member of our military who has been killed, I read his or her name very carefully. Sometimes I cry.

In 1999, when the barrel-chested Marine recruiter showed up in dress blues and bedazzled my son John, I did not stand in the way. John was headstrong, and he seemed to understand these stern, clean men with straight backs and flawless uniforms. I did not. I live in the Volvo-driving, higher education-worshiping North Shore of Boston. I write novels for a living. I have never served in the military.

It had been hard enough sending my two older children off to Georgetown and New York University. John's enlisting was unexpected, so deeply unsettling. I did not relish the prospect of answering the question, "So where is John going to college?" from the parents who were itching to tell me all about how their son or daughter was going to Harvard. At the private high school John attended, no other students were going into the military.

"But aren't the Marines terribly Southern?" asked one perplexed mother while standing next to me at the brunch following graduation. "What a waste, he was such a good student," said another parent. One parent (a professor at a nearby and rather famous university) spoke up at a school meeting and suggested that the school should "carefully evaluate what went wrong."

When John graduated from three months of boot camp on Parris Island, 3,000 parents and friends were on the

parade deck stands. We parents and our Marines not only were of many races but also were representative of many economic classes. Many were poor. Some arrived crammed in the backs of pickups, others by bus. John told me that a lot of parents could not afford the trip.

We in the audience were white and Native American. We were Hispanic, Arab, and African American, and Asian. We were former Marines wearing the scars of battle, or at least baseball caps emblazoned with battles' names. We were Southern whites from Nashville and skinheads from New Jersey, black kids from Cleveland wearing ghetto rags, and white ex-cons with ham-hock forearms defaced by jailhouse tattoos. We would not have been mistaken for the educated and well-heeled parents gathered on the lawns of John's private school a half-year before.

After graduation, one new Marine told John, "Before I was a Marine, if I had ever seen you on my block I would've probably killed you just because you were standing there." This was a serious statement from one of John's good friends, a black ex-gang member from Detroit who, as John said, "would die for me now, just like I'd die for him."

My son has connected me to my country in a way that I was too selfish and insular to experience before. I feel closer to the waitress at our local diner than to some of my oldest friends. She has two sons in the Corps. They are facing the same dangers as my boy. When the guy who fixes my car asks me how John is doing, I know he means it. His younger brother is in the Navy.

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A lot of calendar pages have flipped over since I first arrived in Vietnam in early August, 1967. But, I still retain some recollections of that first month in country that have stayed with me all these years.

I completed the Tracked Vehicle Officer's class at Camp Pendleton the summer of '67, then received orders to WESTPAC. Seventeen other tank officers from that class were going with me. I was expecting to go to Vietnam; that was the main reason I had applied for Marine Corps OCS in the first place. A great uncle had served with the Marines in Europe in World War I, and an older step-brother served with the Marines in the Pacific during World War II, receiving two Purple Hearts. The Vietnam War was what my generation faced.

After our flight landed in Da Nang, I was herded over to a tent to spend the night. We were located right next to the runway; jets took off and landed all night long. I doubt that I slept more than a few minutes all night. After a morning meal, I was told to report to a duty shack and get my orders. I was assigned to report to 3rd Tank Battalion up north, along with eight other tank officers. The remaining nine tank officers would stay there and be assigned to 1st Tanks.

I have no memory of how I and the other eight second lieutenants got from Da Nang to Phu Bai that day. We probably flew in a C-130. Third Tank Battalion was located outside of Phu Bai at Gia Le. We were picked up in a truck at the Phu Bai airport and driven to Bn. HQ. I recall that Lieutenants Brignon, Block, and myself were assigned to Bn. HQ. at Gia Le. Lieutenant Tom Barry was assigned to Alpha Company at Dong Ha, and he took over the 1st Platoon at Con Thien. Lieutenants James Georgaklis and Steven Fitzgerald went to Bravo Company at Camp Carroll. Lieutenants McCollum and John Paul Marken went to Charlie Company. One of our group, 2/Lt. Roger Luli, went to Con Thien to take over an Ontos platoon. He was later transferred to Bravo Co. at Camp Carroll.

I was assigned to be the S-3 Alpha working for Major Bruce MacLaren, Bn. S-3. Everything was pretty routine that first week, learning the ropes, preparing for the Battalion Commander's briefing every afternoon at 1400. I was even enjoying the routine. But, there were real battles going on in areas far from Battalion HQS that I reported on at

the briefings. I had no idea what hell those tankers could be going through in those battles. One afternoon, I was in the 3rd Bn. tank park when I saw a cloud of dust approaching; two tanks roared in and pulled up to a halt nearby. My first thought was, "Don't they have speed limits around here?" Then I observed the tankers exiting their tanks. Their uniforms were sweat and dirt stained, and they had that wild look in their eyes, like they had just run away from the grim reaper. I was suddenly conscious of my shined boots and ironed utilities and felt almost ashamed to be in the company of these warriors.

Then, a tragic event late one night brought home to me that people got killed in Vietnam by accident, not just during combat. An ARVN "short round" from a 75mm artillery piece detonated atop the roof of a "hootch" (a plywood walled, screened, and tin roofed hut that we all slept in) occupied by a U.S. Navy Seabee unit. Their unit was adjacent to ours. Helicopters were arriving and departing from their compound for hours that night. Out of morbid curiosity, I strolled over there in the morning to see what had happened. I was stunned to see the carnage that had resulted from that "friendly fire." Every cot in the hootch, perhaps a dozen, had blood stains on them. Piles of blood-soaked sheets lay on the wooden deck. That was my awakening to the side of warfare that no one likes to talk about, that one could get killed or wounded anywhere in Vietnam, at any time, and completely by accident.

Shortly after that incident, information came to our battalion that 2/Lt. Tom Barry had been wounded up at Con Thien, but not medevaced. Lieutenants Georgaklis and Fitzgerald were both seriously wounded while responding with their tank platoons to a major ambush along Route 9 outside of Camp Carroll. I learned months later that Lieutenant Fitzgerald had been shot in the back by an NVA sniper and the round exited his chest. He only survived because his loader sealed the entry and exit wounds enough to allow him to keep breathing. His war was over. Lt. Georgaklis would return four months later and take over as the CO of Headquarters Co., 3rd Tank Bn., then located at Quang Tri.

The Battalion S-2 was Capt. Daniel Kent. He took me under his wing, explaining what I would need to >>

know when it came my turn to take over a tank platoon. He gave me advice on how to deal with infantry units my tank platoon would be attached to. And he cautioned me several times about not trying to do too much, trying to win the war all by myself. He told me, "Your main job is to get yourself and your men home alive. They are counting on you to not put them in any unnecessary danger. And stay inside the turret; don't do any John Wayne stuff."

On 9 September, I got the word that I was going to take over the 1st Platoon at Con Thien. The platoon commander, 2/Lt. Barry, was wounded a second time from incoming artillery. Division policy at the time mandated that Marines with two or more Purple Hearts were to be pulled out of the line and sent to rear-area positions.

Major MacLaren offered to drive me up to Dong Ha where Alpha Co., 3rd Tanks was located and introduce me to the CO, Capt. Jacobsen; but, something came up at the last minute and instead I hopped a C-130 and flew to my new assignment. What transpired subsequently at Con Thien is another story that I won't go into here.

Major MacLaren retired as a colonel years later. He travelled up to that Great Tank Park in the Sky last February. He was as fine a Marine officer as I ever encountered. I learned many things from him about how to conduct myself as an Officer of Marines. Capt. Kent was another officer that I learned from and who taught me how to conduct myself in the presence of Marines who were depending on me to lead them wisely and to do everything in my power to get them back home alive. The following January, I was shocked and saddened to learn that Capt. Kent, who had taken command of Bravo Company at Camp Carroll, was killed while leading a reaction force to break up an ambush along Route 9, just outside the main access road to the base. He had been riding on the lead tank, standing outside of the turret, when NVA bullets found him. How ironic that he would be killed while doing the very thing that he had specifically warned me not to do.

Some years after that Vietnam experience, I learned that, of the nine of us shiny- new second lieutenants that went up to Northern I Corps, every one of us except one were wounded. Lieutenant John Paul Marken, assigned to Char-

lie Company, was killed responding to an ambush near Highway One. I don't know what fate had in store for the nine other lieutenants who were assigned to 1st Tanks. I do know that it was many months before new 1802 MOS tank officers arriving in country actually reported in to a tank battalion. They were all being assigned to infantry battalions.

I would spend a total of ten months out in the bush with 1st Platoon. I went through five platoon sergeants. Three were wounded and evacuated, one had a nervous breakdown, and one hopped on a helicopter going from Con Thien back to Dong Ha (without my knowledge) and never returned. Despite my protests, I heard he was put in charge of the Alpha Company NCO club.

On my birthday, 15 July 1968, I was on Operation Thor and assigned to Golf Company, 2/9. We were somewhere



out in the middle of Leatherneck Square; the temperature had to be near 120 degrees when a Marine helicopter landed nearby. A shiny-new second lieutenant approached my tank and said, "Mr. Coan, I'm Lieutenant Blakemore and I'm your replacement. You're going back to Dong Ha to be the company XO." I was off of that tank and seated on that chopper in less than a minute. Two months later, I was seated on the "Freedom Bird" and headed home.

Whenever I think back to those action-filled days in Vietnam, there are no regrets. I got all of my tankers home alive. I'll always remember and appreciate that I had the opportunity to serve with two outstanding Marine officers, Colonel Bruce MacLaren and Capt. Dan Kent. May they rest in peace in that great tank park in the sky. ■

AMBUSH OF CHARLIE ONE - DEUCE

BY RIC LANGLEY

On March 4, 1967, the three tanks that made up the heavy section from 1st Platoon, "C" Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division accompanied by a unit of grunts, were on a sweep from Cam Lo north to Con Thien in the Republic of South Vietnam. The sweep had left Cam Lo three or four days earlier and had spent the afternoon of the day before replenishing our ammo, fuel, food and water. Sgt. T. J. Siva was the tank commander of Charlie 1-2 with Cpl. Walter Hullings as gunner, Pvt. Alvin Hamby as loader and I, L/Cpl. Ric Langley, was the driver.

The days prior to the 4th had been very eventful with several violent firefights with the NVA. We had expended a lot of ammunition and fuel trying to keep up and stay in contact with the enemy. During the resupply stop, Cpl. Hullings, who was filling in for our regular gunner and who was due to rotate back to the States in just a few days, was informed that if he wanted to return to the rear, they would send out a replacement for him. Hullings declined, stating that he could catch a chopper back when we reached Con Thien.

The morning of the 4th we were up and moving as soon as there was enough light. This day seemed different, because it was way too quiet. The recon teams that were sent out the night before had not seen or heard anything. Our tanks moved on line up to an old abandoned village. We had been in this area many times before; in fact, a few months before, we had knocked down all of the structures after being ambushed there. The hairs on the back of my neck were standing up and my stomach was in a knot. After eight months in-country, I had developed a sense for trouble.

Moving slowly to let the grunts get on line, we headed across the area of the abandoned village. About fifty yards from the tree line, all hell broke loose. Small arms and RPG fire filled the air. From the driver's compartment, I could see NVA in spider holes not ten yards in front of us. Sgt. Siva ordered canister rounds and we started firing as fast as Hamby could load them. The gun tube moved back and forth, spitting out fire at a steady pace. I could see heads and arms and other body parts flying into the air. We were real-

ly putting a hurt on them. The gun tube was pointed over the left front fender as I had dropped down in my seat and closed and locked down the driver's hatch, which was something that I had never done before. For some reason, I was looking over my left shoulder back into the turret. Hulling had his eye to the telescope, Hamby was loading and shuffling spent casings as fast as he could. Suddenly, the turret filled with a bright flash, sparks, smoke and fire. An NVA RPG round had penetrated the turret to the right side just below the main gun tube, going through the hydraulic system and hitting Hullings in the upper chest and head. He died instantly. I tried to back the tank out of danger, but there was no response. The burning hydraulic fluid flowed into the bottom of the hull and under my seat. Sgt. Siva ordered us out of the tank saying, "Don't worry about Hullings, he's dead."



Charlie 1-2 burning

As I exited the driver's compartment, I vaulted over the gun tube and, not touching the fender, I hit the >>

ground running, knowing that there was no way that we could survive the intense enemy fire. I spotted a small bush and jumped behind it, only to find both Siva and Hamby there. Bullets were impacting all around us, so we were on the move again. I ran hard to my right, passing behind the burning tank, and dove into the tall elephant grass. As I lay very still, I could hear the enemy talking no more than five yards in front of me. Then, just out of my reach to my front, a grenade plopped down. I was unable to reach it to throw it back, so I cringed and waited for the explosion, but it never came. Thank God, it must have been a dud! I crawled

back to an area out of the line of fire and was helped by a corpsman to move to a collection point where they were preparing the wounded for medevac. I was amazed to find both Siva and Hamby there also, waiting for medical evacuation. All three of us had been wounded. Siva had shrapnel in both arms and both legs. I had multiple shrapnel wounds and had lost vision in my left eye. Hamby had several small wounds. We were medevaced to Dong Ha where Hamby was treated and released back to duty. Siva and I were flown out to the hospital ship, USS *Repose*, for more extensive treatment and then back to the war.



RPG "splatter" marks on the turret.



Charlie 1-2 in the "bone yard" at Dong Ha Tank Park



The hole of the RPG that killed the gunner, Cpl Hullings, and caught the tank on fire.



Bravo 34 - "Nomad"

(L to R) Andy Anderson (gunner); Bob Mendez (driver); Claude "Chris" Vargo (TC); and under the road wheels, Fred Morale (loader).

BEAT YOUR DOGGIE

BY ANDY ANDERSON & LT. PETE RITCH

In April, 1969, our tank B-34, nicknamed Nomad, under the command of Cpl. Chris Vargo, 3rd Platoon, B Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, was on a hunt with a hungry crew. We were operating out of the company's forward positions of Camp J.J. Carroll and Vandergrift Combat Base. Our platoon of five tanks were primary operation-conned and assigned to Marine grunt operations in northern I Corps, providing quick react capability, road sweep support, and convoy escort in the area. In addition, our tanks provided perimeter security for Vandergrift when not in the bush or manning designated revetments from dusk to dawn.

In addition to the contingency of approximately a thousand Marines at Vandergrift, there were several other military units there including Navy CB's, Air Force forward observers, and a platoon of five Army M-42 "Dusters."

The M-42 is a self-propelled, tracked anti-aircraft weapon which has twin 40mm guns mounted on Korean War era tank hulls with an open turret. They were touted to be the fastest firing vehicles in the Army's fleet of tracked gun units, due to its primary mission of air defense. Our night defense was usually anchored on either end by the Dusters or our lightly armored personnel carriers.

One night, our beer bunker closed up shop after an initial round of two-beer-per-Jarhead, and we headed to our assignments early as usual. Vargo's tank was scheduled for perimeter security with crew members Cpl. Andy Anderson,

LCpl. Fred Morale, and PFC Bob Mendez, who checked out their designated tank slot. The guys noticed that there was an Army Duster parked approximately fifty meters to our right in another firing slot on the perimeter and another equidistant to the left. Because no crew member was familiar with the Duster, the tankers sashayed over to one and introduced themselves. We asked the doggies about the capability of their vehicle, such as top speed, repair mine damage time and general reliability, eventually getting around to its nomenclature, including the crown jewel, the cyclical rate of fire. The Duster crew couldn't wait to brag on their vehicle and their skills to fire not only on fully automatic, but also on single-fire mode. Vargo grinned at Anderson and immediately challenged the Duster dogs to a shoot off. The doggies immediately took the bait and agreed to a case of beer wager where the first vehicle to fire ten rounds, single fire, won a case of beer from the other crew.

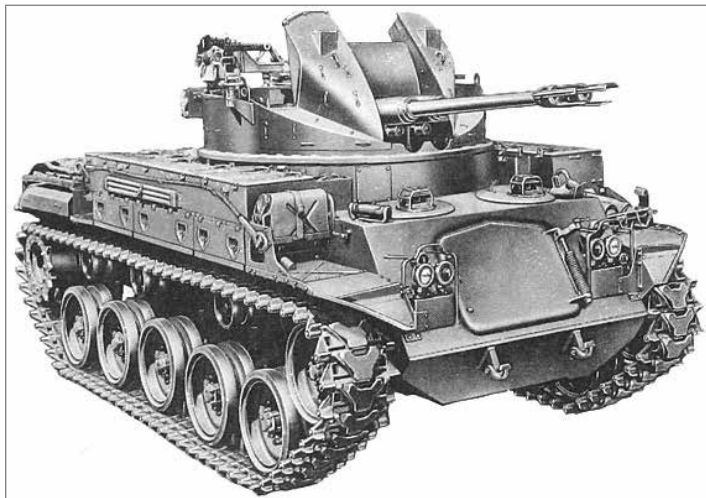
Anderson quickly pulled Vargo aside and noted two small problems. Who could out-load a Duster on either automatic or manual, and, no one had any beer except the doggies. Also, Anderson was worried, because Vargo immediately volunteered to load, but no one had ever seen him, since he was always a commander.

Chris said he would load and told Andy, "Let her rip as soon as the barrel recoiled and the breech block slammed shut"; this sequence was to be repeated until all ten >>

rounds were spent. Vargo said, “Don’t worry about the loading, just fire, no ‘Gun up’ or ‘On the way,’ just squeeze like hell as soon as you hear a “kachunk.”

Shortly before dusk, the crew parked B-34 into an adjacent slot and nodded to the Duster crew that they were ready for show time. As soon as they were given the H&I fire order, the contest would begin. When the order came, both vehicles let loose and, eight seconds later, it was over. Ten rounds from Bravo-34 versus eight rounds by the Duster, who fired two belated rounds. Chris placed one HE round in the breach and cradled three more in his long, lanky arms with six more rounds in the ready rack. The perfectly choreographed sound from our tank was a smooth, even-sounding staccato boom, boom, boom, boom, boom...

The doggies could not believe it (and neither could we!). They were in such disbelief that they counted and recounted the hot brass littering the ground next to the tank three times. Asked how they did it, Vargo and Anderson replied, “We had a definite height advantage,” standing 6’6” and 6’3”, respectively. Vargo and Anderson were two of the tallest tankers in the battalion and definitely had some ‘rock monkey’ arm leverage. The Duster crew begrudgingly delivered a case of hot beer the next day. Truth be told, the case of beer was secondary to an opportunity to beat the doggies, which really motivated Chris and Andy’s rapid fire moment and, hopefully, hit something on those steep mountains that surrounded the firebase. And, we had the honor of our Corps at stake.



M2A1 40 MM GUN

Main armament is the M2A1 dual 40mm automatic gun (Swedish Bofors L/60). The 40mm gun is a high-velocity, flat-trajectory, clip-fed, automatic-loading weapon capable of firing 240 rounds per minute (120

per barrel). The cyclic functioning of each gun is automatic from the firing of one round to the next. The 40mm gun may be either fully automatic or semi-automatic. It is air-cooled and, if fired at maximum rate, will over-heat after about 100 rounds are fired. When over-heated, firing must be suspended and the barrel changed, which takes approximately 3 minutes. Gun tube life can vary from 4,000 to 16,000 rounds, depending on the amount of overheating due to continuous firing.

MK2 High Explosive with Tracer, Self Destroying (HE-T SD)

Used against aerial targets, personnel, and light materiel. The HE-T shells have a supersensitive fuze which bursts on contact. If no contact is made as the tracer burns out, the relay ignition charge is ignited detonating the bursting charge of the shell.

Length: 17.60 in (447 mm)
 Weight: 4.75 lb (2.15 kg)
 Projectile Weight: 1.985 lb (0.9 kg)
 Color Identification: Olive drab with yellow markings
 Muzzle Velocity: 2,870 fps (875 mps)
 Vertical Range: 5,100 yds (4,663 m)
 Horizontal Range: 5,200 yds (4,755 m)
 Tracer Burn Time: 7-12 seconds

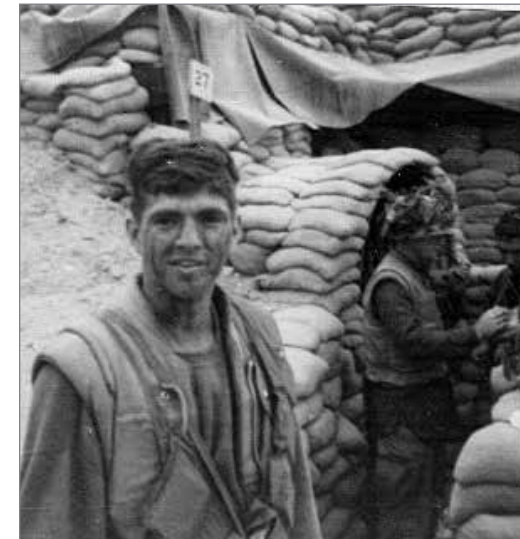
M48A3 90 MM GUN TANK

Length (without main gun):	6870 mm
Length (over main gun):	8680 mm
Height:	3280 mm
Width:	3630 mm
Service weight:	48500 kg
Main armament:	90mm gun M41 (mount M87A1 in turret)
Auxiliary armament:	M2HB 12.7 mm machine gun & 7.62 mm M73 machine gun coaxial with 90mm main gun
Armour hull:	from 30mm (rear) to 110mm (front)
Armour turret:	from 25mm (top) to 180mm (front)
Propulsion:	Continental AVDS-1790-2A; 12 cylinder, 4 cycle, 90° vee, supercharged diesel
Power (gross/net):	559 kW/ 479 kW @ 2400 rpm
Torque:	2318 Nm @ 1800rpm / 2135 Nm @ 1710 rpm
Fuel capacity:	1460 L
Transmission:	General Motors CD-850-6A, 2 ranges forward, 1 reverse
Suspension:	Torsion bars
Speed (on road):	48 km/h
Range:	480 km
Fording:	1.2 m
Trench crossing:	2.59 m
Vertical obstacle:	0.91 m
Crew:	4

Hearts and Minds

BY TOM FENERTY

FOXTROT 2/9, RVN '68 - '69



In photo: Tom Fenerty getting ready for a night ambush

Much has been written and said recently concerning our Afghan allies and winning the war by first winning the

‘hearts & minds’ of the people. It has become the centerpiece of our strategy. We (our men on the ground) must first show them that we care.

We Americans care so much that we have placed our youth in the crosshairs of the enemy. The insurgents get the first shot and, if that’s not bad enough, they then get to hide their weapons and blend in with women and children. Some very noble folks who are not in harm’s way must have made this decision.

History, from the beginning of the written word, tells us that war is a savage endeavor. If the war in the Pacific was fought today, our Marines would probably be viewed as those savages and not the hero’s that they became while fighting for their very survival. They defeated an enemy that, at the time, was considered invincible.

As a witness to war, I can attest that being shot at by a rifle, mortar, RPG, or a cannon does something to an individual’s view of the enemy and of those who offer the enemy support. The emotions involved have a wide range: fear, anger, hatred and sorrow quickly come to mind. Some men, those who have survived long enough, reach a point of numbness that is difficult to explain. Revenge is a trigger pull away some days and it takes strength and leadership to prevent atrocities from being the rule and not the exception.

I recall a company-sized patrol in 1968 when, as radioman for the platoon commander, I witnessed the eventual capture of an enemy soldier who had been following our movements.

He initially sprang up and ran when he was spotted, but he was shot and wounded and then crawled into a hole. It didn’t take long to find him and, when the Lieutenant and I came upon the half-dozen troops surrounding the gook, the conversation went like this:

“Let’s kill the mother fucker!”

“Shoot him!”

“Waste the son of a bitch!”

Weapons were only a few inches from his head and the tension was extreme. I can still see his terror-filled face. Lieutenant Knight immediately took control and said, “We will not kill this man. He’s worth more alive than dead. Call a corpsman and set up a medevac.” The Lt. was right on more than one count. We patched him up and choppered him out.

Word came back that the wounded enemy soldier provided intelligence that would give us an edge (and save lives) in the coming week. Lt. Knight also prevented his men from the nightmares that the murder would have caused. Suppose we had shot the prisoner on the spot. With the exception of the Lt., we would have understood and accepted, because of the revenge and hatred that we harbored. It would have felt good. Yes, it’s madness alright—savagery even.

On another occasion in February ’68, I was part of a squad of Marines that were providing security for a mine sweep that ran daily between Cam Lo and Charlie 2. There were several enemy bodies just off the road that had been killed by an ambush the previous night. There was also unexploded ordinance (grenades and mortars) at the ambush site. The mine sweep crew prepared the duds for destruction and then added a bit of C-4 to the corpses. They then yelled, “Fire in the hole” and ...BOOM! It was raining body parts. From my position about 100 yards away, I could see villagers in the distance standing on a knoll watching this madness unfold. It was over in a flash and the sweep moved forward as if it was just part of the job.

The destination of the dead NVA had been that nearby village. There they would receive additional orders and a bit of R&R for the evening.

Hearts & Minds anyone?

Imagine what the mental state of mind must have been for this to just casually happen. We’re talking about 19 to 20-year-old youths, who only a year or so before were graduating from high school and probably never saw anything more tragic than a car accident. Certainly gives one pause for thought. I respected Lieutenant Knight for his leadership and strength, but even though I did not agree with the road sweep’s actions, I completely understood. ■

May 19, 1968

BY RICK OSWOOD

My name is Rick Oswood and I was a 2141 tank mechanic with the 1st Plt., Bravo Co., 3rd Tanks at Khe Sanh. On the morning of the 19th of May, I was the gunner on Tank B-14. We were assigned convoy duty along with Tank B-15. While waiting for the road sweep, we were informed it was Ho Chi Minh's birthday. The road sweep team, consisted of two tanks from the 1st platoon and infantry from F Co., 2nd Bn, 1st Marines. We were then told that the road sweep team had been fired on. The crew in my tank was talking about the enemy making a mistake by firing on the road sweep team instead of waiting for the convoy.

We wanted to join the tanks and infantry on the road sweep in the fight, but were held for what seemed like a couple of hours. We were finally allowed to go help. We loaded infantry from F Co., 2nd Bn, 1st Marines on both tanks, B-15 and B-14, and headed to the scene of the fight. B-15 was in front and B-14 in trace. As a gunner, I had limited view of the battle. When we started receiving fire, B-15 was positioned to fire from the center of the road to cover the right side. B-14 was positioned to fire from the center of the road and to cover the left side. We did not have as many targets on the left. I saw an RPG crew setting up in the middle of the road to fire on B-15, so I took them out using an HE round. Because of the volume of fire coming from the right side, we then switched and covered the right side of the road. I was firing the main gun using canister rounds and HE rounds, and also the .30 caliber machine gun on groups of NVA and crew-served weapons. The North Vietnamese were well-equipped and were wearing what

looked like new uniforms...and they were fearless.

A couple of times during the battle, we had fired so many rounds that the spent shells from the main gun were jamming the rotation of the turret and we had to open the hatch to get rid of the spent shells. The spent shells were hot and I could feel the heat on my legs through my boots. The loader burned a hole in the mitt he was using to throw spent casings and I gave him my sweat shirt to wrap around the mitt so he could continue throwing the casings out of the turret. There were so many NVA, and I was so focused on trying to kill or at least keep them from overrunning us, that I lost all concept of time; I do not know if we fought for minutes or hours. We had the .30 caliber machine gun jam and quit using it. I do not know if the TC was using the .50 caliber; I was just so involved with what I was doing. We were running very low on ammo for the main gun. The loader was keeping track of RPG hits and he told me that we had been hit by seven RPGs. By this time, we had moved in front of B-15 on the road.

All of a sudden, the NVA stopped attacking us and I could not find any targets. I kept rotating the turret slowly from left to right to keep the NVA down and from attacking us. A short time later the tank commander yelled for me to come "left, left, left"; he then said, "fire, fire", and I did fire. I do not know if we got the RPG crew or not; we fired at the same time; I do know that the RPG they fired got us. In the S-4 section of the staff journal for the 3rd Tank BN, May 19, 1968, it says B-14 had two penetrations and the turret was inoperative. It also said all tanks in the fight that day were hit by at least three RPGs. Counting

the last two, I am not sure if we were hit by eight or nine RPGs that day. I was knocked unconscious after the RPG penetrated the turret and I regained consciousness in Charlie Med at Khe Sanh. I do not know how we got back to Khe Sanh or how long it took, or how I was removed from the tank. I was treated at Charlie Med at Khe Sanh, then flown by helicopter to Dong Ha, then sent to Da Nang.

At the hospital in Da Nang, they used antiseptic soap and a scrub brush to clean the powder burns and shrapnel wounds that I had everywhere above the waist. That was the worst pain I have ever experienced. But I was still laughing while they were doing this, and the man scrubbing asked me if I was laughing because of the morphine they had given me. I told them the reason I was laughing was because I was still alive. I was temporarily blind; I had damage to both eyes, both retinas were partially detached, I had flash burns to both eyes and shrapnel in the left eye; both my eyes were bandaged. The RPG must have exploded just in front of my left shoulder; I had powder burns and shrapnel from the top of my head to my waist, including arms and hands. While I was in the hospital in Da Nang, the hospital came under rocket attack. I could not be moved, so they put a foam mattress over me; I pushed it off and told them it would not stop a rocket, but that they should go somewhere safe.

I was next flown to Tripler Army Hospital in Hawaii, where I started getting my vision back. Two weeks later, I was sent to Bremerton Naval Hospital in Washington State, then later to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland, California, for treatment they were not equipped to give at the Bremerton Naval Hospital. I was released from Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in late October of 1968 and discharged from the Marine Corps in November of 1968. ■

My Recollections of May 19, 1968

BY RENA CERDA

Below are my recollections of the experience of a major ambush/firefight that occurred on May 19, 1968 just outside of the Khe Sanh Combat Base (KSCB). Tanks from the 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, were supporting grunts from Echo Company, Foxtrot Company and Golf Company, 2nd Bn., 1st Marines. As you know, the 2nd Bn, 1st Marines replaced the 26th Marines, who had been at Khe Sanh during the siege of Khe Sanh. Tanks from the 1st Platoon were Bravo-11, Bravo-12, Bravo-13, Bravo-14 and Bravo-15. Platoon leader was 1st Lt. Harris Himes, Platoon Sergeant was S/Sgt. T. J. Wharton. Tank Commanders (TC) were: B-11 S/Sgt. Wharton or Sgt. Clifford Evans; B-12 Cpl. Fred Kellogg; B-13 Sgt. Steve Baker; B-14 Cpl. Patrick Baddgor; and, B-15 Cpl. Rene Cerda. Doc Pipkin, corpsman with 2/1, told me 2/1 sustained 19 KIAs and 44 WIAs in this battle. The events listed are to the best of my recollection.

On or about April 1, 1968, tanks from 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 3rd Tank Bn., 3rd Marine Division, participated in Operation Pegasus; the objective was to relieve the KSCB, re-open Highway 9 from Ca Lu to the KSCB, and destroy enemy troops in the area. Also, the 1st Platoon was to rotate with the 3rd Platoon who had been at Khe Sanh and the 3rd Platoon was to be assigned to Camp Carroll, Bravo Company's headquarters. I later learned from Chris Vargo, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, that the 3rd Platoon remained at Ca Lu for awhile conducting convoys between Ca Lu and Khe Sanh and then returned to Camp Carroll.

Convoys were being conducted on a daily basis between Ca Lu and Khe Sanh. On the morning of May 19, 1968, grunts, tanks and other vehicles staged at the main gate of the KSCB. B-12 and B-13 were assigned to go out with the mine sweep team and, after the mine sweep was completed, return to KSCB. My tank, B-15, and B-14 were assigned to provide security/support to the convoy. My tank was to be the lead tank, and B-14 was to be the second vehicle in the convoy.

At about 7:30 am, I think two, maybe three, squads of grunts from a platoon from Foxtrot Company, 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, B-12 (TC Fred Kellogg) and B-13 (TC A. M.

"Buzz" Conklin) (Note: I believe Sgt. Baker, who was the TC, was on R&R and Conklin was left as the TC in his absence) and the mine sweepers departed KSCB along Route 9. We were preparing our tanks to get the convoy underway as soon as the tanks and the mine sweepers returned to KSCB. We were monitoring the radio when we heard someone broadcast over the radio that they had spotted some NVA. We could see the tanks and mine sweepers who were probably a half mile away or less from the main gate when we heard a rifle shot. I don't know who fired the first round, whether it was friendly or the NVA. We heard more gun fire, then all kinds of gun fire and we knew that the grunts, tanks and the mine sweepers had made contact with the NVA. We could hear B-12 and B-13 firing their coax and main guns. We heard machine gun fire, rifle fire and hand grenade explosions.

Lt. Himes made his way to the main gate and joined us monitoring the radios. Lt. Himes told me that he was going to get permission to go assist B-12 and B-13 and he would be going out in my tank. I told him, fine, I'm going out as well. I got my crew together: Jack Butcher was my loader, J. C. Cox was my gunner and Clay Larabell was my driver. I explained the situation to them, that Lt. Himes was going out in our tank and I was going to go out as well; therefore, one of the them had to remain behind. I told them to draw straws and see who would be staying behind. Jack Butcher drew the short straw and was the one that had to stay behind. Although I was the TC of B-15, that is how I ended up being the loader that day and Lt. Himes the TC.

We kept monitoring the radio. Lt. Himes contacted the KSCB base commander via radio and asked if we could go out and assist our tanks and the mine sweep team. It appeared that Lt. Himes' initial requests were denied and, at times, Lt. Himes appeared frustrated that we could not go and help out B-12 and B-13. (Note: We learned later that the base commander was reluctant in letting us go out because he felt the NVA were attempting to lure Marines out of KSCB and maybe trying to overrun the base. I don't know if that is true, but that is what I've heard.)

I don't remember how many times Lt. Himes asked >>

permission to go out and re-enforce our tanks and grunts involved in the firefight, but we were finally given the okay and allowed to go out. By this time, we could tell our units were heavily involved in a firefight and taking casualties. We departed the main gate and took the rest of the grunts from Foxtrot Company, 2/1; some grunts on the tanks and the other grunts walked alongside the tanks. Echo Company and Golf Company walked and covered our flank. (Note: Most tank crews all had the Marine Corps-type flak jacket. Butcher, who had scrounged up an Army-type jacket which fitted more snug, had left his flak jacket on the rack behind the turret. I normally did not wear my jacket, because it was bulky and hard to maneuver inside the crew compartment. Just as we headed out, I noticed Butcher's flak jacket in the rack behind the turret. Something told me I should put it on, so I did.) As the loader, basically, I made sure the main gun and coax machine gun were loaded and ready for action. (Note: As the loader, I could not see much of what was happening outside the tank, so I do not have much recollection of the area.) By this time, B-12 and B-13 had sustained numerous rocket propelled grenade (RPG) hits. TCs Kellogg and Conklin had been seriously wounded, and some of the crew members were also wounded.

I have no recollection of the time we departed the KSCB or how long it took us to get to the ambush site. Upon our arrival at the ambush site, Lt. Himes told B-12 and B-13 to move back, which they did, and we moved up in front of the other tanks and took the forward position. Immediately, we came under intense rifle and machine gun fire. I realized that I had not secured the loader's hatch (dumb mistake on my part) and could hear small arms fire, the pinging of the rounds on the outside of the turret, and hand grenade explosions all around our tank. I don't know if the NVA threw hand grenades at our tank, but, if they did, none landed in the crew compartment.

I do not recall how long we had been in place firing our coax machine and the main gun when I heard Lt. Himes over the intercom, "Look at those guys (grunts); they are fighting hand-to-hand combat." Since I had yet still not closed the loader's hatch, I stepped on the loader's seat and stood up, poking my head outside the hatch (not a very good move on my part) and observed the grunts in hand-to-hand combat. I don't know how long I exposed my head outside the hatch, probably seconds, when I dropped back down inside the crew compartment. What seemed like a few seconds after I dropped down, an RPG hit right over

the loader's hatch where I had exposed my head. (I suspect that an RPG team sighted in on me, but I dropped down before they fired the RPG at our tank.) The explosion and concussion of the RPG knocked me down to my knees on the floor of the turret. My ears were ringing and my eyes watered so much I could not see anything. I wiped my eyes with my hands, but still I could not see. After a few seconds, I started to regain my sight and could see some light through my eyes and I looked at my hands and saw some blood on my hands. My first thought was, "Damn, I've been hit in the eyes." Later, I realized that the blood on my hands was from my nose; the concussion from the RPG had also caused a nose bleed. I stood up again on the loader's seat and secured the loader's hatch. (Note: At the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay, I learned that I had been hit in the head and neck with shrapnel from the RPG that exploded above my head. The liner inside the helmet must have put pressure on my head wound because, at the first two hospitals, they did not detect or see any blood on my head.)

I recall an RPG hitting the tank on the left side of the turret. The RPG penetrated the crew compartment to my left, about shoulder level. The RPG penetration caused some back-spalling, sending shrapnel all around. I was knocked down again to the floor of the turret. I felt hot metal on my hands, wrist, and neck. A piece of shrapnel cut the cord to my helmet, causing me to lose communication with the rest of the crew in the tank. I had to yell to Lt. Himes whenever I had to communicate with him. Another RPG hit the tank again on the left side of the turret and also penetrated into the crew compartment. This RPG penetration was to my left and behind me. The force of the explosion of the RPG threw me forward and toward the coax machine gun and gun shield. I was hit with shrapnel in the back.

It was hot that day and I usually rolled up my jungle fatigues. We had fired so many rounds with the main gun that the 90mm brass was stacking up in the turret and burning me in the shins. I tossed the brass casings out the loader's hatch. I hoped I didn't hit any grunt with the brass, because I was just tossing the brass out the loader's hatch.

After being in the firefight for awhile, I remember our tank moving back, how far I don't know, and the tank stopped. It would not go forward or backward. The transmission had been damaged by the RPGs and the tank could not move. We also lost electrical power inside the turret. I could still hear small arms fire hitting the side of the turret. I manually traversed the turret and, when my gunner

observed a target, I would stop and manually operate the main gun and the coax machine gun. We did this for awhile. It appeared that RPGs had hit the fuel cells, and the diesel had been ignited and flames and smoke started to come into the crew compartment. After a few minutes, it was getting difficult to see and breathe. Lt. Himes said for us to don our gas masks, which we did. I don't remember how long we sat there, but the flames and smoke were getting more intense. Lt. Himes then said that we can either stay in the tank and probably burn with the tank or we could jump out of the tank and take the chance of being shot. We decided to abandon our burning tank. By this time, being wounded three separate times, I had lost a lot of blood and was getting weak. Lt. Himes assisted me in getting off the tank and getting to the ground. We crawled on the ground toward the KSCB and came upon a bomb crater. We crawled into the bomb crater and joined three or four Marines (grunts) that were also in the crater. By this time, I was going in and out of consciousness.

Marines from H&S, 2/1 had been delivering ammo to the field and picking up the dead and wounded Marines and transporting them to KSCB. Someone flagged down a 4X4 or 6X6 that was headed back to the KSCB and the entire tank crew, Lt. Himes, Cox, Larabell and I were taken to the first aid station at KSCB. My wounds were bandaged up at the first aid station, and I was put on a medevac helicopter to Phu Bai where they changed my bandages and I spent the night. (Note: At the hospital in Phu Bai, when they removed my flak jacket, I noticed 2-3 large holes in the back of the flak jacket. Fortunately for me, I had decided to wear Butcher's flak jacket that day. I truly believe that, if I had not worn the flak jacket that day, I would not be here today.) I complained about having a terrible headache; they would give me some medication, I would fall asleep and wake up with the headache. The next day I was medevac to Da Nang and stayed at a hospital in Da Nang for 3-4 days. I still was having the headaches. They gave me medication; I would fall asleep and wake up with a headache. Initially, I was told I was going to be sent to the U.S. Sanctuary hospital ship, but I don't know why I was sent to Cam Ranh Bay.

On the first day at the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay, I complained to my doctor that I had a terrible headache. The doctor said we'll send you to x-ray this afternoon and take some x-rays of the head area and see if we can find anything. The next morning, the doctor came in and said, "I think I know why you have a headache, Marine. X-rays show you have a

hole on the side of your head and we need to do immediate surgery." That afternoon I was prepped for surgery and surgery was performed on the right side of my head. I spent about 7-8 days at Cam Ranh Bay. From Cam Ranh Bay, I was sent to Japan and, eventually, sent to the U.S. I spent four months at Balboa Naval Hospital, San Diego, CA.

I don't recall how many RPGs hit the tank that day during the firefight, but I do recall some of the RPGs sounded like deflections and some RPGs that hit the tank sounded like they bounced off. As far as RPG penetrations, I didn't personally count the RPGs that hit the tank but, in conversations with Lt. Himes, he states that we took about thirteen (13) RPG penetrations into the crew compartment and the engine compartment. I don't recall how long we were in the firefight but, I guess, it was a pretty long time. My tank B-15 burned for hours and was a combat loss. (Photo attached)

In November 2008, Harris Himes, Fred Kellogg, Rick Oswood and I attended a reunion held by 2nd Bn., 1st Marines at Oceanside, CA. I met a grunt named Peter Hoban who, on May 19, 1968, was a Cpl. with Hotel Company, and he told me he had some photos that he took while he was at Khe Sanh between April thru July 1968. Peter said H Co 2/1 left Khe Sanh around July 4-5, 1968. Peter told me to contact him after we returned home from the reunion and he would send me copies of the photos. Peter provided copies of the photos, which include my tank, B-15, which was a combat loss on May 19th burning; a jet dropping a napalm bomb, and other photos. I scanned the photos and I have attached the photos to this email. You may notice some of the photos are stamped with an "Aug 1968" date, because Cpl. Hoban asked some buddies who went on R&R to develop the rolls of film for him. I also have included some photos I obtained from Ron Taylor, who was with an artillery unit at Khe Sanh and provided artillery support on May 19th. If you have any questions or need further information, let me know.

In the past, Harris Himes, Fred Kellogg, Rick Oswood and I have attended a couple of 2/1 reunions and have talked to some of the 2/1 Marines that, through the years, have learned that the NVA wanted to overrun KSCB as a birthday present for Ho Chi Minh. I have not been able to confirm that, but it is possible that was the NVA's objective. If, in fact, that was the NVA goal that day, unfortunately for the NVA, there was one obstacle, there were U.S. Marines at KSCB. >>

(The photos below were taken by Cpl. Peter Hoban, H Co., 2/1.)



USMC Phantom jet in the upper left of photo, dropping napalm bomb on NVA position, May 19, 1968.



Grunts from 2/1 watching US napalm bomb exploding around tank Bravo 15 on May 19, 1968.



Bravo 15 burning at the ambush / firefight site on May 19, 1968.



Destroyed USMC tank at Khe Sanh. We heard that Bravo 15 was towed back to the Khe Sanh Combat Base. It was salvaged and buried around the time that the base was abandoned. I believe this tank is Bravo 15 but I have not been able to confirmed it. (April-July 1968)



Destroyed tank. (April-July 1968)



Destroyed tank. (April-July 1968)



Unknown tanks and what appears a convoy at the main gate at Khe Sanh. (April-July 1968)



Rene Cerda, front and Bob Fornwalt, rear, doing maintenance on B-15 at Camp Carroll. (Feb-Mar 1968)

To the best of my recollection, I believe the following individuals comprised the tank crews on May 19, 1968.

B-11 – “Pandemonium”

Sgt. Evans, TC

Gunner: Rick Coulter

Loader: Rick aka “Surfer”

Driver: “Cricket” – *(Note: Cricket was initially the driver on Cpl. Kellogg’s tank, but according to Rick Coulter, when Fred’s tank, B-12, returned to the KSCB, Cricket got into B-11 as the driver and went back out. But this wasn’t until sometime later and most of the fighting has died down, though there was still contact with the NVA, but not as heavy as before.)*

B-12 – “Beelzebub”

Cpl. Fred Kellogg, TC

Gunner: Carlos “Charlie” Trinidad *(Note: Fred knew him as “Lupe.”)*

Loader: Don’t recall

Driver: Cricket

B-13 – “Memphisto”

Cpl. A. M. “Buzz” Conklin, TC

Gunner: Don’t recall

Loader: Don’t recall

Driver: Don’t recall

B-14 – “Misanthrope”

Patrick Baddgor, TC – *(Lt. Himes thinks Baddgor was not the TC, but I do.)*

Gunner: Richard “Rick” Oswood

Loader: Charlie Lehman – *(I believe it was Charlie “Sugar Bear” Lehman, but I am not 100 percent sure.)*

Driver: S. Camerdesse

B-15 – “Chaos”

Lt. Harris Himes, TC

Gunner: J. C. Cox

Loader: Rene Cerda

Driver: Clay Larabell ■

My Heart on the Line

(Continued from page 22)

Why were I and the other parents at my son’s private school so surprised by his choice? During World War II, the sons and daughters of the most powerful and educated families did their bit. If the idea of the immorality of the Vietnam War was the only reason those lucky enough to go to college dodged the draft, why did we not encourage our children to volunteer for military service once that war was done?

Have we wealthy and educated Americans all become pacifists? Is the world a safe place? Or have we just gotten used to having somebody else defend us? What is the future of our democracy when the sons and daughters of

the janitors at our elite universities are far more likely to be put in harm’s way than are any of the students whose dorms their parents clean?

I feel shame because it took my son’s joining the Marine Corps to make me take notice of who is defending me. I feel hope because perhaps my son is part of a future “greatest generation.” As the storm clouds of war gather, at least I know that I can look the men and women in uniform in the eye.

My son is one of them. He is the best I have to offer. He is my heart.

USMC Customs

There are many customs which have significance in the life of a Marine. A few of the notable ones are:

Boarding a small boat or entering a car. When boarding a small boat or entering a car, Juniors enter first and take up the seats or the space beginning forward, leaving the most desirable seat for the senior. Seniors enter last and leave first.

Marines’ Hymn. Whenever the Marines’ Hymn is played or sung, all Marines rise to their feet and remain standing during the rendition of the music.

Serenading the Commandant. Commencing with the

last New Year’s Day of the Civil War, on the morning of 1 January of each year the Marine Band serenades the Commandant of the Marine Corps at his quarters and receives hot buttered rum and breakfast in return.

Wetting Down Parties. Whenever an officer is promoted, he customarily holds a “wetting-down party.” At this time the new commission is said to be “wet down.” When several officers are promoted at the same time, they frequently have a single wetting-down party.

(Continued on page 39)

This is Harris “Alfie” Himes’ narrative regarding May 19, 1968

It was May 19, 1968, Ho Chi Minh’s birthday. It was at the tail-end of Operation Pegasus, the relief of Khe Sanh. The beleaguered, but stalwart, 26th Marine Regiment was in the “process” of being relieved by the Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment. “Process” could mean everything from moseying along to frenzied, deadly combat. The “process” would fit the day.

This early morning, I watched two tanks, B-12 and B-13 from my platoon load up to escort a road sweep team to check out the road for mines which might have been laid by the NVA during the night. A large convoy was going out of Khe Sanh later in the morning and they didn’t need to get stalled by blown-up six-by’s, so that the enemy could pick off the rest of the convoy at their leisure.

Corporal Fred Kellogg was the TC of the tank “Beelzebub” B-12. Corporal “Buzz” Conklin had “Memphisto” B-13. Buzz’s regular TC, Corporal Steve Baker, was on R&R. So, Buzz had the tank. Both Kellogg and Conklin were good men and had good crews. Conklin had been around longer, but Kellogg was a quick-learner. I had given the other tanks names of the same genre: “Misanthrope” B-14, “Pandemonium” B-11 and “Chaos” B-15.

As I settled down to cook my morning’s C-rats of ham ‘n’ eggs (canned), using a pinch of C4 (plastic explosive – which burned hot and well) in an empty can with cuts in it from my “John Wayne” can opener, so it could breathe, followed by fruit cocktail

(much more highly sought after), I looked up in time to see Kellogg give me a thumbs-up as he headed out the barbed-wire gate.

My platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant “TJ” Wharton, came ambling over. Sergeant Wharton tried unsuccessfully to effect an Irish brogue, “Ah, the fresh smell of diesel in the morning,” referring to the clouds of exhaust drifting our way as the tanks began to move ... “gives just the right tang to m’coffee.” We often used the same phrase to describe the military’s version of sewage disposal: 55 gallon drums cut in half were partially filled with diesel fuel, placed below the multiple-hole out-houses around the camp, then pulled out later to be burned. “Pungent” is an entirely inadequate term for the resultant effluvium.

“What’s up, Sergeant Wharton?” I asked him.

“Well, sir, as soon as Kellogg and Conklin get back from the sweep, we’ll start getting the rest of the p’toon together for the convoy. I figure I’ll lead out,” he answered, a smirk on his face distorted the scar on his lip and cheek, the memento of one of his many brawls, because it had long been the custom for me to lead. But TJ was always trying to get his plug in. I often let him take out many of the light (two tanks) and heavy section (three tanks) patrols, but the full platoon (five tanks) belonged to me.

As platoon commander of First Platoon, Bravo Company, Third Tank Battalion, Third Marine Division, I was known as “Bravo 1,” sometimes, “Bravo 1 Actual,” when it was nec-

essary to let it be known that the actual commander was on the horn (radio). As the platoon sergeant and second in command, Wharton was “Bravo 1 Alpha.”

“If you would go check on the status of the other three tanks so we can be ready to move out when the others get back, the Corps and I would be ever so grateful,” I responded.

“Aye, aye, sir,” and, with an elaborate left-hand salute and a smile, Wharton moved off to attend to business. He was so bow-legged – and a little pot-bellied – that he seemed to rock where he was going, rather than ambulate. However, I considered myself and the platoon fortunate to have him for platoon sergeant. What he might have lacked in judgment, he more than made up for in enthusiasm and “can-do.” A few days earlier, I had to chew him out because, as they came through the main gate at Khe Sanh, his tank’s sprocket had caught a few strands of wire which ended up tearing out a couple hundred feet of concertina, before someone, not Wharton, had noticed. The fact that he had enjoyed several beers coming in had played no small part. He and his crew had spent several hours cutting out the wire from the tank’s track. I had to explain to headquarters what had happened. Still, Wharton was a good Staff NCO – it just took a little extra supervision sometimes. Plus, I liked him, as did most of the other troops.

About twenty minutes later, I had just finished brushing my snags (teeth) and my other ablutions after breakfast when Lance Corporal Jack Butcher

came running up, “Lieutenant, 1-deuce and 1-3 have really gotten into something. I was monitoring the radios and it sounds like it’s really hit the fan.”

I ran to my tank, found my crew already there, and told them to crank up the engine so they could come up on their radios without draining their batteries. Soon, I was listening to my men out with the sweep team, as one tank talked to the other or to the infantry.

I could get only snatches, “. . . over to your right (the sound of machine guns in the background) a whole load of ‘em in the bushes . . .” and the sound of the 90mm guns firing in the distance.

“Bravo 1-deuce, this is Bravo 1, over,” I came up on the net. “Bravo 1, this is 1-2, over,” came Kellogg’s strained response. I could tell by Kellogg’s heavy breathing and fluctuating voice that things were hot.

“1-2, what’s goin’ on?”

“Looks like we woke somethin’ up. Started out small, just a couple of shots after the grunts . . . [static] movement. Then, we got into the . . . show, [static] and all hell broke loose. Over.”

“1-2, you’re breaking up a little. How’re y’ doin’?”

“Okay, so far. Busy.”

“Keep at it. Keep me informed as you get a chance.”

“Roger, 1-2, out.”

Bravo 1-3, this is Bravo 1, over,” I tried my other tank.

“One, this is 1-3. Our sitrep is the same. Lotsa gooks. Scramblin’, over.” That was Buzz.

“Do it to ‘em. Lemme know. Out.”

“Butcher (Lance Corporal Jack Butcher, a Canadian volunteer), get Wharton for me. Cerda (Corporal Rene Cerda), see if you can raise reg-

iment on the land line,” I rapped out orders.

Two “aye, sir’s,” and they were off.

Cerda was the TC of B-15, which I often used when I went out. I didn’t know that Lance Corporal John Cox, gunner, Butcher, loader, and PFC Clay Larabell, driver, had drawn straws to see who would go on the mission. Butcher drew the short straw and remained behind. Cerda would go as the loader.

Within minutes, Sgt. Wharton came rocking up at full speed – and puffing. “Yessir.”

“You probably know by now that Kellogg and Conklin have gotten into it. Sounds big enough. Get the other tanks ready to roll. I’m gonna try to get permission to go get ‘em and help them out. Stay up on the radio.” Without waiting for Wharton to respond, I went to our make-shift comm shack to see if Cerda had >> regiment up on the land line.

“They’re lookin’ for someone, Lieutenant. Nothin’ yet. Not sure they even know what’s happenin’ out there,” Cerda volunteered.

“Stay with it.”

“Yessir.”

Frustrated, I walked back toward my tank. I looked up, squinting into a hot, brassy-pan sky. My cammies were already attaching to my skin with sweat-glue. Day certainly got hotter. I Wished regiment would get its act together so I could help my men. I could hear the tanks’ guns booming in the distance, the stitching sound of the machine guns fainter, but there.

The ambush consisted of units from several NVA regiments and divisions. It was prematurely sprung when the mine sweep detail, accompanied by two Bravo Company, 1st Platoon

tanks, spotted some enemy, and the tanks brought them under fire. The tanks and the mine sweep team were then immediately brought under heavy fire, severely damaging the tanks and wounding many of the two tank crews and the sweep team members.

After they had taken several RPG’s, Corporal Conklin was hit in the face and totally incapacitated (He lost sight in one eye and later received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart for this action).

Corporal Kellogg deployed his tank effectively in protecting the infantry sweep team members and attacking the enemy. His tank killed several RPG teams. In at least nineteen instances, he approached craters where NVA were concealed, then fired his main gun right over their positions to stun them with the 90 mm’s concussion. Exposing himself to enemy fire and risking his life, he would lob a grenade into the craters to finish the job. In the course of the battle, Kellogg also employed the tank’s M3A1 “grease gun” in killing NVA when they were too close to the tank to use the main gun.

Conklin’s tank had been hit. Its blast deflector was canted up about forty-five degrees. Conklin radioed that he had been badly wounded. To protect that tank, Kellogg immediately maneuvered his tank in between the damaged tank and the NVA and continued to fight.

Kellogg’s tank was heavily engaged when it took another RPG in a weak area of the turret near the range finder, injuring all crewmen in the turret. Kellogg received over seventy wounds of varying severity to his face, throat, both arms, both hands and his chest. Extremely bloody, he fell to the >>

floor of the turret. His loader, "Sugar Bear" (Lance Corporal Charles Lehman) thought he was dead. Fortunately, he wasn't. (Efforts have been made to elevate Kellogg's Bronze Star with Combat "V.")

The cavalry arrived, mostly on time. I had gone over to regimental HQ and finally gained permission to take two more tanks, B-15 and B-14 and infantry out to the ambush. I ordered Wharton to remain behind to coordinate while I was out. By this time, it was about ten in the morning. The sun was a major player, well up in the sky and frying all of us.

"1-deuce, 1-3, this is One, over," I called.

"This is 1-3," came back Conklin.

"1-deuce," responded Sugar Bear.

"Get back to base. We'll take it from here. Well done."

But Cricket, driver in Kellogg's tank, couldn't see through his fractured driver's 'scope; so Sugar Bear had to back him all the way to the base, which was only 300 or so yards away, peeking through the intermittent smoke and flames where RPGs had set clothing stashed in the gypsy rack afire. Then Regiment wouldn't let Beelzebub, B-12, through the wire due to its still-fiery coiffure. Cricket (Stanley Williams) came back out to the ambush site on B-11, as the driver, after Kellogg's tank returned to base. (Efforts have been made to elevate Lehman's award.)

Finally allowed to join the fight, my two tanks, B-15 and B-14, led two companies of 2/1 in six-by's, with at least a squad of infantry aboard each tank, into the fray.

Upon disembarking, the two headquarters groups of the infantry were almost immediately wiped out by

NVA rockets and mortars, leaving the infantry without most, if not all, of their officers. Corporal Cerda saw one of the infantry captains take at least three bullets in his chest.

All units came under heavy fire. From my vantage point in the tank cupola, I helped to direct the almost-leaderless infantry by leaning out of the cupola to point out enemy positions and help organize their attack.

As I was occupied with the infantry and the other tank, B-14, as well as coordinating with the base, Corporal Cerda ran fire missions for my tank. Cerda and I both took some hits. Cerda frequently exposed himself in the loader's hatch to locate the enemy and to help direct the tank's fire.

On several occasions, he was wounded in the upper body, head, and later near his neck. Notwithstanding his many wounds, Cerda never complained and continued to keep a sharp eye out, often warning me of approaching enemy, while at the same time rapidly loading the main gun and changing the barrels on the .30 caliber machine gun and reloading it – daunting tasks even without wounds in the heat of Vietnam and in the cauldron of battle.

The fighting was intense for all of us. At one point, I ordered Baddgor's tank, B-14, to "scratch my back" with machine gun fire and a canister round, because NVA were climbing up on my tank. Lance Corporal Rick Oswood, their gunner, wiped out an RPG team that was taking aim at our tank.

Suffering from both shrapnel wounds and a gaping hole in his leg, Baddgor and his loader, PFC Ray Baddett, ran the tank because Oswood took shrapnel in his face and upper body from the RPG round which

wounded Baddgor's leg. With only his bare hands, Baddgor changed the hot .30 caliber machine gun barrel several times, ignoring the blistering burns. (Corporal Baddgor died several years ago of cancer caused by Agent Orange. Efforts have been made to elevate his medal award from Navy Commendation with Combat "V"). I finally ordered Baddgor's tank back to the base for reinforcements.

During this engagement, which lasted many hours, our tank, B-15, took over thirteen RPG hits, which wounded everyone in the turret multiple times. The radio antennas were shot off, the radios were out, and the turret power was gone, requiring the turret and the guns to be operated manually. Cerda's comcord to his helmet had been cut by RPG shrapnel; so, he just kept loading and our brave gunner, Lance Corporal Cox, just kept firing.

The infantry were almost out of ammunition and were preparing for hand-to-hand combat.

Smoke began to fill the turret. The engine was on fire and pulling the fire extinguishers didn't help. I ordered gas masks to be put on. The tank continued to fight. Most of the tank rounds and machine gun ammunition were expended and Cerda was struggling with the brass.

Then flames came up into the turret. I remember wondering two things: "Would some postcards which I had placed in the turret to be mailed later – would they ever get mailed? And what was I missing for dinner later that night back at the base?"

It wasn't until replacements finally came that we evacuated the tank, now on fire. I helped Cerda out of the turret and carried him to a nearby bomb cra-

ter where the crew continued to fight with pistols, grenades, and the tank's grease gun. (Efforts have been made to elevate Cerda's Silver Star.)

When an ammo resupply truck, headed back to the base, came by, I jumped out in front of it, waved it

down, and got all of us aboard and back to the base to get medical attention. Cerda and I were later medivac'd, making it about half my platoon of heroes that was medivac'd that day – but not one of my men was ever killed while I had the platoon.

Our tank, B-15, was later disarmed and buried in place. The after-action report indicated over 600 enemy killed by tank rounds in that immediate area, a day that "alters and illuminates our times," as Walter Cronkite would intone. ■

USMC Customs

(Continued from page 35)

Wishes of Commanding Officer. When the commanding officer of Marines says, "I wish" or "I desire," these expressions have the force of a direct order and should be acted upon as if he had given a direct order.

Looking Out for Your Men. One feature which has made the Marine Corps such a respected organization is the custom of Marine leaders looking out for their men. A Marine leader makes sure his men are comfortably clothed, housed, and justly treated. For example, in the field a Marine officer takes position in the mess line after all the enlisted men in order to insure all men get their food. A Marine leader never leaves a wounded or dead Marine on the battlefield to fall into the hands of the enemy.

Being a Marine. But the most outstanding custom in the Marine Corps is simply "being a Marine" and all that it implies. Call it morale, call it esprit de corps, call it what you will--it is that pride which sets a United States Marine

apart from the men of other armed services. It is not taught in manuals, yet it is the most impressive lesson a recruit learns in boot camp. It is not tangible, yet it has won fights against material odds. Perhaps it has best been defined by Senator Paul H. Douglas: "Those of us who have had the privilege of serving in the Marine Corps value our experience as among the most precious of our lives. The fellowship of shared hardships and dangers in a worthy cause creates a close bond of comradeship. It is the basic reason for the cohesiveness of Marines and for the pride we have in our corps and our loyalty to each other." A Marine is proud of his Corps and believes it to be second to none. He is loyal to his comrades and to the Marine Corps, adhering always to the motto *Semper Fidelis* (Always Faithful).

[Source: Marine Corps Historical Reference Series, 1963, Courtesy of the United States Marine Corps Oct 2014 ++]

Be Careful What You Ask For

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Sometime during 1979, 1st Sgt McCarthy said he would begin holding NCO breakfasts in the Battalion Mess Hall. I thought it was a good idea and told him so. It was obvious to me he wanted to tighten up the NCOs and also stretch the S/NCOs by having them provide some military instruction. I told the Bn CO, XO, S-3 and Sgt Maj what was going on and they all thought it was a good idea – the rifle Co. 1st Sgts and COs were wishing they'd thought of it. The Admin Chief thought it'd be good to have an invocation. I said he might want to call the Chaplain since he would be the

best candidate I could think of. I liked the idea of using the mess hall and, having recently been the S-4, had first-hand knowledge of how hard the Mess Chief and cooks worked, and felt they'd think it was a good idea too.

After a few days the 1st Sgt stopped by to fill me in on what he had planned and said he wanted me to be the speaker. Well this 1st Sgt wanted to make the point that a lot of responsibility was on the NCOs, so, with me having been both an NCO and S/NCO, I said okay. H&S Company 1/1 had well over 400 Marines in it. There were >>

five platoons: Headquarters (clerks), Service (supply, armory, motor-t, cooks), Surveillance and Target Acquisition (S-2), 81mm Mortars, and Dragons (anti-tank). There was just about the right number of corporals and sergeants, but when taken in aggregation there sure were a lot of them.

The morning of the NCO breakfast arrived and I was impressed. The Top and Gunny (Bill Denny) had done a great job gathering up all the NCOs and they had an assorted group of S/NCO, mostly Plt Sgt's, as observers. The 1st Sgt made a small and to the point speech; we had breakfast and then I discussed leadership traits right out to the Guidebook for Marines stressing supervision and setting a personal example. Questions and answers followed. One question from the floor was, "what do you do when a Marine doesn't want to get out of the rack at reveille?" The 1st Sgt looked at me and then I looked at the man who asked the question. I said "you hold a class". Top knew what was com-

ing so he just looked at the Gunny and smiled. I continued; tell the Marine in a loud and firm voice that this is a class on how to assemble and disassemble the rack, and the first step in disassembly is to remove the occupant. Then disassemble the rack rapidly and energetically as possible bearing in mind that you are conducting a period of military instruction. You may combine the two steps. These corporals and sergeants were beginning to really enjoy breakfast and getting some practical information from their CO. Finally, I said, "you need to direct the Marine on how to reassemble his rack - it could take several attempts but it's likely he'll be awake and paying attention by then."

We had a series of NCO breakfasts, but somehow the 1st Sgt always found a speaker so I didn't get asked again - not sure why. We also had an NCO mess night - but that's another story.

Marine Corps Ranked Worst Service Branch To Join

This article was written by Ron Johnson and it completely made my day. The writer was asked to rank best military branch to serve in:

He ranks them as:

1. Army
2. Air Force
3. Navy
4. Coast Guard
5. Marine Corps (as the Worst Military Branch)

And here's what he had to say about the Marine Corps:

"Of all the military branches, the Marine Corps ranks as the least attractive choice for this author. Technically part of the Navy, the Marine Corps are the elite war fighters of the United States military. The leathernecks of the USMC are truly fearsome fighters, tough as nails and ready and willing to fight all comers. The Marines turn recruits into stone-cold killers and they make no secrets about that fact. Marines live tough lives, sleeping on board Navy ships, charging through the surf and crawling in the sand with one goal in mind: engage the enemy. Unfortunately, when Marines fulfill their obligation and exit the service, they seem to find difficulty in turning this Marine Corps attitude 'off'. Whereas, an Army or Navy veteran will likely adjust to civilian life over time and become softer, Marines

stay Marines. Visit any neighborhood in the United States and you will find a USMC flag flying high over someone's house. You will rarely, if ever, see a person flying an Army, Navy, Air Force or Coast Guard flag. While veterans of other military branches tend to relax a little bit as they transition into civilian life, any Marine will be quick to remind you of their unofficial motto, "Once a Marine, always a Marine." I don't know what those Marine Corps drill Instructors are doing to their recruits, but whatever it is, it works.

"Is that a bad thing? Well, that depends on your reasons for considering a military enlistment. If you have a strong desire to kill the enemy, the Marine Corps is for you because that is what the Marines do. Either you want that or you don't, plain and simple. If you simply want a challenge, any other branch of the military will provide you with plenty of opportunities to test yourself. Army Rangers and Green Berets, Air Force Para-Rescue Jumpers, and the Navy Seals all offer extreme physical and mental challenges outside of the Marine Corps. So if you are considering joining the Marine Corps, think long and hard about what that means before going to a recruiter and signing up."

And why is it I'm mostly proud of what he said about the Marine Corps? Are we that messed up in the head? Keep the faith! ■

U.S. Army Tests Soviet-Designed Rocket Launcher

BY MATTHEW COX ON FEBRUARY 18, 2015

U.S. Army and Marine infantry platoons may one day be fighting with an Americanized version of the famous, Soviet RPG 7 anti-armor weapon. Army testers recently evaluated Airtronic USA Inc.'s RPG 7 as part of service's annual Army



Expeditionary Warrior Experiment. "The durability, simplicity, low cost and effectiveness of the RPG 7 has made it the most widely used man-portable anti-armor weapon in the world, according to the AEWE's Systems Book of selected technologies chosen for this year's experiment. But the Airtronic RPG is quite different than the 1960s-era Soviet weapon. Its tube is made from 4140/4150 ordnance grade barrel steel and it features several sections of rail for attaching optics. It also has an M4-style pistol grip and butt stock. It weighs about 14 pounds unloaded and without optic.

Many soldiers involved with the experiment have faced enemy forces in Iraq and Afghanistan that were armed with RPG weapons, Army officials from the Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, Ga., said. "There was a great deal of interest because there were a number of guys that had been deployed had seen it from the other perspective," said Harry Lubin, chief of the Experimentation Branch of MCOE's Maneuver Battle Lab.

The Airtronic RPG is now a program of record in U.S. Special Operations Command. Soldiers, however, did not get to fire any RPG rounds through it because of restrictions imposed by Army Test and Evaluation Command's safety release, Lubin said.

The problem was that RPG ammunition is made in Europe and could not be safety certified in time for this year's live-fire portion of AEWE, he said. "Special-ops command is a little ahead of the Army as far as looking at these," Lubin said. "They have got the lots of

ammo certified ... we didn't not have that luxury. Soldiers could handle it but couldn't pull the trigger on it."

This challenge may be solved in the future since Airtronic USA is working on producing the ammunition for it in the United States.

"The weapon did perform well when company representatives fired it at targets between 900 and 1,200 meters away," Lubin said. "The accuracy seemed to be very good."

It's too early to tell if the Army will adopt an RPG-style weapon, but the results of the live-fire assessment will be available to Army officials who write future lethality requirements. "This was the first year a live-fire portion was added to AEWE. It gave Benning officials the chance to evaluate weapons that might not be looked at otherwise," Lubin said. "This provides the opportunity for the Army to look at it," he said. "This is one of the nice things about AEWE. We are not bound by any programs of record. Other munitions systems assessed in the live fire also showed a lot of promise," Lubin said.

The Scalable Offensive Hand Grenade offers conventional soldiers a new capability. Unlike the standard fragmentation grenade, this design offers mainly a blast effect that can be doubled or tripled to suit the job. It has been fielded to USSCOM since 2010. The base grenade has a non-removable, 3.5 second fuse and a body encasing .25 pounds of high explosive. Two separate modules of the same potency can be quickly connected to provide one, simultaneous explosion. "The blast completely collapsed a one-room, adobe-style structure," Lubin said. "It really has a devastating effect," he added. ■

Reunion Comments

Why We Reunite

By Bob Peavey

Many first timers to a USMC Vietnam Tankers Association reunion say the same thing as you have, that they never wanted or thought about joining a veteran organization, myself included. Our thought process is that we did our time and we didn't want to be reminded of it all over again. In fact, our war has the least amount of participants by percentage within all the standard organizations like VFW and the like. I think a lot of it has to do with the way we were treated when we returned.

But let me share with the two of you something we see at every reunion. The new members attending their first reunion always come up to us afterwards with big smiles on their faces and comment about how good they feel and how rewarding it was to have gotten together after 40+ years. Most of them say it was something missing in their lives that they were totally unaware of. I know it sounds like a church revival sermon but having attended the eight reunions we have conducted, I hear with great satisfaction the same comment over and over again. You will be with your own and see people you served with and experienced things with. It is a great healing process even if you don't realize something has been missing all these years. I have found it to be a great catharsis. And many of our members bring their wives.

We only get together once every two years and our ages are beginning to show. It will, in the not to distant future, become where it is just too difficult to travel. You are fortunate to have the chance to attend at least one reunion and catch up with your past friends. I can assure you that you will want to attend the following reunions thereafter. Every month we lose more and more members who have moved on to "The Great Tank Park in the Sky."

Why Men Who Have Been To War Yearn To Reunite

Written by a member of the Hawaii Old Soldiers Association

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to weep or laugh. Comrades gather because they long to be with the people who once acted their best; who once suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men they were delivered by fate and the military. But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation, the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were all willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day. I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thoughts will be of my family, and my comrades. SUCH GOOD MEN..."

Submitted by Bob Skeels

And from the book Last Stand at Khe Sanh

by Gregg Jones:

"For years afterward, Bravo Co, 1/26, rifleman Michael O'Hara would be too embarrassed to talk to his Khe Sanh brothers about the terror he had felt during the artillery bombardments, particularly in those moments when Soviet-made 152-mm guns hurled eighty-eight pound shells into the base with the fearsome roar of a runaway locomotive. When he finally revealed his feelings at the Khe Sanh Veterans Association reunion in 1993, O'Hara was astonished – and relieved – to learn that all of his comrades had shared his exact same fears." ■

2015 Washington, DC Reunion Overview

HOTEL: Our reunion hotel (The Hyatt Regency) is located in the "Crystal City" area of Arlington, Virginia. Crystal City houses award winning theater, exciting restaurants, specialty stores, bike trails and so much more. To make your hotel room reservation call: 1-888-421-1442 and be sure to mention: "USMC Vietnam Tankers Association reunion" or you can go to the VTA website's Reunion News section and make it on line.

YOUR ARRIVAL at Reagan National Airport (DCA):

- Shuttle picks up at A Terminal (2nd Curb by the marked Hotel Shuttle stop location) and
- Shuttle pick up at B & C Terminal Arrivals, Door 5 and Door 9 (1st Curb by the marked Hotel Shuttle stop location).
- Courtesy Hyatt Airport Shuttle to Reagan National Airport (DCA) departs the hotel every 20 minutes on the hour from 4:40am – 12:00am. (Times subject to change.)

RESTURANTS: When we visited last fall, we found that there are over 40 restaurants within easy walking distance of our reunion hotel. **Please see the map that is included in this issue.

GETTING AROUND and SITE SEEING: The DC Metro (the subway system) is a short (free) hotel shuttle ride.. or it is a brisk eight block walk. One very important note should be made when you are making your plans to attend the reunion in Washington, DC, is that all of the museums and monuments along the National Mall in downtown Washington are spread out over a five mile area. The DC Metro (subway) system connects our hotel to the National Mall but there will be a very large amount of walking if you plan to see the sites. There are easy to catch taxi cabs all over the city for anyone who does not feel strong enough to do a lot of walking. The VTA will have buses for the group trip to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico and for the guided tour of the city ... but for incidental transportation during any Free Time, you will be on your own.

PACKAGE SHIPMENTS: If you are donating items for the auction and they are too bulky or heavy to carry onto the airplane, you can ship them to the below address. Please either email or call John Wear telling him the number of boxes and what is inside of them. John will give you the SHIP TO address to send the boxes...do not send them to the hotel.

How To Win A Free Hotel Room!

You can win a free hotel stay for this year's reunion when you bring this coupon to Thursday's Opening Meeting no later than 08:59 EST

Rules: This coupon is your raffle ticket to be surrendered at the door of the meeting room before 08:59 EST for a chance to win a free 4-night stay during the reunion. The prize covers the basic room rate (\$109) plus taxes. Prize value: \$436.00+.

Drawing will be held at the conclusion of the same meeting. Tickets will be awarded only to people who are in the meeting room prior to 08:59 EST. No latecomers will be permitted in the drawing. Correct time is determined by the President's watch set to atomic clock standards.

Doors will close at exactly 09:00 EST to determine who is in the room on time. Winner MUST be in the room when the bell rings. If someone is almost at the door when the bell rings and he is not physically in the meeting room, he is NOT eligible for the drawing. No exceptions will be made. Only one (1) entry per person allowed.

Name: _____ Room # _____

We will provide this form in your Welcome bag when you check in to the reunion.



2015 Waswwhington, DC Reunion Schedule

Wednesday	October 28	0900 - 2330	Arrival Day – Pick up Reunion Welcome Packet just outside of the “Slopchute” hospitality room (3rd Floor) **Sign up for VTA History Interviews and For photo scanning for the website** Slopchute Open
		0900 - 2330	Lunch & Dinner on your own Reunion Kick-off and VTA Business Mtg. Enter to win a FREE stay! Ladies Coffee (Hospitality Room)
Thursday	October 29	0900 – 1100	Lunch on your own Load buses to MCB Quantico Be sure to wear your reunion T-shirt for group photo. Tour NMMC and Reunion Group Photo Buffet Dinner NMMC Board buses to hotel
		0900 – 1100 1100 – 1245 1300 – 1315 1415 – 1900 1900 – 2030 2030 – 2045 2200 – 2330	Slopchute Open Operation VTA History Day **Interview Schedule Posted in Slopchute** ...Or Tour city on your own
Friday	October 30	0900 – 1500	Lunch on your own Photo scanning for the website Slopchute Open
		1200 – 1500 1500 – 2330	Dinner on your own Load buses Guided Tour of the city Stay in city or return to hotel
Saturday	October 31	0800 – 0815 0830 – 1300 1300	Lunch on your own Slopchute Open Pizza Party (Slopechute) Auction
		1330 – 1700 1730 – 1830 1830 – 2200 2200 – 2330	Slop chute Open Open Day
Sunday	November 1	All Day	Lunch on your own Slopchute Open Reunion Banquet – Cash Bar Presentation of Colors & Remarks Dinner Served
		1000 – 1700 1730 – 1815 1830 – 1845 1845 – 1930	Please note: Dress for the Banquet will be a shirt with a collar, dress slacks and shoes...Coats & ties are optional. Birthday Cake cutting & desert served • 5 minute - Head Call • 30 Minutes - Guest Speaker • 30 minutes - Fallen Heroes • 5 minute – San Antonio Reunion Review & 2017 Announcement
Monday	November 2	2130 – 2400	Slopchute Open – Last Call...
			Departure Day

Reminder: November 3 is National General Election Day - So get out and vote!



OFFICIAL REGISTRATION FORM 2015 Washington DC Reunion Hyatt Regency Crystal City October 28 – November 2

IF YOU MAIL IN YOUR COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM WITH YOUR PAYMENT CHECK BEFORE AUGUST 31ST THEN YOU WILL BE ELIGIBLE TO PURCHASE OUR \$20 REUNION T-SHIRT FOR HALF PRICE.

PLEASE PRINT ALL INFORMATION

Member's Name: _____

Guest's Name(s): _____
and relationship _____

Address: _____ Unit#: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Day Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Vietnam Tank or AT Bn: _____ Co: _____ Years in-country: _____ to _____
(Circle one of the above)

Are you a first time attendee? YES _____ NO _____

Would you like to participate in our personal interview program? YES _____ NO _____

Your USMC VTA membership dues must be current in order to attend the reunion. If your membership is delinquent please mail your dues with this registration (or the dues will be collected at the sign-in desk). No partial payments of the registration fee are accepted. Fee covers planned food functions, bus transportation & lunch, meeting facilities, hospitality room, beer & sodas and other expenses associated with the cost of hosting the reunion. Registration fee does not include your sleeping room, taxes or air fare.

Reunion Refund Policy: If you find that you cannot attend the Washington DC reunion after you have pre-paid your reunion fees, the USMC VTA will refund your total reunion fees if you notify us prior to August 31, 2015. If you notify us of your cancellation after that date, we are sorry but we cannot make any refund offer

Please fill out the back side of this form to determine total fees.

NAME (as you want them to appear on your reunion name tag)	T-SHIRT SIZE
<input type="radio"/> _____	<input type="radio"/> _____
<input type="radio"/> _____	<input type="radio"/> _____
<input type="radio"/> _____	<input type="radio"/> _____
<input type="radio"/> _____	<input type="radio"/> _____

Your total reunion fees

My Registration Fee: **\$160.00**

T-Shirt: **\$ 10.00**

Number of guests _____ **X \$160.00 = \$** _____
(Registration Fee for each guest is \$160.00)

Guest T- Shirt _____ **X \$10.00 = \$** _____

Grand Total = \$ _____

Optional: Would you like to donate a few dollars to help with the beer & soda fund? **\$** _____

GROSS AMOUNT ENCLOSED: **\$** _____

You must make your own hotel room reservations by October 1st to get the low room rate!

Call: **1-888-421-1442** and ask for the “**US Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Association Reunion**” for the special room rate of \$109.00 per night. The special room rate is good for three days prior and three days after the reunion dates as well. Please note the regular hotel room rate is \$199 per night.

CAUTION: Do not confuse the above hotel booking deadline date with the early registration half-price T-shirt offer which has an August 31st deadline.

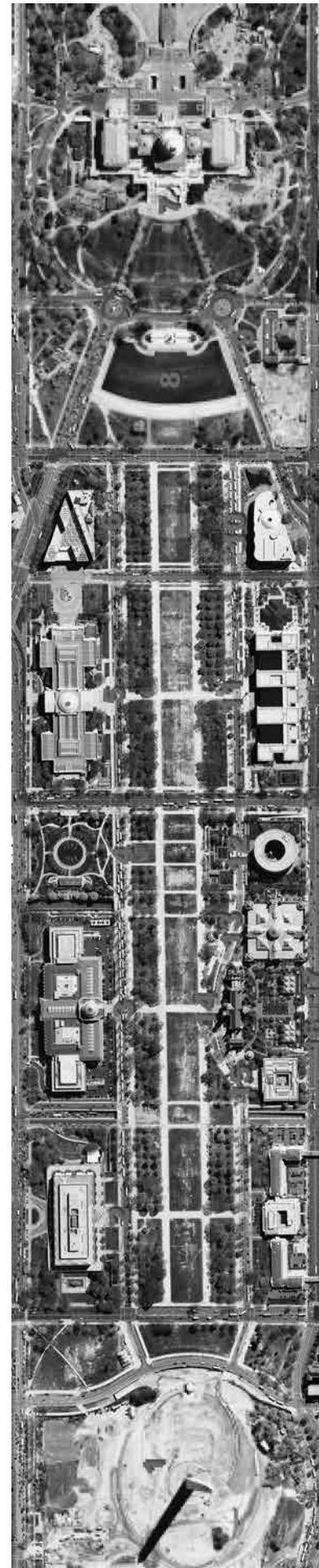
Submit this form along with your payment by August 31st to get a half-priced Reunion t-shirt worth \$20.

Send check or money order made out to: USMC VTA and the completed registration form to:

USMC VTA
c/o Ron Knight
6665 Burnt Hickory Drive
Hoschton, GA 30548-8280

The National Mall (proper) contains the following landmarks, museums and other features:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Washington Monument 2. National Museum of American History 3. National Museum of Natural History 4. National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden 5. West Building of the National Gallery of Art 6. East Building of the National Gallery of Art 7. The US Capitol Building 8. US Grant Memorial 9. US Botanical Garden | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. National Museum of the American Indian 11. National Air and Space Museum 12. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden 13. Arts and Industries Building 14. Smithsonian Institution Building (“The Castle”) 15. Freer Gallery of Art 16. Arthur M. Sackler Gallery 17. National Museum of African Art |
|--|--|



With the exception of the National Gallery of Art, all of the museums on the National Mall (proper) are part of the Smithsonian Institution. The Smithsonian Gardens maintains a number of gardens near its museums. These gardens include:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mary Livingston Ripley Garden Enid A. Haupt Garden Kathrine Dulin Folger Rose Garden Butterfly Habitat Garden Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Victory Garden at the National Museum of American History Heirloom Garden at the National Museum of American History, Behring Center Native Landscape at the National Museum of | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the American Indian Features west of the National Mall (proper) include the following: United States Department of Agriculture South Building Constitution Gardens Sylvan Theater Lincoln Memorial Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool World War II Memorial | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Korean War Veterans Memorial Vietnam Veterans Memorial The Three Soldiers Statue Vietnam Women's District of Columbia War Memorial John Ericsson National Memorial John Paul Jones Memorial Lock Keeper's House Jefferson Pier |
|--|---|--|

USMC Vietnam Tankers Association
5537 Lower Mountain Road • New Hope, PA 18938

Please check your address label... if the last two digits of "EXPIRES" is less than "15" then your 2015 membership dues are now payable. Make your check out to: USMC VTA for \$30* and mail to:

NEW ADDRESS!!!!

USMC VTA c/o Bruce Van Apeldoorn, 73 Stanton Street, Rochester, NY 14611

*Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.

