



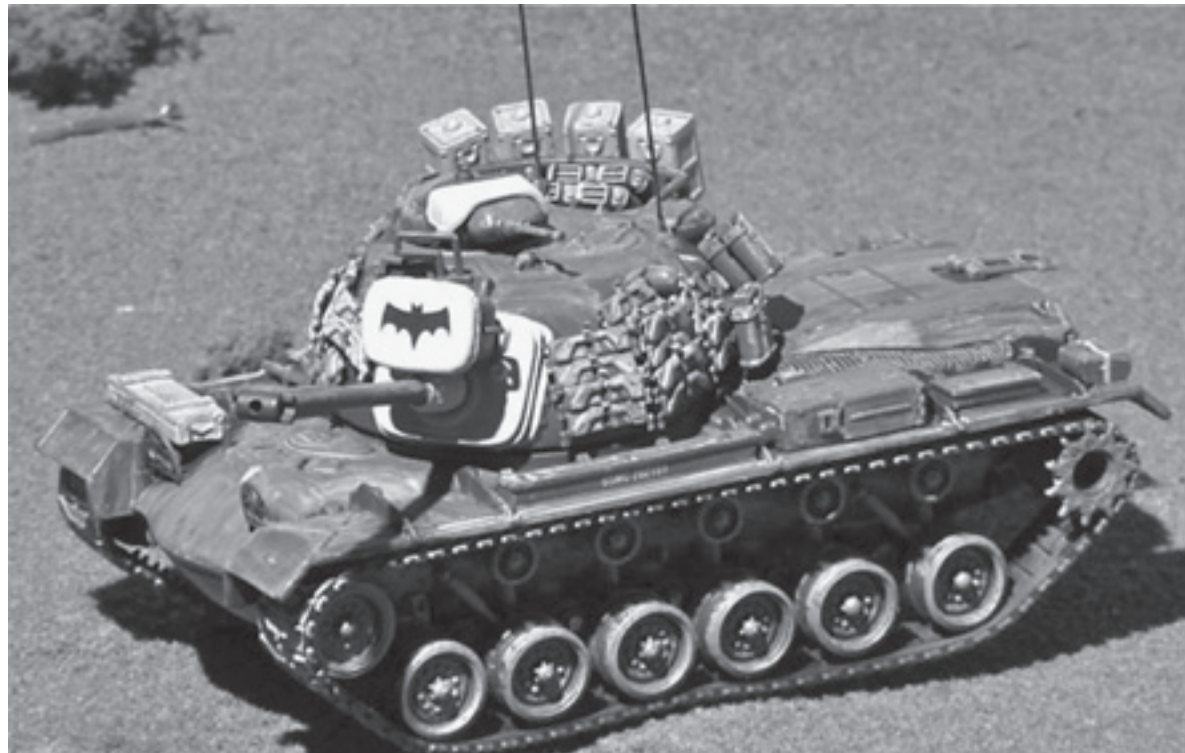
Sponson BOX

*Voice of
the USMC
Vietnam Tankers
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



- Featuring
- ♦ Operation Buffalo Discussion 24
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Letter from the President

Greetings,

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

This is the first issue of the *Sponson Box* that I have published myself. In the past I had offered limited assistance in the publication but this one is pretty much of my doing. I hope that you-all feel that it is as good as any that have come before it. I welcome any constructive suggestions for improvement and as we have said all along in the past, any personal stories are welcome. The best way to submit them is through email but if you send them through the US mail that will work. With that said I want to keep reminding all of you that even though you may feel that your own personal life is not all that interesting or that you do not have much to say, I can assure you that you are 100% wrong. Any story that you have about your time in-country whether it is deadly serious, somewhat silly or even just plain funny, I will just about guarantee you that the membership would enjoy reading about it. Also stories about your current life are most welcome to be published here. It could be a story about a family vacation trip, a relative who is on active duty with our military or something that you are simply thinking about. I want to offer just a simple word of caution: We do not want to open Pandora's Box by interjecting any form of political discussions into the organization. While most of us are deeply concerned with the current state of the union, we cannot allow ourselves to become embroiled with partisan politics that might appear in our “official” publication.

As most of you know, my good friend Bob Peavey has resigned his position as Vice President of the VTA and as editor & publisher of the *Sponson Box* news magazine. I will miss Bob and our almost-everyday interaction with the VTA matters. Yes, being an officer of the VTA tends to involve our attention on a weekly, if not daily, basis. I feel pretty strongly that this is one of the many reasons for the apparent success of the organization. I also request that anyone who has the desire to devote some time & energy to our brotherhood that you give it some serious thought and come up with something that you'd like to help us in accomplishing. Simply making the move to volunteer is not all that helpful unless you can find a job for yourself to do and then figure out a way to do it.

As a reminder: We have several VTA themed items for sale on Sgt Grits website (<http://www.grunt.com>) or you can access the PX on our VTA website. Speaking of which, someone had planted a malicious message on our website that has turned out to be a bogus warning indicating that if you enter the website using certain web browsers that you may get infected with a computer virus or malware. Again, this is a bogus warning which was not true. If we find out who the perpetrator is, we are considering a law suit.

And lastly, if you have not already paid your 2012 membership dues, they are now payable. Please make you check out to “USMC VTA” and mail them to my address. All “over & above” donations will be most gratefully appreciated.

“The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall”
 —Vince Lombardi



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5537 Lower Mountain Road; New Hope, PA 18938
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OPEN, Vice President

Jim Coan, Treasurer

5374 East Lantana Drive; Sierra Vista, AZ 85650
(520) 378-9659 · E-mail: zjimco@aol.com

Ronald C. Knight, Secretary

720 Quail Run Court; Alpharetta, GA 30005-8920
(770) 623-9237 · E-mail: rckusmcvta@att.net

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E-mail: MRSteele@aol.com

Carl Fleischman

P.O. Box 727; Keyport, WA 98345-0727
(360) 779-1327 · E-mail: gfleisch@sinclair.net

Dave “Doc” Forsyth

PO Box 52; Lackawaxen, PA 18435-0052
(570) 685-2020 · E-mail: docnomo2@yahoo.com

Fred Kellogg

15013 NE 16th St.; Vancouver, WA 98684-3605
(360) 609-3404 E-mail: kelloggfc@comcast.net

Rick Lewis

5663 Balboa Ave. #366; San Diego, CA 92111-2795
(858) 297-8909 E-mail: ricklent@aol.com

Lt Col Raymond Stewart, USMC (ret)

President, Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation
707 SW 350th Court; Federal Way, WA 98023
(253) 835-9083 · Email: usmcmvthf@comcast.net

Robert H. Vaxter

45749 Prairiegrass Court; Belleville, MI 48111-6428
(734) 385-6395 Email: RVaxter1@comcast.net

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Fallen Heroes & Sponson Box Editor
770-365-3711 EST

“Robbie” Robinson

National Recruiter
409-385-6399 CST

Greg Martin

Webmaster
360-480-12060 PST
Email: usmc1811@hctc.com

Web Site: www.usmcmvta.org

The Sponson Box is the official publication for the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and the Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation. The Sponson Box is published three times a year, more often prior to the biennial reunion of the Association. *No portion of the Sponson Box is to be reprinted without prior written permission from the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association.*

John Wear – Editor & Publisher – johnwear2@verizon.net

Tuyen Pham – Layout and Design

Sandra Coan – Proofing

Printed in the USA

ON THE COVER:

July 1967, outside of Con Thien, South Vietnam: This is the sad and gruesome aftermath of a three day battle between Alpha & Bravo Companies, 1st Bn, 9th Marines (The Walking Dead) and a far superior (in numbers) NVA regiment. The story appears in this issue.

New Members for 2012 – 1st Sponson Box

Armstrong, Rick A
753 Towne Oaks Drive
Tyler, TX 75701
Phone: (903) 504-5759
H&S Co, 1st Tanks, '66 – '67 – '68
MOS: 2141
Wife: Patricia
Recruited by: John Wear

Hika, Eugene E “Gene”
19863 Beaulieu Court
Ft Meyers, FL 33908
Phone: (239) 267-4984
H&S Co, 3rd Tanks, '65 – '66
MOS: 2531
DOB: 11/02/45
Wife: Martha
Recruited by: John Wear

Portello, Frank
10901 Connemara Court
Bakersfield, CA 93312
Phone: (661) 587-9612
A Co, 3rd AT, '67 – '68
MOS: 0353
BOD: 03/31/48
Recruited by: Rick Walters

2012 – 1st Sponson Box Membership Information Changes

Bedoar, Jack
C Co, 3rd Tanks, '65 – '66
Cummings, Charles “Corky”
130 Dixie Way
Rotonda West, FL 33947
Phone: (941) 276-0560

Lee, Valmore L
903 W Ardussi Court (Apt 15)
Frankenmuth, MI 48734

Mackenzie, James W “Jim”
435 Front Street
Eagle Harbor, MI 49950
Phone: 906) 289-4567
MOS: 1811
Wife: Sharon
DOB: 05/13/47

David Fanning
Should be: “JD” Fanning

Please note: Most of these new members were recruited through a joint effort. The recruiters called or emailed John Wear or “Robbie” Robinson and the perspective member had a membership packet sent to them. The packet that was mailed included a sample of the Sponson Box news magazine, a membership application and a letter asking them to join. Anyone who knows a perspective member, please alert either Robbie or John.

Letter to the Editor

Hey John,
Here is a donation that you can apply to where ever you want: The Buddy Fund, the General Fund or the reunion Beer Fund or how ever you want to divide it. I am thinking about driving my car to San Diego so I can make several stops along the way for visits with old buddies. No matter how I get to San Diego, I will see you there!
I am seriously considering purchasing a set of dress greens for the Farewell Dinner. I am also seriously considering having eleven hash marks sewn on the sleeve since I have never been formally discharged from the USMC. I’ve shown up at the Marine recruiter’s office every time they’ve thrown a war...and generally, I have been told to get my gray haired, fat ass out of their office...They have told me this in a nice way since this is the new, gentle Marine Corps! With that said, I feel that I have done my duty since I am the only “corporal over 44” in the world!!!
Semper Fi

John “Hughie” Hughes
Jay, Florida
(850) 675-0490

Here are my annual dues and a little more for the general fund. I have to tell you that San Diego was great! Good program especially the Fallen Heroes. I'm glad you are the person getting it all together. Good vibes. Thanks for all the hard work. Semper Fi.

Sid Ferguson
Bonsall Pet Hospital
(760) 630-1711

I would like to ask for two copies of the current Sponson Box (with the details of the August 2010 reunion). I want to mail them to two friends, former USMC Vietnam Tankers who have not joined. Harold and I enjoyed the reunion and connecting with a few of the men he served with 42 years ago. These two former tankers keep in touch with us. One we have worked on to attend but no luck yet. The other, I am going to write to and tell him who we saw and see if he will become interested. Just tell me how much and where to send the check. Thank you. An early “Happy Birthday” for this coming Thursday. We’re going to begin our celebration at our dentist’s office, getting our teeth cleaned (yuck!).

Harold and Laura Riensche
91 Northern Harrier Road
Reed Point, MT 59069-7923
(406) 326-2363

Editor’s Note: Asking for copies of the Sponson Box news magazine to be sent to potential members is no charge!

I really enjoy the articles, photos and quality of the Sponson Box and want to thank all of those who participate in producing it. Having said that, the Guess Who photo contest says the ears are a dead giveaway. For many years, I have been especially sensitive to ear jokes, having been the subject of many of them. The Guess Who photo, while he has a great set of ears, really takes a back seat to mine, which while not large are a really recognizable pair. Thanks for your efforts, here is my dues payment for 2012.

Col Louis E Cherico, USMC (ret)
Bravo, 1st Tanks, '66 – 67
(914) 948-2299

Editor’s Note: Staying on the subject of the Da Nang Golf Club I also got this reply from Richard Nagle:

When I reported to Co. B, 3d Tanks in March of 1966 our CP was in the vicinity of Marble Mountain and likely very near these golf links. We could have loaned the VC our blade tank to construct fairway bunkers!

Dick Nagle
Laguna Hills, CA
Home: (949) 586-0481

Please pass my thanks on to the other members of the Board of Directors of the USMCMVTA, for a fantastic reunion in San Diego. Y’all did a great job, worked long hours and if you don’t respond to this e-mail for a week or so, I know why- you’re exhausted!

A request: Harold Riensche’s participation in the reunion was a great surprise to me and the two other B Co., 3 rd Herd members who spent a long night with him just below the DMZ in 1969, with no one but us Marines to rely on to make it thru the night. If possible, please include a picture of him (our photographer took at least one that I saw on display), in the Sponson Box where you have a reunion picture spread. I think it took a great effort for Harold and his wife to come to the reunion. As the most highly decorated member of the USMCMVTA, he should be included in the pictures of the reunion in our magazine.

I am continually amazed by the fraternity of brothers that are the USMCMVTA. At the last reunion in Charleston, Chris Vargo and I were the only attendees from B Co. 3rd Tanks that were in-country in 1968-1969. At the San Diego Reunion, there were at least seven of us...(Bill Davis, Andy Anderson, Harold Reinsche, John Harper, Mike Bolenbaugh, Chris and me) and probably a couple of others that I missed. It was great seeing these guys after 42 years and sharing countless stories and remembrances. I have a couple of articles for the Sponson Box in process and will get them to y’all for review and edit.

Guys, thanks again for a great event, get some rest and saddle

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up and move out to our next objective. We'll see y'all in San Antonio.

Semper Fi.

Pete Ritch
St George Island, FL
(850) 734-0014

I have been remiss in thanking you for a great reunion. You are to be congratulated on the great planning and execution. Thank all of the crew that aided you on an outstanding time.

John Harper
Wichita, KS
(316) 554-1093

I am probably the last...but a great big thank you to you and all the officers and directors for putting on a great reunion. My wife, Gloria, especially enjoyed the entire event and will urge other wives who were not there to attend next year.

When you get caught up (if you ever do), please send four more malo amigas a "Sponson Box" and an application blank as I am shaming them into joining and coming to the next reunion in SA, which is their back yard.

At the least, place them on a list-serve email so they get the newsletters and any blasts.

Larry Basco
220 Ruth St
Timeville, LA 71360

Frank Smith
206 Clair Rd
Boyce, LA 71409

Sgt A Soto
10396 Woodbreeze St
San Antonio, TX 78217

Dale Wayne Sandifer
315 Defreese Rd
West Monroe, LA 71291

Thanks John & S/F

Chris Vargo
Mableton, GA
(832) 545-7600

Hi John

First and foremost, thank you to you, USMC Vietnam Tankers and all the volunteers that made this the best reunion ever!! "Blues" and I can't wait till 2013 and San Antonio.

The other thing I wanted to pass along is the website below. Honor Flights.org is a non-profit, private funded organization that provides trips to DC for vets as a small way to say thank you for your service. My father, a WWII veteran is on his honor flight today. The organization prioritizes WWII vets and ANY terminally ill vet. It doesn't matter if the vet can or cannot afford the trip. The point is to honor our vets. I'm sure there are members that may qualify now based on their health, and eventually you

guys will move to the top of the list as you get older. You may have already known about this organization. I was so impressed with the concept and with the way my Dad is being treated, I am planning on passing this on to every vet that I can.

<http://www.honorflight.org/about/index>.

Thanks again.

Mary Unland – "Blue's" wife
Chula Vista, CA
(619) 421-0531

From the Sgt Grit Newsletter (7/28/2001):

In 1958-1960 I was assigned to the 2nd Tank Bn, Bravo Company. During this time, for 14 months, I was Platoon Leader of 1st Platoon. We were deployed for all but about two month's total. Finally, I was reassigned and was XO of Bravo Company. A new 2nd Lt was given my old Platoon, and I was curious how he was doing in the field. I tuned to his frequency to see what was happening.

I heard the new Lt call, "Bravo 15, this is Bravo 1 how do you read?" He was answered by my old Platoon Sergeant, Gunny John Harrington, "Bravo 1, this is 15, read you 5x5." Then in a very few minutes I heard the same transmission and response. Then a 3rd one came about 5 minutes later. This time I could tell the Gunny was getting tired of all the chatter. About another five minutes went by in silence when I heard, "Bravo 15, Bravo 1 how do you read?" Immediately I heard Bravo15 answer, "Read you 2x2!" Back came the puzzled voice, "2x2, what do you mean?" Then the Gunny responded, "Too loud and too goddamn often, out!" After that the radio became very quiet and the new Lt had learned a valuable training lesson.

It was only a few days later the same Lt came in and informed the Skipper and myself that he wanted to put First Sgt Kirkland on report. (The First Sgt had been a Major in WWII and then after the war there were too many officers so he became a GySgt. He had been in three invasions and was a tanker in the old M4s.) The Skipper raised up and demanded, "Lt, why in hell do you even think about putting the First Sgt on report? Are you crazy?"

The Lt turned a little red in the face was he explained, "I went into the First Sgt's office and while we were talking, I sat on the corner of his desk. He immediately told me to get my ass off his desk. This is total disrespect." The Skipper sat back down and then said, "Lt, even I nor the XO would even think about sitting on his desk. Get out of here and go and apologize to the First Sgt for your stupidity." It was another learning lesson for the young Lt.

E.L.Dodd,
1953-1961, USMC Forever

From the Sgt Grit Newsletter (09/01/11): ABOUT THE ONTOS:

Lieutenant Asher: I drove a 2 1/2 ton truck in Vietnam and a few of my runs was running 105 ammo up to a place called Cua Viet. It was up the Cua Viet River from the city of Dong Ha. It was a beach, all sand. I would drive my truck, with the ammo, on to a Mike Boat at Dong Ha and they would float me up the river. Once at Cua Viet, an Ontos would pull me, with a chain,

up the beach to the gun batteries. After the gunners unloaded my truck, the Ontos would drag me back down the beach and push me back up on the Mike boat. The Ontos sure worked good for that.

Mike Finch
H.Q. 1/11 68/69

From the Sgt Grit Newsletter (09/08/11): Ontos = "The Thing" = Pigs

They were doomed from the onset. The Army dumped them on the Corps around 1957. Tow's were well into development and the Army preferred them. Little did they know what a fine fighting platform Ontos were. Anti personnel rounds were developed and used with great effectiveness in V.N. and no enemy tanks until Tet of 68 I was schooled at Camp Delmar Track Schools Bn.s in 1965. I served in 1st- 2nd- 3rd Bn.s and Div's They saw service in at least two other Theaters of Operation then unceremoniously sold off to third world countries.

Draw Backs? YES...But with a highly trained crew despite exterior loading, manual sighting and poor performance in soft sand, they did well. On the other hand a GOOD OC could take out 6 tanks before they ever got a gun on him My Chu Lai address was:

Cpl. Prohaski
Charlie Co. 1st Plt C-23 1st AT BN.
1st MAR DIV

Thanx & Semper Fi

MAJOR USMC Ret

Ontos

My first contact with the ONTOS was when I was assigned to 1st Anti-Tank Bn 1stMarDiv Vietnam July 1967 - December 1967. Am including a few pictures of our CP on a hill outside Da Nang in hopes I will hear from some of the Marines who served in 1st AT Bn during that period.



I was Bn CommO and because of the shortage of officers at that time also served as Hqs Commandant, Mess Officer, engineer Officer, and CO H&S Company. In December of 1967 1st AT Bn was disbanded and most ONTOS were attached to 1st Tank Bn which was headed North to Hue. This effectively



was the end of 1st AT Bn and I was sent south to Chu Lai as CommO of 9th Engineer Bn. Hope these pictures bring back some memories and it would really be great to hear from Marines who were there.

ROBERT BAILEY
Capt USMC (Ret)
Lebanon Missouri

50 Hit

Speaking of the Ontos, in 1958 I was assigned to the public information office of Hq Co. Hq Bn., 1st MarDiv at Camp

Pendleton. One day the Captain of the PIO office sent me out to the field to observe and write a story about a new piece of equipment the Marines were experimenting with.

It was a strange looking duck which looked like a pickup truck mounting a recoilless 105 mm which had a unique aiming system linked to a 50 cal. mg. When the 50 hit the target the 105 was fired and also hit the target. I remember being very impressed and was convinced we ruled the armored warfare battles of the world.

Charles Miller,
Cpl USMC 1957-59

Fire Team To The Right

Sgt. Grit,

As I write this, I am reading through the 25 August issue of your newsletter, and I have found two submissions to which I would like to reply.

The submission in your newsletter was from 1st Lt. Martin Asher, who asked about the use of Ontos in Vietnam.

In previous submissions to your newsletter, I have referred to Operation Desoto (26 Jan-9 Apr 67) in Duc Pho District, south of Quang Ngai. I had two experiences involving Ontos during that operation. Both of them were unpleasant-not because of the Ontos themselves, but because of what happened “around” their use.

I was the artillery forward observer for Lima 3/7 for almost six months, before being called back to my battery to be FDO. On a patrol around one of the villages surrounding Duc Pho, I was out with the 3rd Platoon, which was then being led by the platoon sergeant, GySgt. Malloy. (The 3rd Platoon Commander, John Welch, had been a classmate of mine at The Basic School. He died as a result of setting off a booby-trapped LAAW he found lying along the trail, about two months earlier in Lima’s involvement in the Duc Pho area.) At least one Ontos had been around the area of the village that we were entering, as there were tracks in the rice paddy. We came under heavy fire as our last man entered the ville, and it was hard to determine where the firing was coming from. The gunny sent a fire team off to the right to try to flank the enemy. Unfortunately, the leader of the team decided to follow the Ontos tracks, rather than avoid them. He set off an anti-tank mine that killed him and caused minor wounds to the other three Marines.

I believe it was later, after Capt. Henry, who had joined Lima in January--just in time to take us on the operation--was hit by “friendly fire” and med-evacked out. He was replaced by Capt. Larry Celmer. Capt. Celmer sent me with 1st Platoon up onto a hill called Nui Cua, right on the edge of the South China Sea, to set up an observation post. While we were there, Celmer took part of the rest of the company north, across the river. Using a spotter scope, I could see armed individual’s moving toward his position, and I called to let him know. I could hear firing from his end of the radio conversation when he acknowledged my message. Facing heavy fire, he pulled Lima back toward the ville that served as our HQ. Still watching through either the sniper spotter scope or my own binoculars, I saw the “Skipper” hit and fall. An Ontos, that happened to be in “our” ville, drove out onto

the sand bar where he lay, and retrieved his body by straddling him with the tracks and lifting him inside.

In addition to commenting on the articles by Cpl. Stupp and Lt. Asher, I just read David Johnson’s clarification of his “dark and difficult time” comment, regarding the U.S.’s evacuation at the end of the Vietnam War. I would like to refer anyone who might be interested to the subject, to a book titled Unheralded Victory: The Defeat of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army 1961-1973, by Mark W. Woodruff (with a foreword by Gen. James L. Jones).

Mr Woodruff re-enforces an opinion that I have had since my time there: we who fought in ‘Nam didn’t lose the war--others gave away the victory. To quote from a comment on the back of the book’s jacket, “What defeat? When I left Vietnam we were winning.” (Which is similar to a slogan on one of Sgt. Grit’s bumper stickers.)

Semper Fi!

Tom Downey
Once a captain, USMCR; always a Marine
‘63-’76 “for pay purposes”
Vietnam, 4 Dec 66-18 Dec 67

Promptly Threw A Track

This is in response to the query made by Lt Asher concerning the Ontos and how they were used and performed in Viet Nam.

I was first introduced to the Ontos at Quantico Va. in 1966. This was after I was released from Bethesda, after I recovered from wounds from my first tour in Nam. At that time my MOS was 0353, 3.5 rockets. our unit was School Demonstration Troops. We actually showed you young officer how things were done. (hopefully you learned something).

I went back to Nam in early 1967, attached to 3rd Anti Tanks . Col, McCain (JINX) was our Co. Honestly The Ontos (we called them PIGS not in Jinx’s hearing) was only good for convoy escort or perimeter defense. Once you got off a hard packed surface it, like tanks, bogged down.

I think my platoon was the last active Ontos platoon in the Corps . This was at Khe Sanh. I actually shot at a suspected NVA 57 recoilless position during the siege, backed into our revetment real quick and promptly threw a track. Try repairing a track while the enemy is rocketing you. Did I like them? NO, but it sure beat humping.

My neighbor Col, Gene Birnbaum USMC Ret, is a dichard tanker and Nam vet, and he told me that no tanker he knew was ever worried about THE ONTOS. I did do another tour in 70-71 as a grunt, and missed my PIG.

If I have offended any old pig crewmen or made a mistake please forgive an old Marines mistakes.

Semper Fi brothers

J B Boitnott SGT

Vietnam veterans gather in Mayport for Battle of Hue memorial service

Survivors gather at memorial service and honor those who died in the battle.

By Heather Lovejoy

Posted: October 3, 2011

It was Jan. 31, 1968. The city was Hue, South Vietnam. Four harrowing weeks of battle ensued, burning lifelong memories of carnage, loss, fear and camaraderie — and finally, triumph — into thousands of young men’s minds.

More than 40 years later, those four weeks of intense fighting are still in Barney Barnes’ thoughts daily. He was 21, a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, during the Battle of Hue in the Vietnam War. There were many moments, too many to count, that he feared he wouldn’t make it through, he said. Some of his friends did not.

Those lost in the battle were honored Sunday morning as survivors gathered in the dozens with their families at Naval Station Mayport for the 20th annual Battle of Hue Memorial Service. Veterans traveled from all over the country to attend, including Barnes from Oklahoma.

The station is home to the Navy’s USS Hue City, the only ship named after a Vietnam War battle, according to base spokesman Bill Austin.

Former Marine Jim Lewis of Jupiter was among the survivors and said it was the 15th memorial service he had attended. When asked what brings him back each time, he answered, “All my guys. ... This band of brothers is a special group.”

The battle began after the North Vietnamese Army attacked during the country’s New Year holiday, Tet. Regaining control of Hue, an imperial city and cultural center, was a particularly significant victory.

For some, the mission continues in charity work.

“For 40 years, I knew I needed to do something,” Lewis said.

He wanted to honor his fallen friend, Jesse Griego, with whom he became close during the Battle of Hue. Griego survived that fight, but a few months later he died in Lewis’ arms. Griego was killed by a buried explosive, a “booby trap,” Lewis said.

“I saw the light go out of his eyes,” he said. “When Jesse died, he was staring at me, wanting for me to do something. But there was nothing I could do.”

To honor his friend, Lewis decided to raise money and help build the Jesse Griego kindergarten school in the Quang Tri Province of Vietnam through the nonprofit Peacetrees Vietnam. The province, where a regional dialect is spoken, did not have a



BOB SELF/The Times-Union

Caption: 10/2/11--Battle of Hue City veteran Allen Morris from Charleston, SC looks over a copy of a newspaper story about a friend of his that was killed in Vietnam a couple of weeks after the battle of Hue City. Crew from the USS Hue City hosted the 20th Annual Battle of Hue Memorial Service in the Ocean Breeze Conference Center at NS Mayport Sunday morning. Among the events attendees were veterans of the Tet offensive battle.

school that taught children to read, write and speak Vietnamese, the country’s standard language, he said. For about two years, the school has been educating and providing food to underprivileged children.

“It gives them a fighting chance for a better life,” he said.

Sunday’s memorial event in the Ocean Breeze Conference Center capped a reunion weekend that included a tour of the USS Hue City, a Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser. During the service, which included prayers and several speeches, including one by Battle of Hue veteran Scott Nelson, and a commemorative placing of a wreath, tears welled up in the eyes of many veterans.

For Barnes, they came as the U.S. Marine Corps hymn played in the closing moments.

“That song always gets me,” he said.

heather.lovejoy@jacksonville.com
(904) 359-4539

Heroism In Ambush Yields Top Valor Award

Dateline: Afghanistan, September 2009
By Dan Lamothe - Staff writer
Posted: Aug 2, 2010

With no air or artillery support, the Marines of Embedded Training Team 2-8 were trapped deep in a kill zone in eastern Afghanistan. Their radios worked only sporadically, and dozens of insurgents fired on them repeatedly from three sides.

“We’re surrounded!” Gunnery Sgt. Edwin Johnson yelled into his radio in the early-morning hours of Sept. 8, 2009. “They’re moving in on us!”

At least twice, a two-man team attempted to rescue their buddies, using an armored vehicle mounted with a .50-caliber machine gun to fight their way toward them. They were forced back each time by a hail of bullets, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. An enemy bullet hit the vehicle’s gun turret, piercing then-Cpl. Dakota Meyer’s elbow with shrapnel. He shook it off, refusing to tell the staff sergeant with him because he didn’t want to make the situation worse, according to U.S. Army documents outlining a military investigation of the ambush.

What he did next will live on in Marine Corps lore — and, some say, should earn him consideration for the Medal of Honor.

After helicopter pilots called on to respond said fighting was too fierce for them to land, Meyer, then 21, charged into the kill zone on foot to find his friends. Under heavy fire, he reached a trench where the pilots had spotted the Marines, by then considered missing.

He found Johnson, 31; Staff Sgt. Aaron Kenefick, 30; 1st Lt. Michael Johnson, 25; Navy Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class James Layton, 22; and an Afghan soldier they were training — all dead and bloody from gunshot wounds. They were spread out in the ditch, their weapons and radios stolen.

“I checked them all for a pulse. There [sic] bodies were already stiff,” Meyer said in a sworn statement he was asked to provide military investigators. “I found SSgt Kenefick facedown in the trench w/ his GPS in his hand. His face appeared as if he was screaming. He had been shot in the head.”

Rather than give up, Meyer, of Greensburg, Ky., fought to bring his buddies back home. Bleeding from his shrapnel wound and still under fire, he carried their bodies back to a Humvee with the help of Afghan troops, and escorted them to nearby Forward Operating Base Joyce, about a mile to the northeast of Ganjgal.

Meyer’s five-page, handwritten statement to investigators is part of a 300-plus page report compiled by Combined Joint Task Force 82, then based at Bagram Air Base, in the days following the ambush. The military has declined repeatedly to release the full report, but Marine Corps Times obtained a declassified version that not only outlines heroism on the battlefield by numerous troops, but raises new questions about the mission’s failure, the Army officers in charge and why repeated, frantic pleas for air and artillery support from troops on the ground were ignored.

Meyer’s name was redacted from the report, but parents of the fallen Marines said he is responsible for retrieving their sons from the battlefield. Reached for comment July 15, Meyer declined to discuss the battle, and said he has avoided reading media coverage of it.

Then an infantry rifleman with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, out of Marine Corps Base Hawaii, he worked closely with Layton, Lt. Johnson and Kenefick, who

was posthumously promoted to gunnery sergeant, in a four-man training team based at FOB Monti in Kunar province. He considered them close friends, he said. He left the Corps in June, after his four-year active-duty commitment expired.

“The main thing that we need to get from that day is that those guys died heroes, and they are greatly missed,” he said. “This isn’t about me. If anything comes out of it for me, it’s for those guys.”

A Medal of Honor?

The Marines weren’t the only ones killed that day. Some of the Afghan soldiers present fought alongside U.S. forces bravely, but nearly a dozen of them were cut down by gunfire, many after failing to heed the instruction of U.S. forces to keep down, according to witness statements. A 10-man squad working with the pinned down Marine trainers was initially identified as missing, but it was later determined that it was due to a scattering of Afghan forces after their leadership took heavy losses.

Thirteen U.S. military trainers, 60 Afghan soldiers and 20 Afghan border police officers were outside the wire that day to meet with village elders, according to a report by a McClatchy News journalist traveling with the unit when it was ambushed. At least eight Afghan troops and an Afghan interpreter were killed while fighting about 150 insurgents, and a U.S. soldier, Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Westbrook, died Oct. 7 at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington from wounds sustained in the attack.

Army officials announced in February that “negligent” leadership at the battalion level contributed “directly to the loss of life which ensued” by refusing repeated pleas for artillery support from U.S.

forces on the ground and failing to notify higher commands that they had troops in trouble. Three unidentified officers — likely captains or majors — were recommended for letters of reprimand, potential career killers, but no additional punishment is expected.

Two investigations were conducted, with the first headed by an Army major in the first few days after the ambush and the second, focusing primarily on command post failure, overseen by Army Col. Richard Hooker and Marine Col. James Werth in November, said Marine Lt. Col. Joseph Kloppel, a spokesman for Marine Corps Forces Central Command, out of Tampa, Fla.

In February, the military released a five-page summary report of its investigation, void of many details, including which units were involved. With first-person statements from more than 35 U.S. troops, the full report covers much more ground, and describes in grisly detail chaos on the battlefield and in the operations center, based at FOB Joyce and overseen by Task Force Chosin, an Army unit comprising soldiers from 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, out of Fort Drum, N.Y.

The battalion, then commanded by Army Lt. Col. Mark O’Donnell, was not disclosed in the summary report. It said an acting battalion commander was in charge at the time of the attack.

The full report describes in great detail Meyer’s heroism and that of several other U.S. troops trapped in the middle of a violent maelstrom.

Investigating officers said at least two service members in the field that day “stand out as extraordinary examples of heroism worthy of the highest recognition.” The names of the troops cited for bravery were redacted from the report, and it is unclear if Meyer or another service member may be under consideration for the Medal of Honor or another high-level award.

Susan Price, Kenefick’s mother, said Marine officials have told her it is likely her son and the other casualties will receive at least a Bronze Star with V device for their bravery under fire. No Marine has received an award for valor related

to the battle yet, and the process has been stalled while the Corps researches possible high-level awards, Price said she believes. She can handle that: Meyer deserves consideration for the nation’s highest honor, she said.

“He risked his life to bring back the bodies of our heroes,” she said. “In my heart of hearts, I believe he deserves it. He had to have said, ‘I have to go in and get them, and whatever happens, happens.’”

Another possible contender for a high-level award could be Layton. He rushed to the lieutenant’s side to provide medical treatment to a gunshot wound in the right shoulder, putting himself in harm’s way in the process, according to several witness statements. Layton was shot in the face with an AK47 burst, while Gunnery Sgt. Johnson was hit in the right side, face and chest, Meyer said in his statement.

“His arms were up as if he had seen the enemy there,” Meyer said of the gunny. The body armor and gear for the five troops was “spread out through the trench,” although it is believed they all kept their protective equipment on, suggesting the enemy removed it. Investigators also determined it is unlikely they were executed at close range.

Doug Sterner, a Vietnam veteran consulted frequently by Congress as an expert on combat valor issues, said Meyer’s actions sound worthy of Medal of Honor consideration, while Layton’s sounds worthy of consideration for the Navy Cross or Silver Star, the nation’s second- and third-highest awards for valor.

“I would think this action is certainly something where his commander should consider submitting him for the Medal of Honor,” he said of Meyer’s actions. Sterner said he is hopeful they will consider him for it despite the fact that when he found his buddies, they were already dead.

“To me, that’s a moot point,” Sterner said. “We don’t leave anybody behind, and we go to extreme lengths to recover their remains.”

Neither the commandant’s office nor the Marine Corps Awards Branch comments on possible combat awards, spokespersons for each said. MARCENT is reviewing Meyer’s actions for possible awards, Kloppel said. A recommendation

will eventually be made to Marine Corps headquarters, which can either authorize an award or push it up to a higher command — which would be necessary for the Medal of Honor or the Navy Cross.

‘They knew we were coming’

The full report reveals a variety of other details not previously disclosed by the military in its five-page summary — including actions that potentially contributed directly to U.S. deaths.

One example: In the five-page summary released early this year, investigating officers said the mission called for a meeting with Ganjgal village elders. That’s true, but the situation was far more complicated than acknowledged publicly.

In fact, the mission in Ganjgal was a follow-up to another operation in the region, and included not only meeting with village elders, but clearing the area of the enemy, according to witness statements. On Sept. 3, a joint force composed of Afghan National Army soldiers, Afghan border police, and U.S. embedded trainers and mentoring teams conducted a mission in Dam Dara village, about a mile from Ganjgal. The troops were met “with a cordial response” from the villagers, but ambushed by a three- to five-man insurgent team wielding small arms on a ridge south of Ganjgal while leaving the area.

Following the attack, tribal elders in Ganjgal met with Afghan troops and renounced the Taliban. The elders invited the Afghan troops to return to discuss renovation plans for a mosque and conduct a census of military-age males. Afghan forces began planning their return to Ganjgal for Sept. 7, but decided to delay it a day due to “competing mission requirements” for the border police, the investigative report says.

No designated air support was available for the Ganjgal mission on Sept. 8, but Afghan military leadership, in conjunction with U.S. trainers, decided artillery support would be sufficient, especially because they were promised that helicopter gunships designated for another Sept. 8 operation in the nearby Shuryak Valley by a sister Army battalion

— Task Force Lethal, comprising soldiers in Kunar province with 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th BCT, 4th ID, out of Fort Carson, Colo. — could be redirected to assist Chosin in Ganjgal, if necessary.

Before the mission, military leadership learned that Taliban leaders met in Ganjgal on Sept. 7 to plan an ambush of U.S. forces. Twenty fighters were in Ganjgal that day, with at least 20 more expected to come.

Despite the potential danger, U.S. and Afghan forces didn't wave off on the mission the following day. Leadership decided that delaying the mission "would

be perceived as stifling" the Afghan troops' initiative. In a witness statement, an intelligence and operations officer for the Marine training team said they didn't want to delay the mission out of concern for the village elders' lives.

In retrospect, it backfired. "The mission was definitely compromised," an Army staff sergeant and scout squad leader on the battlefield with Task Force Chosin said in a sworn statement. "The elders/police could have easily tipped the enemy off. They knew what day we were coming. All I know is that they were already in position and waiting and they had a ton of ammo."

The incident has been used as an example for officers in Afghanistan on how things can go wrong. It also has resulted in tightened requirements meant to ensure leadership stays involved in an operation from pre-mission planning through execution — a downfall in Ganjgal, where senior battalion leadership was not fully involved.

Army and Marine officials said investigations into what went wrong are now complete. It is unclear if the Army officers cited in the five U.S. deaths ever received the letters of reprimand. ■



This photo was taken at the 2011 Veterans Day Parade in New York City. The two veterans present are the oldest and youngest Living Medal of Honor Awardees. On the left: WW2 Army Master Sgt Nicolas Oresko and on the right, OEF (Afghanistan) US Marine Sgt Dakota Meyers.

Above & Beyond for 2011

We are extremely grateful to the following members who reached deep into their pockets and made a financial contribution to the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association this past year. We thank you very much.

- | | | | |
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| <i>Bill Davis</i> | <i>Ray Kennedy</i> | <i>Pete Ritch</i> | |

If we inadvertently missed someone who participated in the financial well being of our organization, we humbly apologize for the omission and ask that you please notify us of our oversight.

Looking For...

Editor’s note: I found an entry on the USMC VTA Facebook page from a Vietnam Marine who has just been recruited to join our brotherhood. If you remember Gene, please contact him.

“Looking for anyone who had been in the Comm. Platoon of H&S Co. 3rd. Tank Bn. who mounted out with us to Nam in June 65 from Camp Hanson Okinawa”

Eugene Hika
19863 Beaulieu Court
Ft. Myers FL. 33908
Phone: (239) 267-4984

This letter is in response to David J Alavrez’s letter in the July – August – September issue of the Sponson Box.

Without knowing anything about that letter, on October 25, 2011, my wife and

I went to the local K-Mart to get a CD of Johnny Cash music to give to a very dear friend of mine, John Ashman. My Marine friend was killed on December 23, 1965. Because he and I loved Johnny Cash’s music when we were stationed at Camp Pendleton, California and since we were both from Pennsylvania, it might have added to our friendship. My wife and I were going on a trip to Washington, DC, on the 27th so we wanted to place the CD at The Wall. When we purchased the CD, the manager of the department saw my Vietnam Veteran hat and he thanked me for my service. After we spoke for a while it turned out his father-in-law was a Vietnam veteran. When I told him why we were there, he said that it was really weird because his cell phone ring tone was a Johnny Cash song. After returning

from our DC trip where we placed the CD at The Wall, we got our mail out of our mailbox and I read the David Alvarez story in the Sponson Box. I was shocked. You see, David’s father also served with me and with John Ashman. And all three of us were good friends as young Marines. Since then David and I have been in touch with each other and we plan to continue to stay in touch. I promised him that I would send him some photos of his father, Johnny, and myself. If there is anyone else out there that served with us, please feel free to contact me.

Harry “Skip” Moore
Bravo Co, 1st Tank Bn, 65 – 66
(724) 323-6137

“Reckless”
The story of a Marine War Hero

This horse was a packhorse during the Korean war, and she carried recoilless rifles, ammunition and supplies to Marines. Nothing too unusual about that, lots of animals got pressed into doing pack chores in many wars.

But this horse did something more... during the battle for a location called Outpost Vegas, this mare made 51 trips up and down the hill, on the way up she carried ammunition, and on the way down she carried wounded soldiers...

What was so amazing? Well she made every one of those trips without anyone leading her.

I can imagine a horse carrying a wounded soldier, being smacked on the rump at the top of the hill, and heading

back to the “safety” of the rear. But to imagine the same horse, loaded with ammunition, and trudging back to the battle where artillery is going off, without anyone leading her is unbelievable. To know that she would make 51 of those trips is unheard of. Hell, how many horses would even make it back to the barn once, let alone return to you in the field one single time.

So here is a video clip of her story and photos to prove where she was and what she did...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ylo3ZfA9da0> ■



To the Great Tank Park in the Sky



Roger D. McVay, 70, of Rockford died at 3:35 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 21, 2011, in OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center. Born Dec. 17, 1941, in Rewey, Wis.; the son of Albert and Elsie (Shady) McVay. He served in the U.S. Marine Corps for three tours of duty in Vietnam, and received three Purple Hearts. Also recently received the Gallantry Cross for his service. He married Sandy S. Seidel on June 25, 1994, in Rockton. Member of Pelley Road Christian Fellowship, Vietnam Veteran’s Association, and the U.S.M.C. Tankers Convention. Roger was an avid Green Bay Packers fan. Survived by wife, Sandy; five children; eight grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; brothers, Bob and David; and numerous nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents; two sisters; and three brothers. Service at 11 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 28, in Olson Funeral & Cremation Services Ltd., Fred C. Olson Chapel, 1001 Second Ave., with the Rev. Jerry Hall officiating. Burial in Arlington Memorial Park. Visitation from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 27, in Fred C. Olson Chapel, and from 10 to 10:45 a.m. Wednesday. Memorials may be made to the Marine Corps War Memorial Foundation, P.O. Box 101, Winchester, VA 22604.



It is with a very sad heart that I report that **Wayne (“Tuna Fish”) Tunison** went to the Great Tank Park in the Sky on February 2, 2006. I hadn’t spoken to “Tuna” since 1995, when I rode my Harley down to Sarasota, Florida, to see him. At that time he was having problems with Parkinson’s and some other complications diagnosed as caused by Agent Orange. I had not able to get a hold him since. Todd Phillips, who went to Boot Camp and Tank School with Tuna and me, was on the recent trip to find Tuna. We looked up the Death Records in the Bradenton, Florida courthouse. The records indicated that Tuna had died on that day in February five years ago. It also reported that his body had been cremated and that his ashes were given to his sister, Louise. We made numerous attempts to get in contact with Louise to no avail. Tuna was my best friend in Vietnam. Everybody that ever knew him was a friend.

Semper Fi Tuna,

Jan “Turtle” Wendling
Mansfield, OH
(419) 566-0692

What Members are Doing

Garry Hall for Congress
PO Box 24
Vincennes, IN 47591

(812) 887-2106



Join our grass roots campaign to put a common sense candidate in Congress with the values of the citizens in the Indiana 8th District.

Today I have filed my candidacy for the Republican Indiana 8th District Congressional Race. I have decided to run because of the rapid deterioration of our country and the erosion of our basic rights. Congress has failed us and recently voted to increase

the National Debt Limit to over 14 Trillion Dollars. Illegal aliens are invading our borders and the Federal Government rewards them by providing benefits and incentives not available to our own tax paying citizens.



How's life treating you guys? As usual I keep busy, and keep meeting the most interesting people. I spent some time with the Aussies last week. Above is a photo take at the USS San Francisco Memorial where the Aussies came to lay a wreath to honor the Sailors and Marines who were KIA on the ship during the Battle for Guadalcanal.

Front row left to right: Chief of Australian Defense Forces General David Hurley. He is like our Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The lady I believe is his wife. Next to her is Don Reid (Korean War Vet; machine gunner, 1st Mar. Div; and Chairman of the Marine Corps Coordinating Council of Northern California, Stephen Smith Minister of Defense (Australia's equal to our Sec. of Defense), and Lt. Col John

Stevens USMC (ret). The Lt. Col is a Pearl Harbor survivor. He began his Marine Corps career as an enlisted guy. He accepted a commission just after the attack on Pearl, fought with the 1st Division in WW 2, and while a rifle Company C.O. in Korea he was part of the relieving force at the Pusan Perimeter, made the Inchon Landing, and walked across Korea via the Frozen Chosin with Chesty Puller. Back row: Me, 1st Sgt. Cortez Brown, HQ. 23rd MarRgt and two gunnys from the same regiment.

Semper Fi

Belmo
Mike Belmessieri
So San Francisco, CA
(650) 756-2324

What did Vietnam teach you?

What I learned in Vietnam

BY ROBERT PEAVEY

“When were you in Vietnam?”, the VA shrink asked.

“Last night”, I whispered.

The psychiatrist couldn't have been more that 26 years old, fresh out of school having left behind his fraternity and his parents' safety maybe a week ago. This was his first job, after all, this was the VA. Most competent doctors find work in esteemed practices or hospitals... not government healthcare jobs.

I knew this kid had never worn a uniform nor worked a day in his life. His closest brush with death was the day his dog died; the only hole he ever dug was the one he dropped Spot in. Yeah, and he was going to tell me about PTSD.

He only reiterated what I had already learned from Vietnam, that I was distrustful of people, that I was angry, have a short temper, and that I thought it was everyone else's problem. He guessed correctly that I would never sit in a restaurant with my back to the door and that I probably had guns stashed around the house... just in case. “Doesn't everyone?” I naively asked.

The anger began to surface as soon as I started college four months after being discharged. The veterans on campus were easy to spot – we were the old guys who were an ancient twenty-two years old. At noon we huddled together claiming our own two tables for lunch. We had nothing in common with the student body... nor did we want to associate with these kids. We saw them as the children they were, and we worldlier adults. “Naïve” was the only word we could describe the brats around us. When they picketed school buildings the day after Kent State, blocking students from attending classes, the veterans pushed their way through enduring verbal harassment. They knew who we were for we always wore a utility jacket or field jacket, usually with our rank still on the collar. We weren't about to let rich snot-nosed kids keep us from what we rightfully earned and appreciated . . . even if they didn't. The hope within all of us was that they would try to stop us.

Vietnam taught me to trust no one, to ask questions and pursue the truth especially anything connected with government or politics. I resented those whose only purpose was to simply get reelected. It was politicians who sent us off to fight a war we weren't allowed to win... yet it was OK to die for. These politicians were all from the “Greatest Generation”, people who should have known better. Yet I wondered where in their war did

they have bombing halts hoping that Hitler would return to the peace table? It sounds stupid even as I type this.

And yet that is what we fought under. How did this “greatest generation”, our parents, come to think that war could be anything less than total? I will argue that the greatest generation was those of us who answered our country's call, right or wrong, regardless of the ridiculous parameters set upon us, yet had the guts and the honor to answer the call, where running to Canada wasn't within us, only to return 13 months later to the chants of “Baby Killers”. The world had turned upside down while we were gone.

Vietnam taught me that retirement packages and powerful jobs were more important than people. I am referring to the Joints Chiefs of Staff, the very people who should have stood up to Johnson and McNamara about the way the war was being conducted. These were the very people who should have thrown down the gauntlet and resigned because of the mishandling of the war. Instead, they cow-towed to two amateur civilians. The JCS generals were more concerned about themselves then the men under them. I soon began to think that maybe Abbey Hoffman was right... “Never trust anyone over 30”.

I learned that absolute trust could be gained from a complete stranger after only one firefight; a bond that can last a lifetime with no questions asked. He will be the one you can call to help bury a body if needed.

I learned that I wasn't alone and that there were many like me for which I will always thank Dick Carey for and his inspiration to form the USMC Vietnam Tanker's Association.

Vietnam also taught me how a friendly fire incident can haunt one the rest of his life. I never recognized the symptoms and never understood all the anger I carried due to such an event. Three wives later I am slowly learning how to cope; I only wish the dreams would stop. I wake up running in bed most nights, running to warn seven Marines what was about to come their way. I have yet to reach them these past 43 years.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second letter submitted for this new forum. We hope you will contribute your story.

GUESS WHO

Photo Contest



New VTA member Al Esquivel (on the right) sent in this photo of himself and another skinny young Jarhead who we'd like for you to identify. Send your replies to John Wear. The winner will get a prize!

Last issue's winner is: Howard Blum from Silver Springs, MD

On November 1st we got this email:
"The guy in the picture is R.B. English, at the time he was a Gunnery Sgt. with "A" Co. 3rd Tanks. The picture was taken sometime in the summer of 1967 at Dong Ha, Vietnam. I know (because) I took the picture!" Ric Langley



We want to thank everyone for responding to the "Guess Who?" photo identification contest that was on Page 21 of the last issue of the Sponson Box. We are amazed at how many members replied and that they were all correct in guessing **RB English!** This must be a testament to good old "RB" and the impact that he had on the lives of all of the Marines who came in contact with him during his most auspicious career.

Please note: One of the logistical problems in mailing over 500 individual magazines to addresses all over the United States and to a few foreign locations is not all of the magazines can reach the intended addressees on the exact same day. While many of your correct replies came in quickly, there were several respondents who contacted me earlier. Please do not let the Post Office mailing delay keep you from making a reply in the future.

POEM

Archibald "Archie" MacLeish served in the trenches of WW1 and during WW2 wrote this poem. Its powerful verses still ring loud and clear today.

The Young Dead Soldiers Do Not Speak.

Nevertheless, they are heard in the still houses:
who has not heard them?

They have a silence that speaks for them at night
and when the clock counts.

They say: We were young. We have died.
Remember us.

They say: We have done what we could
but until it is finished it is not done.

They say: We have given our lives but until it is finished
no one can know what our lives gave.

They say: Our deaths are not ours: they are yours,
they will mean what you make them.

They say: Whether our lives and our deaths were for
peace and a new hope or for nothing we cannot say,
it is you who must say this.

We leave you our deaths. Give them their meaning.

We were young, they say. We have died; remember us.

Women Marine Instructor

Entering a classroom at MCAS (Marine Corps Air Station), Yuma, a female Marine Captain encountered a clearly apathetic audience. She was selected to provide a full hour's instruction on Iraqi electronic warfare capabilities to 150 Marine aviators who showed by their body language deep skepticism about her ability to teach war fighting skills to an all-male class.

She began by noting that her voice had just been tested to see if it was suitable for some new cockpit recorder messages for Marine aircraft. She said that unfortunately she had not been selected to be the new "Bitching Betty." However, she said it was only fair to warn the audience that the reason given for her non-selection was that an analysis of her voice pattern revealed that her particular voice had a tendency to lull to sleep any male homosexual within earshot.

The assembled officers shot upright in their chairs. 150 pairs of eyes were wide open and locked on her and stayed that way for the rest of the period.

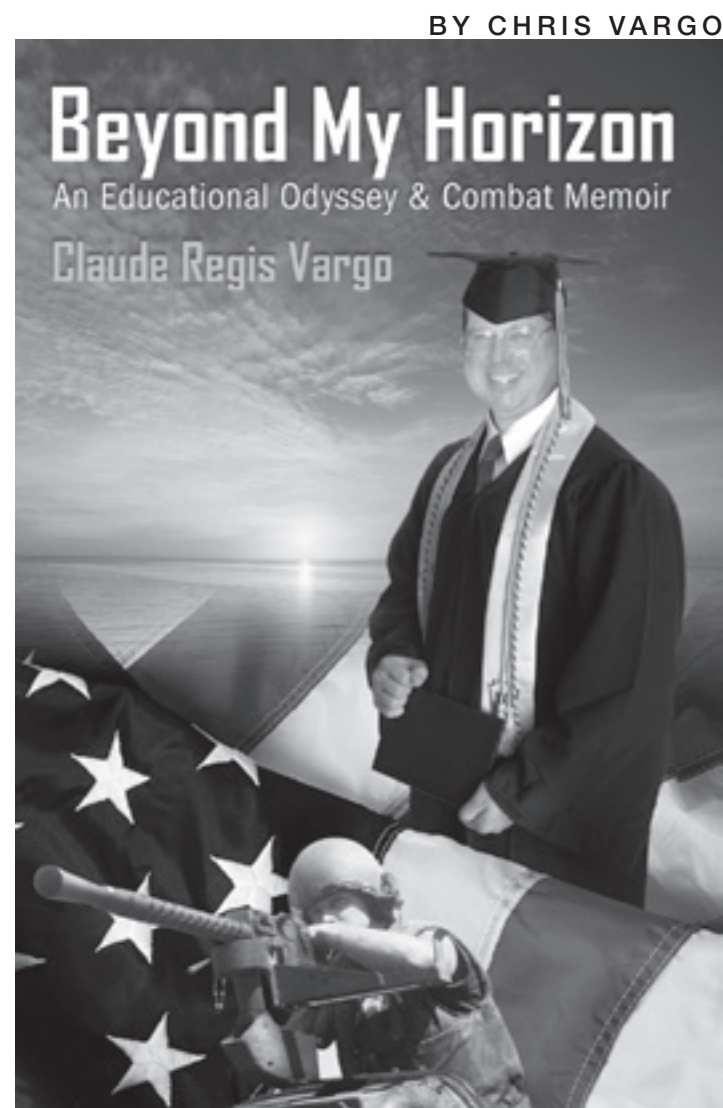
Dirty Magazines in the Barracks

Soon after being transferred to a new duty station, a Marine husband called home to tell his wife he would be late - again. He went on to say that dirty magazines had been discovered in the platoon's quarters and they had to police the area.

She launched into a tirade, arguing that many men had pictures hanging in their quarters at their previous post, so his new platoon should not be penalized for something trivial.

The husband calmly listened to her gripes and then explained, "Kathy, Dirty Magazines means the clips from their rifles had not been properly cleaned." ■





Claude “Chris” Vargo has generously permitted the reprinting of four chapters from his new book, *Beyond My Horizon*. These chapters cover his Marine Corps experience including Khe Sanh as a tanker.

You can purchase *Beyond My Horizon* at your nearest Barnes & Noble and Books-A-Million stores or order it on-line through Amazon.com. The book’s ISBN number is: 978-160844-565-3

CHAPTER SEVEN Semper Fi or Die Harder

THE FIRST WRONG AND A LAST RITE

It was during my second tour that I contracted falciparum malaria, through the abundant and deadly mosquitoes. The NVA, and probably their southern counterparts, too, would fish with hand grenades so the fish would quickly float to the top after the underwater explosion, easy top fishing. But then they would move on and leave the rest of the fish floating, bloated and rotting, where the mosquitoes would lay more larvae in a never-ending cycle. Along come our tanks and infantry, and we got bit and came down with malaria.

These same warriors would eventually forcibly emigrate to Texas and fish the same way in Galveston Bay.

Having contracted malaria I had never been so weak in my entire life, and only one other time since then. One minute I was in a boiling tank turret, soaking up the 110-plus Fahrenheit heat like it was really cool, and the next thing I knew, I could not move even one muscle in my body. I could not move my mouth or my parched lips to summon help, and I could not lift my eyelids, even trying with all my might. I slumped over like I was a bag of mush that had jumped off a forty story building, only barely aware of my own existence. I heard voices as I was pushed and pulled out of the turret into a blizzard-feeling cold in the boiling month of August.

I fought to remain conscious as I heard the whoop-whoop-whoop of a chopper picking me up with a couple of other wounded as a yellow-smoke grenade swirled over us. Marines wounded, with tags blowing, were twisting erratically about under the wind and dust from the rotors. As my luck would have it, a Corpsman was giving the guy next to me a tracheotomy, and I took more than my share of a backlash of blood.

To make things even worse, after we lifted off and started back to a field hospital, we took automatic fire. Smoke started to fill the hull, and the ceiling was spinning around the room in the opposite direction of my stomach.

This was no dress-rehearsal, and as we hit the deck very hard, the air flew out of my lungs like a B-52 had dropped a 2000-pounder right on top of us. I thought a couple of teeth fillings flew out of my mouth as well. I do not know what exploded, but it was as loud as whenever we hit a tank mine. I could not hear the obvious yelling or the screaming, but I could see the door gunners’ shells flying off their machine gun belts. It did cross my mind that all of us were not going to get out of here alive, but then suddenly, unconsciousness gave me its reward.

When I finally opened my eyes, I was no more than a lifeless sardine aboard a C-130; all I saw were plasma units on poles, swinging and rocking back and forth in unison. The next time I opened my eyes, I was in an all-white painted boat that I thought was the big turret in heaven or some such place, it was all so clean and medicinal-smelling, with a faint smell of sea salt. The next time, I was in a crushed-ice bath in a canvas-covered bathtub. It was all so systematic and mysterious. I was barely able to hear anything, except the high-pitched whistling in my

ears and head. I do remember the chaplain with a gold cross on his lapel making the sign of the cross on my forehead and saying something half in English, half in Latin.

As weak as I was, I felt embarrassed. This guy was a priest, and he knew I was a Catholic by my ID tags. But I knew he probably had also read my other joke tag that said, “When I die, bury me face-down so the whole world can kiss my ass.” I was going to die in shame and most likely in the state of mortal sin and go straight to hell. Those damn nuns had been right; I could not remember the words of An Act of Contrition before I expired. Sister Marcella had foretold this event ten years earlier, when I was in the fifth grade. Out of our whole class, it was me she pointed at whenever the word, a guttural “hell,” came out of her mouth. Now it seemed so very damn real; her prediction was coming true.

I don’t know how much time passed before God sent me an angel in the form of a nurse dressed in that white, tight naval outfit (OO-RAH). She, I would learn later, was Ensign Deborah Nast, and I quickly renamed her in my mind Double Nurse Nasty, for obvious reasons. To add to my embarrassment, whenever she placed a crisp new unspired light sheet over my nude torso, I was humiliated because she was so good-looking that she really got me going—and she knew it, because she could see everything.

OLLIE’S RIBS

Another one of my most memorable incidents was from my second tour and also occurred in that spring of 1969, when my platoon was sent out on a search-and-destroy mission. As usual, we were accompanied by the grunts on the backs of our tanks. Our unit was a five-tank platoon, which consisted of three tanks in a heavy section and two in a light section. In charge of all five tanks was Lieutenant Peter J. Ritch.

Under normal circumstances, a tank commander would be a sergeant or staff sergeant and the man in charge of a section would be a gunnery sergeant or above. However, as the war dragged on, there were fewer and fewer trained tankers, so now as a very salty, experienced corporal, I moved up to a TC’s slot or to command a light section. As I had been in the country almost a year and a half by then, I was intermittently in charge of a light section, depending on how many tanks were needed and how they would be dispersed for a particular operation. For tasks such as protecting convoys, security on bridges, or direct fire artillery support, we would use two or three tanks in separate situations.

Lieutenant Peter J. Ritch, our intrepid leader, was our greatest and most highly decorated field officer. I couldn’t help but look up to him; he inspired me. He reminded me of that six-and-a-half-foot-tall Marine in the post office from so many years before. He always did everything correctly, and at the right time. Of course, we did make mistakes and sometimes were in very tight positions, but with his leadership, we always seemed to work ourselves out of a jam. Sometimes he would pull rank and take over my tank, leaving me to go back to my old job as a gunner or loader, but instead of feeling insulted, I welcomed

the brief respite from responsibility. On other occasions, the lieutenant would leave his Jeep and ride on the back of the tank to direct fire support in an ambush or firefight.

This particular day, as my tank section rolled out with grunts on the back of both tanks, we were ambushed from behind. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, gooks started hosing down the backs of the tanks with their AK-47s. All hell broke loose. As the deafening chatter of machine-gun fire came from both sides of the road, the grunts scattered to protect themselves and the tank from incoming RPGs and sapper-satchel charges. The firefight was so intense, we had to call in choppers to pick up the wounded from one of the tanks. One of our guys was flashing around a shotgun, trying to direct the situation, but in return for his heroism he ended up on the ground, gravely wounded, and was himself medevaced by chopper.

Almost forty years later, Lieutenant Peter Ritch and I met at a Ruby Tuesday restaurant in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Over lunch, he told me that the brave lieutenant medevaced that day had not been wounded by enemy action but by Peter knocking him off the tank by mistake. The accident happened after the lieutenant jumped over to the opposite side of the TC's controls to manually override the turret and swing it around to the rear in his haste to quickly return fire by eyesight. He couldn't see our guy waving the shotgun at all and had hit him with the turret as he was swinging it around, which had sent our guy flying, breaking his ribs. The lieutenant who had been hit that day like a baseball out of the park was Oliver North. This firefight and these incidents were later recorded in one of his books, *Under Fire*. Both Lieutenant Peter Ritch and Lieutenant Oliver North were later awarded Bronze Stars for valor in recognition of their actions that day.

But my heartwarming with Lieutenant Ritch reunion almost never took place. In fact, as far as I had known before then, that Peter had been KIA. After Viet Nam was over, I had tried to contact him several times: I had mailed him a wedding invitation, opening announcements for my restaurant, and a letter when I graduated from college. I had sent them all to the New Jersey town that I remembered he was from, but the envelopes had always come back stamped "Return to Sender." They were never opened.

Undeterred, and having better computer skills after finally graduating college, I had continued to look for Peter on the Internet. I had located another tank commander, named Tommy, who had heard that Peter had been KIA. Even though it was some thirty-five-odd years after the war, I was devastated when I heard that news.

In the fall of 2008, however, I decided that I would finally find Lieutenant Ritch, whether he was vertical or horizontal on this earth. I knew inside that I just had to; he had not only been a great officer who had helped keep me alive but had written me a letter of recommendation for Officer Candidate School in a way that had touched me ever since. Finally, after several weekdays and a long weekend searching on the Internet, I located a Peter J. Ritch who lived in Huntsville, Alabama, just a couple of hundred miles away from me in Atlanta. I contacted him and was delighted and very

relieved to find that it was my Peter. Because I was in Atlanta and he was in Alabama, we met halfway, which brought us to the Ruby Tuesday in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I had thought it would be a thirtyminute lunch, but by the time we finally left the restaurant, it had been hours—it was nearly four o'clock. Peter and I have kept in close touch ever since.

LEAVING 'NAM While in Viet Nam, technically, I had one complete tour and two extensions. On my second extension, however, I was suddenly and unexpectedly jerked out of the bush while I was commander of the lead tank of a major operation headed down the A-Shau Valley of death. Generally, when someone was a "short-timer," they were given a little bit of preferential treatment, like going to the rear while they waited for their flight date. That was not really my style, nor the way I wanted it, but it would have been nice. Instead, I was summoned and ordered to the rear. I knew from experience that this was not typical, and I was very skeptical. Gloria and I had arranged to get married on November 8th, so I had tried to time my in-country duty so we would have a full thirty days of leave together. A honeymoon with only one person was not what I had been thinking about over the past couple of years. And I knew full well that if I didn't make the wedding and did not come home when I was supposed to, when I did get back, there would be a funeral instead, with my would-be in-laws presiding.

Climbing out of my tank, I slowly and somewhat awkwardly left as ordered. Looking back at my crewmen, Andy Anderson and Bob Halay, I shrugged my shoulders, assuming I would see them later and tell them what happened. How wrong I was, once again. As soon as I got back to the CP, I was told to pack my gear because I was going home right then. I never really got to say good-bye or exchange anyone's addresses, as I had thought I would. I had told myself that I would never forget anyone or where they lived.

I went from out in the bush to DaNang airport so fast, I really wasn't sure if I had all packed all my worldly possessions. The guys didn't even have time to pull any departing gags, like putting a bunch of scrap tank parts in my duffel bag so I would get stopped by the Military Police for trying to leave the country with contraband. That would hold me up from leaving because not one of the MPs would be able to identify the parts.

At DaNang, I boarded the big, beautiful bird that would take me back to "the world." As I found my assigned seat, I found that my platoon commander from boot camp, Staff Sergeant Lowery, was already in the seat next to mine. He was now a first sergeant, and he grinned from ear to ear at the sight of me. We were both just so damn glad to see each other alive! I didn't know at the time that he had been in charge of deportation and outgoing seat assignme ts. With a stroke of his pen, he had jerked me out of the bush, right underneath some "bird" colonel's nose. He had done it to get me out alive, to see me again, and to be next to me on my flight home. I was now almost on equal footing with him, as I was in line to be promoted to sergeant. It had been more than two years since he had stood on my kneecaps, but I still retained a tremendous urge to stand at attention in that tight cabin and scream back at him, "Sir! Yes, sir!"

Our first stop, after about an hour's flight, was Okinawa, Japan, for processing. After that, it was about a sixteen-hour flight to San Francisco. En route, First Sergeant Lowery told me about things in boot camp from his point of view and about my personal service record, which I couldn't have cared less about at the time, but I listened intently. Interestingly, he described how proficiency and conduct marks were arrived at by the team of drill instructors and then sent up the chain of command. He told me that he had given me extremely high marks—in fact, maximum—but they had been batted down and returned lower. As the story goes, when another Marine, Lewis Burwell Puller, had taken his training decades before on the officer side, he had been given perfect scores of 5.0, 5.0, and 5.0. He had appeared to be the perfect Marine. When Puller's marks were turned in, they had been bumped, supposedly by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, who purportedly said, "There is no perfect Marine!" Puller's marks were returned as 5.0, 5.0, and 4.9.

Puller turned out to be a legend and an eventual lieutenant (three-star) general in the Corps. He was the only Marine ever to receive five Navy Crosses. His nickname, obviously, was "Chesty" Puller. In a thirty-seven-year career, Chesty was in nineteen major operations. For comparison, I was in fourteen major operations in less than two years and would end up being drummed out medically as a lowly sergeant.

Then, decades after Chesty, along came Claude. My platoon commander told me that my marks had been turned in at 5.0, 5.0, and 4.9, the same as Chesty's. But as divine military intervention would dictate, they had been returned as 5.0, 4.9, and 4.9, because "Claude Regis Vargo is no Chesty Puller!"

A common incantation to end one's day with in Marine Corps boot camp is "Good night, Chesty, wherever you are!" My chant was, and still is, "Thank God I'm still alive."

[I have most recently researched Chesty: The Story of Lieutenant General Lewis B. Puller, in which it is disclosed that Puller was in the middle of his class!]

SAN DIEGO MALARIA

When I arrived back in "the world" in September 1969, I took one week of leave instead of the thirty days I was due. This was because November 8th was coming up awkwardly and fast and I was unexpectedly early. It took minimal time during that one week for Gloria and I to fall madly in love with each other all over again; the big day couldn't come soon enough.

On my last day on leave, however, we did have one serious, marriage-deal-breaking argument. It happened when we went to look for a new car. Gloria decided on a beautiful, brand-new, Nassau-blue Chevrolet Chevelle and intended for me to pay cash for it. There was only one hitch: I did not feel that we needed air-conditioning in the car; Gloria was adamant we did. If we were not going to get a car with A/C, we were not getting married. This all played out in front of the cashitchy salesman. Finally, we let the past two years' tensions explode in front of a showroom full of little people with big ears.

I told her that, actually, I felt great sitting in the car with the windows rolled up in over 100-degree heat and Houston's 99%

humidity. She told me I was out of my mind; no person could drive a car like that. I pointed out that we could roll down the windows and blow the air out, which felt almost freezing to me with just the fan on, and that we did not need the luxury or the expense. However, Gloria said, "No damned way. No A/C, no marriage, cheap-ass, or even worse...no honeymoon!"

Inevitably, although I gave it a valiant effort, I lost my first battle and love prevailed.

I bought the model she wanted, with A/C, for a couple of hundred extra dollars. Of course we did make up, and that part was worth the last fight of our single lives.

Finally, my week's leave was over. I packed the car, putting my uniforms on the hooks in the backseat, like a laundry pickup from a cleaner, and filling up the trunk with a lot of items that Gloria had received from her bridal showers. I loaded up the car in a hurry and headed towards California with category-five Hurricane Camille's 190-mph winds at my back.

As I hurriedly drove back to Camp Pendleton, California, I should have known something was grossly wrong. Why did it feel more comfortable driving through the West Texas dry lands and the Arizona desert with the windows rolled up than with the air-conditioning running? I thought it was because I was used to being inside the tank in a stifling and overwhelming 120-degree heat.

Because I had left Houston at night, I didn't realize the hostile attitude that people were showing to me as a soldier until the next morning. People were passing me and giving me a one-finger salute and throwing beer cans and chicken bones at me and my car. I yearned for a weapon, if only a couple of hand grenades, so I could just lob one at them and show them what a real bang was. I thought they were throwing the beer cans at the brand-new car sticker on the rear window, but I soon realized they were throwing things at my uniform, hanging on the rear seat hook behind the sticker. I thought about laying the uniforms on the seat, but I was stubborn and wasn't going to lose two battles in a row. I drove on, a little faster, trying to suppress the anger that would eventually rear its ugly head at the most inopportune moments.

The whole drive, I felt survivor's guilt and was under enormous stress. I didn't know then what a panic attack was, but I had tunnel vision, shortness of breath, and a racing heart, all at the same time. I wanted to catch up with those West Texas rednecks and run them off the road. I had to remind myself that I was not driving my battle tank but Gloria's brand-new car.

I drove back all the way through the desert and finally checked in at Camp Pendleton, about three weeks earlier than I was expected. Today, I'm still so glad I checked in then. While I was going through the formalities, I started to shake as if I had delirium tremens. I shook so badly that the duty officer asked me if I had come off a four-week bender. Suddenly, the air-conditioning was making it feel like about 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Something was really wrong.

(Continued on page 37)

A Conversation About Operation Buffalo

Greg Martin recently got a reply from a post that he made on the website of the 1st Bn, 9th Marines Vietnam and then he carried on this “conversation” about a most desperate situation that occurred around Con Thien, Vietnam, during the week of July 4th 1967 which is also known as “Operation Buffalo”:

Greg,
I am sure that you don't know that Jim Stogner posted your request on 1/9's website. I owe you guys a beer [or soda]. Thanks.
S/F

Dave Granger
1/9

Hey Dave,
There are a lot of things I don't remember especially names. I have a Time magazine from July 67 that my Mom saved for me. It has a picture of the lead tank that pulled my tank out of the DMZ. I am sending a copy of it to you. Please send me a picture of you as a grunt “turd” from that time. Send this image around your organization if you can.
S/F

Greg

Greg
I am having problems with sending or receiving photos but I'll keep trying.
As for as me telling you that we owe you tankers a beer...I'm not sure if you know how desperate we were when your tanks finally arrived to help us. Our ammo and working M-16's were almost all expended; our wounded were everywhere. We had no water and the heat was kicking everyone's ass. The NVA had just started maneuvering up the trail from the south, which meant we were totally cut off. Then you guys [and some more grunts] broke through. Another 5-10 minutes and it would have been another Alamo or Custer's Last Stand thing.
Not sure if you tankers realize that there was no way for just grunts to move the wounded back to the LZ. It takes at least four men to move one casualty using a poncho for a stretcher and with the distance involved; there was no way the exhausted troops could fight 'em off and get that done. With your tanks help we got the wounded back, not all of them made it, but

they at least had a chance of making it thanks to y'all. The grim collection of the dead came later.
I remember a tank being disabled on the east side of the trail [I think while we were moving the wounded]. There were a couple of tankers out looking it over with nothing but boots and trousers on. I wasn't sure if they were crazy, they didn't know what was going on or they were incredibly brave.
Late that evening we were told that anyone left with Bravo Co., 1/9, was to mount the tanks and move back to Con Thien. I was on a tank that was being towed and loaded with dead.
That was the longest day of my life. Thank you guys for 44 more years.
Semper Fi

Dave Granger
1/9

Dave,
Was this on July 2nd? Our tank hit a mine and was disabled. Two of us, myself included, got out of the tank to connect a single tow cable between ours and another tank. We had no other cable available. A cable weighs over a hundred pounds and it's about 10-feet long so it takes two men to handle it. After hooking up with the other tank, Terry and I loaded a couple of shot up grunts onto our tank and then we climbed back in. When you get in and out of a tank you have to be quick so you're not an easy target. I wonder if Terry & I are the two that you saw without flack jackets or helmets. It gets really hot inside the tank and we don't always wear our shirts. I will send you the Time magazine so you have another way for you to see it. I am going to copy the other members of our tank crew (B-23) and our organization's president so that maybe we can get something in our quarterly magazine.
S/F

Greg



That picture has sure been around. I have it from the Baltimore Sun and Terry Hunter got it from the New York Times. It was taken on July 2nd and it is of tank B-24 which is the one that pulled us out.
Greg, I believe it was you & me who got out to hook up the

cables (at least I remember being shot at while mortars were ping-pong off the tank) and then diving head-first into the loaders hatch. Just after that incident was when one of the RPG's that hit us, skipped off the turret & hit the loaders hatch that someone who shall remain nameless, forgot to close. Sure wish I had that helmet with the shrapnel sticking out of it.

Hank Brightwell

Hank,
You said it correctly: the loader's hatch. “Loader” is an adjective and states who the hatch belongs to. It is your hatch and your responsibility. Don't blame it on your neighbor. You could stand flat footed in the turret and close it. I would have to stand on the loaders seat and pop my head out again. I am not that dumb. You're right it was you and not Terry who got off of the tank to hook up the tow cables. Terry was licking his wounds in the driver's compartment...then he had to bail out when Holston yelled to get out after the RPG hit your loader's hatch.
This is cool chatting with Dave who saw us in the DMZ 44 years ago this month.

Greg Martin

2012 Membership Dues Notice

As of January 1st of each year, your annual membership dues are payable.

Please make your check out to: “USMC VTA” and write in the MEMO line: “2012 Dues”

Then mail to:
USMC VTA
c/o John Wear
5537 Lower Mountain Road
New Hope, PA 18938

Any “over & above” amount that you'd like to donate is tax deductible and would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

Everybody loves the M1 Abrams family of tanks. They're powerful, fast, tough, battle-proven and endlessly upgradable — Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Chiarelli says the Abrams' history of improvements provides an ideal blueprint for what he wants out of the new Ground Combat Vehicle. The only problem is, the Abrams might not need to exist anymore. It's getting harder to imagine a scenario in which the Army would fight a big set piece tank battle, and although no one is seriously contemplating giving up heavy armor, the Army does want to bring its tank production to a halt. For awhile.

Army officials would like to shut down the Ohio factory that builds Abrams tanks for three years, which the Department of the Army says would save more than \$1 billion. According to the Army's plan, the line would close from 2013 to 2016, then start back up to begin upgrading existing tanks. It's an usual situation: The U.S. government owns the tank factory in Lima, Ohio, but it's operated by General Dynamics (G-D) Land Systems, which is not pleased with the shutdown proposal.

G-D argues that although the government may continue to own all the equipment at the factory, it will lose the expert workers who know all the secrets in the art of tank construction. And a shutdown would also have

ripple effects beyond Ohio, G-D argues; more than 500 other contractors would lose work and might also need to lay people off. The defense giant has set up a special website to make the case for the Abrams, which includes lushly produced movies and interviews with the salt-of-the-earth Midwesterners about why the Abrams needs to stay in steady production.

Although the Army's plans for a production freeze have been in the works for a few years, they could get additional momentum given that DoD has been asked to find \$400 billion in cuts over the next decade. Given that lawmakers barely seemed to understand the need for the GCV in a House Armed Services Committee hearing earlier this year, it may be politically difficult to support building more and more main battle tanks when the Army already owns more than 5,000 of them, and the Marines operate more than 400.

Then again, don't count the Abrams out yet. The chairman of the HASC air and land forces committee, Maryland Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, was scheduled to travel to Lima this week with Ohio Rep. Michael Turner, so Turner could make G-D's case for a compromise in which it could keep the line running. As soon as we hear more about the trip, look for an update.

The Last Tanks?

The tank at the end of history

BY PHILIP EWING Thursday, April 21st, 2011



Editor's note: I found both of these stories in interesting juxtaposition.

1915: FIRST TANK PRODUCED

On September 9, 1915, a prototype tank nicknamed "Little Willie" rolls off the assembly line in England. Little Willie was far from an overnight success. It weighed 14 tons, got stuck in trenches and crawled over rough terrain at only two miles per hour. However, improvements were made to the original prototype and tanks eventually transformed military battlefields.

~The British developed the tank in response to the trench warfare of World War I. In 1914, a British army colonel named Ernest Swinton and William Hankey, secretary of the Committee for Imperial Defence, championed the idea of an armored vehicle with conveyor-belt-like tracks over its wheels that could break through enemy lines and traverse difficult territory. The men appealed to British navy minister Winston Churchill, who believed in the concept of a "land boat" and organized a Landships Committee to begin developing

a prototype. To keep the project secret from enemies, production workers were reportedly told the vehicles they were building would be used to carry water on the battlefield (alternate theories suggest the shells of the new vehicles resembled water tanks). Either way, the new vehicles were shipped in crates labeled "tank" and the name stuck.

~The first tank prototype, Little Willie, was unveiled in September 1915. Following its underwhelming performance--it was slow, became overheated and couldn't cross trenches--a second prototype, known as "Big Willie," was produced. By 1916, this armored vehicle was deemed ready for battle and made its debut at the First Battle of the Somme near Courcelette, France, on September 15 of that year. Known as the Mark I, this first batch of tanks was hot, noisy and unwieldy and suffered mechanical malfunctions on the battlefield; nevertheless, people realized the tank's potential. Further design improvements were made and at the

Battle of Cambrai in November 1917, 400 Mark IV's proved much more successful than the Mark I, capturing 8,000 enemy troops and 100 guns. ■

M-48s Missing in Action

*From: Duckworth, Eric J MAJ MIL USA
TRADOC [mailto:eric.j.duckworth@
us.army.mil]
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2011 6:56 PM
Subject: RE: REPLY = Rebuttal
to Armor Magazine Letter
(UNCLASSIFIED)*

Dear Mr. Wear,
It is a pleasure to write to you. I was able to find your contact through the great work you are doing on your USMC Vietnam Tankers Website. Thank you for your service the Armor Community and Nation and continued stewardship to a precious portion of our military history. I read your critique to my letter in the latest edition of ARMOR. In the spirit of clarification, one tanker to another, I must say I feel compelled to reply.

You take issue with my claim that "it is difficult to find an effective medium tank after 1960, as they evolved into heavier main battle tanks." Because I did not address the M48 and M60, I am somewhat ignorant of its achievements and must disqualify my statement. On the contrary, I am very aware of the flexibility of the M48 in all the various spectrums of conflict and environments it served in. The M48 was indeed a champion in Vietnam, the Middle East, Indo-Pakistani Wars, and even Mogadishu (something the Major James did not address either in his initial article).

My statement was not to dismiss the stellar performance of these tanks and their crews, but I considered them both part of the evolutionary transition to main battle tanks. The M48 was not so much a

medium tank as it was the interim design for America's first Main Battle Tank. Classified as a "medium" tank, the M48 diverged significantly enough to share more in common with emerging main battle tanks than WWII and Korean era medium tanks. When production ceased in 1959, it required a gun upgrade in order to compete with the T-54/55 (hence, your baby, the M48A3), which it did in spades. By the time of the M48A5 modification, the Patton's more competitive 105mm gun made it virtually indistinguishable from America's first official MBT, the M60 Patton. So the argument is semantic. I concede the M48 was a medium tank in name. But once the A3 and other variants occurred, it had much more in common with MBTs.

Letters to the editor do not normally include credentials. Your letter assumed my statement was the result of being among "younger folk" with inexperience, and not appreciative of the recent past. I would like to offer my credentials to counter your perception. Like you, my father was an Air Force Officer. He was a C-130 and Jolly Green Giant SAR pilot, and earned the DFC in Vietnam where he was combat veteran of the Tet Offensive and Khe Sanh. So I certainly possess a knowledge and appreciation for Vietnam. I possess 17 years as an armor officer in Armor, Infantry, and Stryker formations. I served overseas in Korea as well as two line combat tours in Iraq (one as an Iraqi Infantry Advisor). My assessment emerges from this experience and from a B.S. in military history from West Point, as well as a Masters of

Military Art and Science from the School of Advanced Military Studies at Ft. Leavenworth. My credentials speak for themselves. I stand by my assessment.

Again, hopefully this helps you understand the basis for my statement. I am very pleased with your interest in this debate, and humbled that you took the time to respond to ARMOR. I certainly believe the M48 is much under appreciated, and I admire the efforts you have gone through to keep its legacy and those of its crews alive. Best of luck!

GO ARMY!
Sincerely,
MAJ Eric Duckworth

*Subject: RE: #2 REPLY =
Rebuttal to Armor Magazine Letter
(UNCLASSIFIED)*

Hello Major,
What a nice surprise! Thank you for responding so positively and respectfully. And thank you for your service to our wonderful country. It is young men like you who make this nation strong & safe.

To be honest, I had forgotten that I had written (again) to Armor magazine and since I have not received my most recent issue, I did not know that they had published my comments.

I must admit that as I grow older...(and unfortunately not all that wiser)...I find myself being exposed over and over again to "youngsters" who profess their expertise on a subject when there is absolutely no basis for their "learned" statements. With

(Continued on page 28)

that said, after reading your resume, I have to admit that I was terribly wrong to assume that you were one of those ne’er do well young-uns.

You do seem to have a far deeper and much more technical knowledge of US armor development than I can profess. And your detailed explanation below is testament to your understanding of a far bigger picture than I was ever been privy to. As you may or may not know, I was a lowly Marine tank section leader (of three M-67A2 flame-thrower tanks) while I was deployed to Vietnam. Prior to that time, I was a crewman on an M-48A3 on garrison duty at Camp Pendleton, CA. My narrow focus was solely on the Patton tank so reading your original article made me bristle...unnecessarily I might add.

Just so you know, my son is a 20-year career US Army 1st Sgt who spent his first fourteen years with the Rangers.

Fortunately (or unfortunately) he’s deployed and “gotten into the fray” seven times thus far. Thankfully he is now non-deployable for the next three years...and that is a good thing!!!

I wish you the best of good luck to you in your Army career and with your life as it unfolds.

Semper Fidelis,

John

P.S. I’d like to have your permission to publish your rebuttal letter in the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association news magazine. I am president of this group of veterans and I think that being all Patton “tread heads,” the membership might enjoy your words.

To Major Duckworth

Subject: RE: #3 REPLY =

Rebuttal to Armor Magazine Letter
(UNCLASSIFIED)

I was reading your response to John Wear’s letter where you called the M48A3 through A5 models and the M60 as not

being Medium tanks because they had more in common with MBTs. I think what you may be missing is that the Marine Corps had the M103 Heavy tank in service with its tank battalions as well as on the line at Guantanamo Bay through most of the Vietnam War, hence the reason Marines regard the M48 and M60 as Medium tanks. The M103, while initially conceived by the Army, went into production in the very early 50’s due to the Marine Corps’ needs. The Army did take a few later for Europe after seeing the performance of the 103 and its 120mm gun. Therefore you and John are comparing apples and oranges since the Army never truly had a Heavy tank until the appearance of the M1A1. By the way, if you truly consider the upgraded 48s or M60s as heavy tanks, I suggest you stand in one as an RPG comes through it. They were both equally vulnerable, nothing like today’s impervious M1A1.

Semper Fidelis,

Robert Peavey

Newly released FBI files discuss Walter Cronkite aiding Vietnam antiwar protestors

Fri May 14, 12:07 pm ET

Legendary CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite allegedly collaborated with anti-Vietnam War activists in the 1960s, going so far as to offer advice on how to raise the public profile of protests and even pledging CBS News resources to help pull off events, according to FBI documents obtained by Yahoo! News.

The documents, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, show that in November 1969, Cronkite encouraged students at Rollins College in Winter Park, Fla., to invite Maine Sen. Edmund Muskie to address a protest they were planning near Cape Kennedy (now known as Cape Canaveral). Cronkite told the group’s leader that Muskie would be nearby for a fundraiser on the day of the protest, and said that “CBS would rent [a] helicopter to take Muskie to and from site of rally,” according to the documents.

The claims are contained in an FBI memo recounting a confidential informant’s report on a November 1969 meeting of a Rollins College protest group called Youth for New America. The group was planning rallies near Cape Kennedy on November 13 and 14—the day of the Apollo 12 launch from Cape Kennedy, which Richard Nixon would be attending—as part of a nationwide Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam. That protest action culminated in a massive march on Washington, D.C., on November 15. According to the informant, the group’s leader—whose name is redacted in the documents—told the attendees that during a visit to a local CBS News station to drum up publicity for the protests, he ended up in a 45-minute phone conversation with Cronkite.

[Redacted] told group he had been to

CBS Channel Six in Orlando prior to meeting to speak to newsmen about Vietnam moratorium activities. [Redacted] related that while at TV station, Walter Cronkite, nationally known radio and television commentator, spoke to him by telephone for approximately forty five minutes and that Cronkite reportedly told [redacted] that CBS would have thirty six hours of coverage on Vietnam moratorium with “open mike” to give demonstrators a chance to be heard. Cronkite noted, according to [redacted], that Senator Edmund Muskie would be in Orlando, Fla., November 13 instant for Democratic fund raising dinner. According to [redacted], Cronkite suggested that [redacted] attempt to Muskie to come [sic] to Cape Kennedy to speak at Kelly Park rally to be held November thirteen instant. Cronkite allegedly told [redacted] that CBS

(Continued on page 42)

Oceanview

BY PETE RITCH

Today, Oceanview is probably a Five Star Beach Resort Hotel complete with luxury suites, bars, restaurants, shops and a spa. They probably have cottages and a Tiki bar, a short stroll down the dunes, located on the sugar-sand beach of the South China Sea, complete with multi-colored beach chairs and umbrellas, to give it a Caribbean look.

In May 1969, Oceanview was the northern most U.S. outpost in Vietnam, overlooking the DMZ, the Ben Hai River and the South China Sea. Accommodations included a watch

any ocean, big, wet and capable of being smooth and sleepy or powerful and pounding depending on the weather conditions. The best thing about looking out to sea was seeing the USS New Jersey about a mile off shore.

To the west and south of Oceanview, which Pappy Reynolds estimates was 5 to 10 meters above sea level, there were dark green wetlands and marshes giving way to rice paddies further inland. War-wise May was a lazy summer month along the coast which meant warm, dry weather, relatively quite seas and clear

tower, the revetment, sand bagged gun emplacements, a strand or two of concertina wire, a bomb crater for bathing and all the C-rations you could eat. Oceanview Combat base, was home to two or three tanks from Bravo Company, 3rd Tanks and a platoon of Marine Infantrymen. It was a very scenic spot, too bad there was a war going on.

From the top of the sand dune looking north, was the mouth of the Ben Hai river, a fresh water source, emptying into the South China Sea. As usually happens when fresh water meets salt water, there was a clear blue/green color and a constant chop or turbulence called a “potato field” effect, where the two water sources met. The South China Sea was like



nights. Nighttime skies were star filled and jet black. The most comforting thing during the nighttime hours was the fact that the Battleship New Jersey was pumping shells the size of a VW Bug over our heads into “Indian Country”. The gun flashes lit up the horizon and for a split second you could see the silhouette of the Jersey, rocking in the water. It was like a controlled thunder and lightning storm.

The outpost itself was pretty rustic. There was a strand or two or concertina wire surrounding the dune, some sand bagged tank emplacements and a revetment in case of a mortar attack. The lookout tower stood about ten feet above the dune and was a nice target for NVA mortars and artillery. The grunts



manned the perimeter and had several listening posts set up just down the dune. Our tanks were moved into nighttime firing positions that could cover the entire outpost. During the time, approximately 30 days that we were at Oceanview, we did not receive any incoming, sniper fire or probes. Earlier in 1969, when Charlie Co., 3rd Tanks was at Oceanview, Andy Anderson (USMCVTA Member), remembered taking sporadic mortar and sniper fire and using infrared targeting at night to pick off NVA crossing the dunes into South Vietnam.

Once or twice a week we’d make a run down the beach to Cua Viet for supplies and replacements. After hitting a land mine on one of our early trips, we’d made it mandatory to ‘run the beach’ in the tide line. When the surf was up, we’d stop along the beach, set up a perimeter and take turns body surfing or “boogie boarding” on our “rubber ladies”. It wasn’t until after 3rd Platoon left Oceanview, that I learned that the South China

Sea was home to the highly venomous Spiny-headed Sea Snake that could kill within seconds. One of my favorite photos from our time at Oceanview was one of Cpl. Chris Vargo, sitting in a lawn chair on the back of his tank, decked out in Camo cutoffs, sun glasses and a black beret; surrounded by a boom box with two speakers the size of road wheels, listening to the Beach Boys on an 8-track player. Unfortunately, I cannot locate the photo. If any of the USCMVTA have it please send it to John Wear for inclusion in the Sponson Box.

When A Co., 3rd Tanks was sent to relieve our tanks at Oceanview, I gave a FNG 2nd Lt. a briefing on the Oceanview positions, night fires, etc. His two A Co. tanks escorted my tanks south down the beach. Halfway to Cua Viet, he radio’d me and said that he wanted to take a look over the sand dunes to the west. I advised him he should stay in the tide line but he insisted otherwise. His two tanks went over the dunes and headed south. I paralleled his direction keeping an eye on his radio antenna. Suddenly his southward movement halted and he radio’d that his lead tank was sinking. Our two tanks went over the sand dune to find one tank up to its turret in quick sand and the other tank trying to hook up and pull it out. Luckily the crew escaped unharmed. An Amtrac from Cau Viet arrived shortly and the B Co. tanks were ordered to report to Cau Viet and then Gia Linh. I never did find

out what happened to the sunken tank.

I mentioned that while at Oceanview, for a little over a month, we never took mortar, sniper fire or had any probs from the NVA. I developed four options as to why they left us alone-

Mr. Charles knew:

1. That Oceanview was worth taking;
2. That the Marine tanks and the two Army Dusters at Oceanview would kick their butts;
3. That we’d call in gunfire from the USS New Jersey; or
4. That they knew that Bravo Co. tanks were better than Charlie Co. tanks (just kidding).

I’d bet that it was option # 3.

If anyone has an Oceanview story, please send it to the Sponson Box editor, John Wear. ■

I don’t go back as far as some, but I can remember many of these items, especially the “no back pocket” trousers. (Remember that “women wear pants, Marines wear trousers!”) Ev Tunget

THE OLD CORPS

Some of you (not all) won’t recall a great portion of this but if you do, so be it. If you don’t, you missed a good time! The following is a page found in the book “Green Side Out” by Major H.G.Duncan, USMC (Ret) and Captain W.T. Moore, Jr., USMC (Ret).

You kept your rifle in the barracks.
Your 782 gear did not wear out.
Mess halls were mess halls (NOT dining facilities).
No vandalism wrecked the barracks.
Everyone was a Marine and his ethnic background was unimportant.

We had heroes.
Chaplains didn’t teach leadership to the experts.
Getting high meant getting drunk.
Beer was 25 cents at the slopchute.

Skivvies had tie-ties.
We starched our khakis and looked like hell after sitting down the first time.

We wore the short green jacket with the winter uniform.
We wore Sam Browne belts and sharpened one edge of the buckle for the bad fights.
We kept our packs made up and hanging on the edge of the rack.
We spit-shined shoes.
Brownbaggers’ first concern was the Marine Corps.

Generals cussed.
Generals paid more attention to the Marine Corps than to politics.
UA meant being a few minutes late from a great liberty, and only happened once per career.
Brigs were truly “correctional” facilities.

Sergeants were gods.
The tips of the index and middle fingers of one hand were constantly black from Kiwi shoe polish.
We scrubbed the wooden decks of the barracks with creosote.

We had wooden barracks.
Privates made less than \$100.00 a month.
Privates always had money.
You weren’t transported to war by Trans World or Pan American airlines.
Barracks violence was a fight between two buddies who were buddies when it was over.

Larceny was a civilian crime.
Every trooper had all his gear.
Marines had more uniforms than civilian clothes.
Country and western music did not start race riots in the clubs.
We had no race riots because we had no recognition of races.

Marine Corps birthdays were celebrated on 10 November no matter what day of the week it may have been (except Sunday).
Support units supported.
The supply tail did not wag the maintenance dog.
The 734 form was the only supply document.
You did your own laundry, including ironing.
You aired bedding.
Daily police of outside areas was held although they were always clean.

Field stripping of cigarette butts was required.
Everyone helped at field day
A tour as Duty NCO was an honor.

Everyone got up a reveille.
We had bugle calls.
Movies were free

PX items were bargains.
Parking was the least of problems.

Troops couldn’t afford cars.
You weren’t married unless you could afford it.
Courts-martial orders were read in battalion formations.
A bum didn’t have a BCD (Bad Conduct Discharge) awarded more than once or twice before he actually got it.
We had the “Rocks and Shoals.”

Courts-martial were a rarity.
Marines receiving BCDs were drummed out the gate.
NCOs and officers were not required to be psychologists.
The mission was the most important thing.

Marines could shoot
Marines had a decent rifle.
The BAR was the mainstay of the fire team.
Machine gunnery was an art.

Maggie’s drawers meant a miss and was considered demeaning as hell to the dignity of the shooter.
Carbide lamps blackened sights.
We wore leggings.

We wore herringbone utilities.
We had machine gun carts.

We mixed target paste in the butts.
We had to take and pass promotion tests.
We really had equal opportunity.

Sickbays gave APCs for all ailments.
We had short-arm inspections.
The flame tank was in the arsenal of weapons.

We had unit parties overseas with warm beer and no drugs.

Marines got haircuts.
Non-judicial punishment was non-judicial.
The squad bay rich guy was the only one with a radio.
If a Marine couldn’t make it on a hike, his buddies carried his gear and helped him stumble along so that he wouldn’t have to fall out.

The base legal section was one or two clerks and a lawyer.
We had oval dog tags..
Marines wore dog tags all the time.
We spit-shined shoes and BRUSH-shined boots.

We wore boondockers.
We starched field scarves.
We worked a five and one-half day week.
Everyone attended unit parties.
In the field we used straddle trenches instead of “Porta-Potties.”

Hitch-hiking was an offense.
We used Morse Code for difficult transmissions.
The oil burning tent stove was the center of social activity in the tent.
We had unit mail call.

We carried swagger sticks.
We had Chesty Puller.
Greater privileges for NCOs were not a “right.”
EM Clubs were where you felt at home... and safe.
We sailed on troopships.
We rode troop trains.
Sentries had some authority.
Warrant Officers were not in their teens.
Mess hall “Southern cooking” was not called “soul food.”
Marines went to chapel on Sundays.

Weekend liberty to a distant place was a rarity.
The color of a Marine’s skin was of no consequence.
The Marine Corps was a big team made up of thousands of little teams.
We landed in LCVPs and always got wet.
We debarked from ship by means of nets over the side.
We had platoon virgins.
We had parades.

We had pride.
We had Esprit de Corps.
Field scarves (neckties) were made of the same material as shirts, and had the same consistencies as a wet noodle...
There was no tie clasp to keep it from flapping in the breeze.
Shirts were tailored and spit shined.

Khakis were heavily starched, and you had to run your arm through the pants leg to open them up.
Shirt pockets could not be opened and you carried cigarettes in your socks.

There were no back pockets in uniform trousers.
Buttons on your “Blues” were really brass, and you shined them using jewelers rouge and a button shield.
Piss-cutters had a single dip in the rear.
There were khakis, greens, and blues

“I have only two men out of my company and 20 out of some other company. We need support, but it is almost suicide to try to get it here as we are swept by machine gun fire and a constant barrage is on us. I have no one on my left and only a few on my right. I will hold.” —1st. Lt. Clifton B. Cates, Navy Cross, 2 Distinguished Service Crosses, (later Commandant), USMC, July 19, 1918 commanding 96 Company, 6th Marines, near the French town of Soissons.

“Casualties: Many, Percentage of dead: Not known, Combat efficiency: We are winning.” —Colonel David M. Shoup, USMC, MOH, (later Commandant) Tarawa, 21 November 1943.

“Freedom is not free, but the U.S. Marine Corps will pay most of your share.” —Captain J.E. “Ned” Dolan, USMC (Ret.) Platoon Leader E/27, Korean War

“We fight not for glory, nor for riches, nor for honor, but only and alone for Freedom, which no good man lays down but with his life.” —Declaration of Arbroath, Scotland, 1320

“In the end more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security. When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to society but for society to give to them, when the freedom they wished for was freedom from responsibility, then Athens ceased to be free.” —Edward Gibbon ■



“Carved on these walls is the story of America, of a continuing quest to preserve both democracy and decency, and to protect a national treasure that we call the American dream.”

Something to think about: Most of the surviving parents of the dead are now deceased themselves. There are 58,267 names now listed on that polished black wall, including those added in 2010.

The names are arranged in the order in which they were taken from us by date and within each date the names are alphabetized. It is hard to believe it is 36 years since the last casualties.

The first known casualty was Richard B. Fitzgibbon, of North Weymouth, Mass., listed by the U.S. Department of Defense as having been killed on June 8, 1956. His name is listed on the Wall with that of his son, Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, who was killed on Sept. 7, 1965.

There are three sets of fathers and sons on the Wall. 39,996 on the Wall were just 22 or younger.

The largest age group, 8,283 were just 19 years old 33,103 were 18 years old.

12 soldiers on the Wall were 17 years old.

5 soldiers on the Wall were 16 years old.

One soldier, PFC Dan Bullock was 15 years old.

997 soldiers were killed on their first day in Vietnam.

1,448 soldiers were killed on their last scheduled day in Vietnam .

31 sets of brothers are on the Wall.

Thirty one sets of parents lost two of their sons.

54 soldiers on the Wall attended Thomas Edison High School in Philadelphia... wonder why so many from one school?

8 Women are on the Wall -- nursing the wounded.

244 soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War; 153 of them are on the Wall.

Beallsville, Ohio with a population of 475 lost 6 of her sons.

West Virginia had the highest casualty rate per capita in the nation.

There are 711 West Virginians on the Wall.

The Marines of Morenci - They led some of the scrappiest high school football and basketball teams that the little Arizona copper town of Morenci (pop. 5,058) had ever known and cheered. They enjoyed roaring beer busts. In quieter moments, they rode horses along the Coronado Trail, stalked deer in the Apache National Forest. And in the patriotic camaraderie typical of Morenci’s mining families, the nine graduates of Morenci High enlisted as a group in the Marine Corps.

Their service began on Independence Day, 1966. Only 3 returned home.

The Buddies of Midvale - LeRoy Tafoya, Jimmy Martinez, Tom Gonzales were all boyhood friends and lived on three consecutive streets in Midvale, Utah on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh avenues. They lived only a few yards apart. They played ball at the adjacent sandlot ball field. And they all went to Vietnam. In a span of 16 dark days in late 1967, all three would be killed. LeRoy was killed on Wednesday, Nov. 22, the fourth anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s assassination. Jimmy died less than 24 hours later on Thanksgiving Day. Tom was shot dead assaulting the enemy on Dec. 7, Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

The most casualty deaths for a single day was on January 31, 1968 — 245 deaths.

The most casualty deaths for a single month was May 1968 — 2,415 casualties were incurred.

For many Americans who read this they will only see the numbers that the Vietnam War created. To those of us who survived the war, and to the families of those who did not, we see the faces, we feel the pain that these numbers created. We are, until we too pass away, haunted with these numbers, because they were our friends, fathers, husbands, wife’s, sons and daughters.

There are no noble wars, just noble warriors...
“That we never forget” ■

HUMBLING “Hanoi Jane”

Fonda whines when dissed by capitalist system she once condemned

BY JEFFREY T. KUHNER
The Washington Times 7:41 p.m., Tuesday, July 19, 2011

Hanoi Jane has been humbled. Recently, the home shopping channel QVC canceled a scheduled appearance by Jane Fonda. The actress was supposed to discuss her latest book, “Prime Time.” She is shocked and angry that QVC disinvited her because of mounting public opposition.

“The network said they got a lot of calls,” Ms. Fonda wrote on her personal blog, “criticizing me for my opposition to the Vietnam War and threatening to boycott the show if I was allowed to appear.” She added: “I am, to say the least, deeply disappointed that QVC caved to this kind of insane pressure by some well-funded and organized political extremist groups.”

QVC is right. In fact, they should never have invited her in the first place. Ms. Fonda did more than oppose the Vietnam War: She actively aided and abetted the enemy. Like many in the anti-war ‘60s left, she was a traitor who openly supported the North Vietnamese communists. For years, Ms. Fonda has sought to cynically and mendaciously obfuscate her moral culpability.

The great liberal myth - the basis of the modern new left - is that the ‘60s represented a triumph for freedom and social justice. All of the “liberation” movements - homosexual rights,

multiculturalism and radical feminism - stem from that turbulent decade. Yet, at its core was opposition to the Vietnam War. For peaceniks, America’s involvement in that conflict reflected the country’s profound sins: racism, imperialism and militarism. Only a humiliating defeat could cleanse the United States of its chauvinistic, evil nature.

This is why anti-war activists, such as Ms. Fonda, championed a victory by the Viet Cong. They celebrated North Vietnam’s Marxist dictator, Ho Chi Minh, as a “peasant reformer” and “nationalist” who sought only one noble goal: to reunify his nation free from imperial domination. The ‘60s left even referred to him as “Uncle Ho” - a beloved elder patriotic statesman. According to Ms. Fonda and other radicals such as Bill Ayers, Bernadine Dohrn and Noam Chomsky, the war marked the defining event in the crisis of capitalism. The burgeoning peace movement would act as the catalyst, the vanguard for utopian socialism. “Bring the revolution home,” went the slogan.

Hence, Ms. Fonda was not just an activist, but a self-styled revolutionary. She went to Hanoi in 1972, publicly praised the workers’ paradise and sat on top of a North Vietnamese ant-aircraft gun - one that was targeting U.S. planes

and U.S. boys. She cheered the murder of Americans. Her actions gave aid and comfort to the enemy. Her intention was to demoralize American public opinion and discredit the war effort. In the end, the left succeeded. America pulled out, the war was lost and South Vietnam fell to the communist North.

Vietnam has been over for decades. Liberals romanticize it as the heroic struggle of the ‘60s. Their Orwellian narrative - false as it is malevolent - is that U.S. withdrawal led to regional peace and security. The very opposite occurred: The victory by North Vietnam unleashed a holocaust. Rampaging communist forces summarily executed more than 100,000 civilians. Vietnam’s ethnic Chinese community was exterminated. A totalitarian state was erected. More than 1.5 million boat people took to the high seas - many of them drowning in dangerous waters. Hanoi would wage a war of aggression against Laos, wiping out the Hmong tribe. The declension of American power also resulted in Cambodia’s fall to communism. The Khmer Rouge - initially armed and supported by Hanoi - massacred more than 2 million Cambodians. America’s defeat led to the “Killing Fields.”

(Continued on page 37)

‘Dad, I’ve Been Hit’

BY MIKE LABELLA HAVERHILL

— Ron Powell, a three-time Purple Heart decorated Marine veteran of the Vietnam War, has had many sleepless nights since his three sons followed in his footsteps.

They’d all managed to escape harm while serving with the Marines until Sept. 18, when younger son Andy Powell called from a tent hospital to say he’d been injured while on foot patrol just south of Marjah, Afghanistan.

It was a garbled satellite phone call with the unsettling message, “Dad, I’ve been hit.”

“He said shrapnel from a roadside bomb hit his face and gave him a concussion, and also killed one of his men, blew the legs off another in his squad and injured three more,” Ron Powell said.

The conversation lasted just a minute or so before the line went dead.

Ron Powell, who was returning from a Whittier Tech football game when he got the call, broke the news to his wife, Neva, when he got home.

“It was the worst day and I can’t describe how we felt,” he said.

In the days following that first garbled phone call, Ron Powell tried to find out more about his son’s injuries.

A friend who’d served with him in Vietnam put him in touch with high-ranking Marine officers. He even enlisted the support of U.S. Sen. Scott Brown.

“When HQ Marine Corps in Washington called to tell me he was no longer in critical condition, they said they

would not be contacting me further as they had so many injured Marines that they could not keep up the telephone conversations to update the families on how they were,” Ron Powell said. “I think there are a lot more kids being injured over there than we know.”

Andy Powell, a corporal serving with the 2nd battalion, 6th Marines, has been overseas since June and had joined the Marines after graduating from Haverhill High School in 2007. He served a seven-month tour in Iraq two years ago, at the same time his brother, Sgt. Jake Powell was there with the 2nd Battalion 8th Marines. Jake Powell, 24, is currently at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina preparing for a second tour in Afghanistan.

Adam Powell, 26, served in Iraq and fought in Fallujah with the Second Battalion 3rd Marines. He is now out of the Marines and working at General Electric in Lynn.

All three had joined the Marines after graduating from Haverhill High, where they all played football.

On Oct. 8, Andy Powell called his parents from a hospital between Afghanistan and Pakistan to say they had stitched his face and reset his nose, which had been crushed by the explosion.

“He said he was going to be OK and that when he gets out of the hospital he plans to return to his unit, but will be on restricted duty,” Ron Powell said. “The fact that he will be returning to duty is a great sign, and that makes me happy. If it

was worse, they probably would be flying him home.”

When Ron Powell returned from Vietnam in 1969 after being wounded five times, his father was mad at him.

“He said, ‘I gave you a direct order not to get wounded,’ and that I’d disobeyed his order,” he said about his father, World War II Navy veteran George Powell, who was on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Saratoga, which was at sea at the time of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

“I spoke to my sons in the past and gave them advice on how to avoid being injured,” Ron Powell said. “I told them to think like the enemy and that when the hair stands up on the back of your neck, listen to it.”

Ron Powell said his wife Neva considers Andy her “baby” and that when he called to say he was OK that she was greatly relieved.

“Sometimes we take our kids for granted and don’t spend as much time with them as we should,” he said. “There are a lot of heroic Haverhill kids who are serving overseas. As a football coach for 15 years, I’ve met a lot of kids who had great parents who spent a lot of time with them, and other kids who weren’t as fortunate.

“If you didn’t have a chance to hug your kid today, do it, as it might be the last time you get the chance,” Ron Powell said.

Ron and Neva Powell also have a son Scott, 31, who is a supervisor at Comcast and is a graduate of Whittier Tech. ■

Beyond My Horizon

(Continued from page 23)

After signing in, I walked along a path and, seeing a major, tried to salute him. My legs gave way, and I collapsed. When I fell, he too was convinced I was drunk instead of sick. However, I felt the same way I had when I’d had malaria back in the bush. I was carried off by two other Marines, the major yelling at them to take the drunk to sick bay to have his stomach pumped. By this time, I was convulsing and almost delirious. One Corpsman pumped my stomach while another covered me with a pile of blankets. I was still shaking badly. When the doctor came in and took my temperature, he furiously stripped the blankets off me and could tell by the scabs on my nose and ears that I had been in country very recently.

The next thing I knew, they were cutting the clothes off my back and putting me in a bathtub. It was just like before. Again, they put canvas over me and let my head protrude while they ran cold water into the bath at my feet and shoveled mountains of crushed ice in as fast as they could. The doctor was yelling at everybody to hurry, “before we lose him!”

I finally woke up in the naval hospital, where I spent the next three weeks, and started to recover from vivax malaria this time. When I was ready to be discharged from the hospital, I was told to report to the Judge Advocate General’s (JAG’s) office before I left, to be assigned an attorney. I was being investigated for a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice for not taking my antimalaria pills for at least eight weeks after returning to the States. It was beginning to seem that by going overseas and coming back to base, I was destined for another round of shackles.

During the investigation, there was heated debate over whether I had really checked in when I had returned to the

base and had access to the pills, because my papers had not been processed. It was therefore ambiguous whether I was on duty or on leave when I was in the hospital. If I had been in the hospital while on my leave but claimed I was checked in, I could be court-martialed for not taking care of Marine Corps personal property, that is, myself. I was beginning to see the spit-shine, regulated side of the Marine Corps, which I had not known previously. My relationship with the Marine Corps was changing; I was very confused as to whether I wanted to go to school while in service, graduate, and then go to Officer Candidate School (OCS), or leave the service and go to school on the GI Bill.

In the end, I was recommended for a Naval Medical Review Board for several reasons; it was not optional. On the first of November, I flew home, and Gloria and I were married on November 8, 1969, as scheduled. Much to Gloria’s mother’s chagrin, I had come back from Viet Nam alive. I was twenty-one, and Gloria was barely eighteen. She was absolutely gorgeous, while I was very, very lean and a much different man.

After we drove back from Houston to Camp Pendleton in a rented truck with almost all of our worldly possessions and all of our new wedding gifts, we had a blissful six weeks alone in a rented trailer house in Oceanside, California, just outside the back gate of the camp.

Shortly after I checked back in, the date for my Medical Review Board appointment came, much quicker than I had anticipated. The doctors didn’t take all that long to decide my fate. When asked what I wanted to do, I said, “Go to school.” Before I could continue with where I would like to go to school and what I wanted to study, the doctors were stamping my Service Record Book, “Discharged.” I had never seen the military move that fast. Within seventy-two hours, I was a civilian again. ■

Humbling “Hanoi Jane”

(Continued from page 35)

Ms. Fonda bears significant responsibility for these atrocities. She urged U.S. withdrawal. She glorified the murderous North Vietnamese communists. She misrepresented the true nature of Ho’s regime and of the war itself. Rather than being a struggle for national liberation, Vietnam signified the Marxist conquest of the South. It’s akin to Stalinist North Korea having defeated South Korea in 1953 - a significant setback, not a victory, for human freedom. To suggest otherwise is to engage in dishonest propaganda or pathetic self-delusion.

The Vietnamese have had to live with

the tragic consequences of Marxist-Leninism. Ms. Fonda, however, hasn’t. She couldn’t last a day in communist Vietnam. Instead, she went on to become a Hollywood actress and sell millions of workout videos. Like most new leftists, she gorged on American capitalism while simultaneously demonizing it. She mouthed revolutionary socialism but made millions catering to shallow consumerism.

Ms. Fonda embodies the moral and intellectual bankruptcy of the ‘60s left. Its seminal idea boils down to one impulse: hatred of “Amerika,” which was spelled with a “k” to suggest its fascist undertones. New-age liberalism represented the politics of illusion and self-loathing - the

refusal to acknowledge that, for all of its flaws, the United States has been the greatest force for good in modern political history.

Her treasonous behavior and shameful past are why viewers did not want Ms. Fonda on QVC. This boycott should continue until she stops peddling the false image of a misunderstood, aggrieved and noble peace activist. There was nothing noble in what she or her fellow radicals did. Just ask the people of Vietnam.

Jeffrey T. Kuhner is a columnist at The Washington Times and president of the Edmund Burke Institute.

Remarks by Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta at the 2011 Marine Corps Ball, National Harbor, Maryland.

SECRETARY LEON PANETTA: General Amos, thank you for that very kind introduction. It's -- this is truly, truly an honor to be here this evening and be able to enjoy this wonderful celebration of the birthday of the Marine Corps.

And it's an honor for several reasons -- first of all, because of this guy that just introduced me. I've had a chance to work alongside him these past months, and I've truly benefitted from his advice and his counsel, his good humor. But most of all, he's got a great perspective of what our national security and our national defense needs, and I really appreciate it.

By the way, if you didn't know it, this guy is celebrating his birthday today. (Cheers, applause.) Happy birthday

Come on, guys, help me out here. (Sings "Happy Birthday to You," accompanied by the audience.)

It's also an honor for me to be here with another great Marine, somebody that I thank for his friendship, his counsel. He is my military -- senior military assistant, Lieutenant General John Kelly. (Applause) And he too has been a great friend, a great adviser, and somebody who

comes with me on all the trips, and he never ceases to help lift my spirits. And besides that, his name may be Kelly, but he's half-Italian, so I appreciate that fact. (Laughter)

Most of all, I am honored to be here because of all of you. The men and women of the Marine Corps are, I believe, one of the finest fighting forces on the face of the Earth. You are fighters, you're warriors; most of all, you're Americans. You're brave, you're smart, you don't take any crap from anybody, and you're, frankly, the salt of the Earth.

There's a great story that I heard from one of General Amos's predecessors. It involved a group of Marines that were out on patrol in Iraq. These Marines came upon three men who were digging a hole along the side of the road, and obviously the Marines suspected the worst. And they spread out and approached them, and at that point the individuals scattered and took off and disappeared.

And a cart that they had that was being pulled by a donkey was there loaded down with extra material. Well, a sergeant walked over to the

donkey and unhitched the beast, and the donkey went trotting off, and the Marines followed the donkey. And sure enough -- sure enough, it led to a little mud hut, and there were the insurgents. And without firing a shot, they were able to bring the bombers to justice. They surrendered, and they brought them back to the base.

And a delighted senior officer at that point praised them for their cleverness. And he asked one of the sergeants, "What on earth made you think to unhitch the donkey?"

"Sir," the Marine replied, "I grew up on a farm; I enlisted at age 17; I've been following jackasses most of my life." (Laughter...cheers...applause) Yes, indeed...Salt of the earth. (Laughter)

Most of all, I've come here really to thank all of you for your service, for your patriotism and for being Marines. It is, I -- as I said, an honor to be able to celebrate the 236th birthday of this great United States Marine Corps. And it's always an honor to be able to enjoy a piece of the Marine Corps birthday cake. I think -- I think I ate part of my office -- (laughter) -- (inaudible) -- but it wasn't bad cake.

This is a great tradition. And you know, as General Amos pointed out, Marines all over the world enjoy the same moment, to take the time to eat a piece of cake and celebrate the birthday of the Corps. And it's something that, wherever they're at, they're going to take that moment, even in the middle of battle, the general pointed out, to be able to do that. I've always admired the Marines because of their respect for tradition and for their unyielding devotion to a set of bedrock values: honor, courage and commitment, most of all to their fellow Marines.

Tonight I'd also like to focus on something that is equally important: toughness. As they say, Marines don't avoid hardship, they embrace it. My Italian father used to tell me, "You've got to be tough; you've got to be tough in life to handle everything that life throws at you." And it's true. It takes a truly motivated individual, someone who can draw on that inner reserve, that inner mental fortitude to make it through the grueling challenge of the crucible. It takes something special in a person to earn the right to wear the Eagle, the Globe and the Anchor.

It's that quality which reveals itself when the chips are down. It's measured by the stiffness of the spine. It's measured by the direction you face when the enemy's guns open up. And our enemies have learned time and time again that the reply to their guns when they're facing the U.S. Marines is that they start charging straight at you. And for the call "Send in Marines," that call has echoed across the country's history. We've always sent in the Marines. They've been our shock troops.

As you saw from the clip in the video, in the darkest days of Pearl Harbor, the pride -- the pride of the fleet had been sunk; the country was reeling. America relied on the seasoned Leathernecks -- the Old Breed -- to bring into battle a new generation of recruits. This Old Breed, one veteran wrote, were gamblers, drinkers, connivers -- (cheers) -- they were brawlers and they had fought soldiers and sailors of every nationality in every bar from Brooklyn to Bangkok. (Cheers, whistles, applause.) These were my kind of people. (Laughter)

It was those tough old salts, that Old

Breed, along with a legion of new recruits, who launched the first major counter-offensive in the Pacific, on the island of Guadalcanal.

They were led by Marines like Archer Vandegrift and Chesty Puller. For months they fought in that small perimeter till they were able to break out.

And in the skies above Guadalcanal, Marine pilots of the Cactus Air Force battled overwhelming odds in aerial combat against the Japanese, Marines like Joe Foss, who piloted those tough old Wildcats. They weren't the best fighter planes in the world, but they could take a beating and keep flying. They had a 50-caliber machine gun that could saw a Zero in half, and that's exactly what Joe Foss did. In three months, he shot 26 planes down in Guadalcanal.

Tonight we celebrate, obviously, that rich history with the proud traditions of the Marine Corps. We celebrate the Marines of the past; particularly we celebrate those of the present, today's Marines, who are part of what I call the next Greatest Generation, those who have served in the decade since 9/11.

And they are symbolized by the courage of Sergeant Dakota Meyer, who's with us here this evening. (Cheers, applause.) I had the honor -- the unique honor to pay tribute to him when he received his Medal of Honor. He is truly an inspiration for all of us.

Also with us here tonight are members of a generation whose sacrifice has been especially great. And to them, our wounded warriors, I want to give you my personal thanks for showing us all the unforgettable inspiration that you've provided, the inspiration of resilience and strength and toughness in the face of enormous challenges which you have borne. And Baghdad to Fallujah to Anbar to Helmand, time and time again, you've built another chapter to the Marine Corps roll of honor. (Applause)

I have said this because I believe it deeply. I guess as the son of -- as the son of immigrants, I was taught how important it is to give something back to this country that gave my parents the opportunity -- the opportunity that so many have enjoyed coming to this great country of ours.

But our democracy depends on the willingness of every generation to fight for what's right, to fight for our country, men and women who've answered the call of duty to uphold the fundamental values that this great country of ours is all about. This is a new great American generation, and it's proven its patriotism and its strength and its determination on the battlefield.

They've done everything they've been asked to do, and that's what make -- makes them a great generation that follows the tradition of service to country.

So thank you for your service, thank you for your sacrifice, thank you for your patriotism, thank you for the work that you do every day to protect the United States of America.

And I also want to thank the Marine families for their support and their sacrifice and their love. Marines couldn't do it without the support of their families, and these families are as much a part of the Marine Corps legacy as those who fight on the battlefield. (Applause).

Our country owes the Marine Corps and all of the Marine Corps community an incredible debt for what you've been able to accomplish throughout our history and during these past 10 years. You have helped to make America safer.

I used to ask my father why he traveled all of that distance to come to this country. And he used to say, "Because your mother and I believed we could give our children a better life." That's the American dream. It's what we want for our children. It's why we fight. It's why we care for this country. And you, Marines, have helped give our children a better life, by making them safer.

God bless you. God bless this nation. And God bless the United States Marine Corps... Happy Birthday and Semper Fi. (Cheers, applause). ■

USMCVTA FINANCIAL REPORT 2010

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Dues/Donations	\$ 13,553	Sponson Box	
		Printing/Postage	\$ 6,494
		Layout/Design	2,130
			<u>\$ 8,624</u>
		Bd. of Directors Meeting	
		Expenses	\$ 2,717
		Less Donations	(500)
			<u>\$ 2,217</u>
		Web Site	
		New Site Design	\$ 8,957
		Webmaster Serv.	400
		Site Maintenance	215
			<u>\$ 9,572</u>
		Buddy Fund	557
		Recruiting	196
		CPA Expense	200
		Ontos Logo Design	180
		Misc. Printing/Mailing	621
		**Misc. Expenditures	735
			<u>\$ 2,489</u>
		Total Expenses	\$ 22,902

Total Income \$ 13,553
Total Expenses 22,902
Balance - \$ 9,349

2009 Carryover \$ 33,828
2010 End Yr. Balance \$ 24,479
Respectfully Submitted,
James P. Coan, Treasurer

**Membership cards, envelopes, postage, etc.

USMCVTA FINANCIAL REPORT 2011

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Dues/Donations	\$ 17,306	Buddy Fund	\$ 322
		Web Site	1,071
		Member Cards	1,568
		Scholarship Program	1,000
		Recruiting	0
		*Misc. Expense	688
			<u>\$ 4,649</u>
		Sponson Box	
		Print/Mailing	\$ 6,535
		Layout/Design	2,260
		Portable Scanner	223
			<u>\$ 9,018</u>
Reunion Income		Reunion Expenses	
Registration Fees	\$ 35,932	Bus Company	\$ 4,036
[Less cancelations]	(1,885)	T-shirts/Shipping	2,960
	<u>\$ 34,047</u>	Audio/Visual	2,097
		Harbor Tour	440
VTA Merch Sales	845	Free Room Drawing	441
Donations	830	Fallen Hero Airfare/Rooms	1,222
Sgt Grit (% of profit)	994	Hotel (Farewell Dinner,	
Auction Net	3,341	Ladies coffee, BBQ)	18,028
Total	<u>\$ 40,005</u>	Beverages (Slop Chute)	1,272
		Mailing Expense	1,095
		**Misc. Merchandise	1,777
		Auction Items	1,826
		Reunion Total	<u>\$ 38,239</u>

Total Income \$ 57,363
Total Expenses 51,906
Balance \$ 5,457

2010 Carryover \$ 24,109
2011 End Yr. Balance \$ 29,565
Respectfully Submitted,
James P. Coan, Treasurer

*Shipping, postage, stationery, envelopes
**Lanyards, flag sets, tickets, coasters, magnets

Newly released FBI files
(Continued from page 28)

would rent helicopter to take Muskie to and from site of rally at Kelly Park.

Just nine months before, Cronkite had delivered his famous on-air judgment that the “bloody experience of Vietnam is to end in a stalemate.” Even so, such tight collaboration between a news organization and the anti-war movement—particularly the offer of CBS News resources to help ferry a sitting senator and future presidential candidate around in opposition to the war—was highly unusual and would presumably have been explosive if known widely at the time. It’s unclear whether Muskie ever actually attended the event.

Chip Cronkite, Walter Cronkite’s son, told Yahoo! News it’s highly unlikely that his father would ever have made such an offer. “It doesn’t have the ring of a reliable story to me,” he said. “Particularly at a time when FBI informants often told the FBI what they wanted to hear. It think it would be outside of what we know about Walter Cronkite and CBS News’ practices.”

A CBS News spokesman declined to comment.

The memo is included in 72 pages of FBI files pertaining to Cronkite that were recently released by the Bureau. The FBI claimed late last year, two months after Cronkite’s death in July 2009, that all its records on the newsman had been destroyed in 2007—which raised suspicions that the FBI may have

deliberately shredded embarrassing files on its surveillance of journalists during the Cold War. The new records appear to be from files that didn’t focus specifically on Cronkite’s activities but that included mentions of the newsman. Among the other incidents in the newly released documents are a 1966 criminal investigation into CBS News for allegedly airing obscene language during coverage of civil-rights unrest in Mississippi; applications for Cronkite and others to travel to Cuba and China; and surveillance files on subjects who met with or were interviewed by Cronkite.

John Cook is a senior national reporter/ blogger for Yahoo! News.

WHERE ARE MY MARINES?

By Terry Wallace, Former LCpl, C Company, 1st Tanks RVN, 1966-1967

I attend VTA reunions with the same mix of enthusiasm and apprehension that some of the attendees probably feel. While it’s great to share in the camaraderie of guys who served with you so long ago, the names, places and even the faces have faded after almost 45 years. Will I meet the guys in my unit? Which units were where? Which operations did I participate in?

Not everyone attends with the same anticipation. However, during the afternoon downtime in the Slopchute at this past year’s reunion in San Diego, Fred Kellogg (3rd Tanks, 1968) announced to the crowd that he had been approached in the hotel lobby by an elderly lady who was “Looking for my Marines.” Fred explained that she happened to be attending a Kiwanis convention in the same hotel; that she was a Marine’s widow and that she

was eager to meet her late husband’s “Marine brothers”. Later that same day, as the Slopchute continued its buzz of sea stories, reminiscence and laughter, Fred returned escorting a smiling, energetic and attractive woman whom he introduced as “Ruthie”. Ruthie Graham (the correct spelling which she later pointed out) explained that her husband served from 1943 to 1945 with the 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, on Iwo Jima. She also explained that the pride she feels for her husband and for the Marine Corps is unwavering after all of these years and that she was delighted to have a chance to meet so many Marine veterans.

Ruthie visited with us for sometime, sharing some stories about her husband, their 50 years of marriage since WWII and her active life in Southern California. She spoke with assurance and a smile

as if we were a group of close friends at a barbeque. When it was time to leave to join her business group, she left our room with a rousing “Always Faithful!” Then, according to Fred, she sang the Marine Corps Hymn in the elevator with a few of our Marines by her side and was the only one who knew all the words to all of the verses! To my amazement, Ruthie is 94!

Did I say I was frustrated by not remembering all of the details, names, and faces from my Vietnam experience? Having met Ruthie, I wonder if remembering the details is as important as sharing in the brotherhood of people who have lived the experience of being a Marine. If Ruthie is any example, keeping the relationships, experiences, and pride alive is the real reason we have reunions after all. Thanks, “Ruthie”, and “Semper Fi”!



Ruthie and Fred Kellogg at San Diego Reunion

[REDACTED] TOLD GROUP HE HAD BEEN TO CBS CHANNEL SIX IN ORLANDO PRIOR TO MEETING TO SPEAK TO NEWSMEN ABOUT VIETNAM MORATORIUM ACTIVITIES. [REDACTED] RELATED THAT WHILE AT TV STATION, ~~WALTER CRONKITE~~, NATIONALLY KNOWN RADIO AND TELEVISION COMMENTATOR, SPOKE TO HIM BY TELEPHONE FOR APPROXIMATELY FORTY FIVE MINUTES AND THAT CRONKITE REPORTEDLY TOLD [REDACTED] THAT CBS WOULD HAVE THIRTY SIX HOURS OF COVERAGE ON VIETNAM MORATORIUM WITH "OPEN MIKE" TO GIVE DEMONSTRATORS A CHANCE TO BE HEARD. CRONKITE NOTED, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THAT SENATOR EDMUND MUSKIE WOULD BE IN ORLANDO, FLA. NOVEMBER THIRTEEN INSTANT FOR DEMOCRATIC FUND RAISING DINNER. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] CRONKITE SUGGESTED THAT [REDACTED] ATTEMPT TO MUSKIE TO COME TO CAPE KENNEDY TO SPEAK AT KELLY PARK RALLY TO BE HELD NOVEMBER THIRTEEN INSTANT. CRONKITE ALLEGEDLY TOLD [REDACTED] THAT CBS WOULD RENT HELICOPTER TO TAKE MUSKIE TO AND FROM SITE OF RALLY AT KELLY PARK.

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

Please get your 2011 dues paid up! Send \$30 to:
John Wear, USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938

As long as there are United States Marines



There will be a United States of America