



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of  
the USMC  
Vietnam Tankers  
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



## HONOR THE PAST BY BEING PRESENT...

*It's Just 9 Months Until Our 2017 Reunion in St Louis!!!*

*Featured Stories:*

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## A VERY SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### Time May Be Running Out

We all are aware of our limited time as a viable organization, hence our efforts to get our members to put their stories to paper and/or record them during a reunion. Finding new members is becoming harder and harder with each passing year. But there are new groups of US Marine tankers on the horizon like the "Desert Storm" participants who will be followed by Iraq and Afghanistan tankers. We have recently been approached by a few of these latter-day tankers asking what it takes to form and run an organization, to them, the VTA is the benchmark to which they aspire. Therefore, at the St. Louis reunion,

you will see some younger Marine veteran tankers taking it all in.

We have also invited members of the Marine Corps Tankers Association (MCTA) to join us in St. Louis to have a "joint" reunion. That means we will have several generations of Marine tankers attending our gathering: WW2, Korean War, Cold War and the desert wars tankers present. We hope all our members will make every effort in making them feel welcome. Just ask them for a story and you will be certainly entertained..



### WHY MEN WHO HAVE BEEN TO WAR YEARN TO REUNITE

I NOW KNOW WHY MEN WHO HAVE BEEN TO WAR YEARN TO REUNITE. NOT TO TELL STORIES OR LOOK AT OLD PICTURES. NOT TO WEEP OR LAUGH.

COMRADES GATHER BECAUSE THEY LONG TO BE WITH THE PEOPLE WHO ONCE ACTED THEIR BEST; WHO ONCE SUFFERED AND SACRIFICED, WHO WERE STRIPPED OF THEIR HUMANITY.

I DID NOT PICK THESE MEN, THEY WERE DELIVERED BY FATE AND THE MILITARY. BUT I KNOW THEM IN A WAY I KNOW NO OTHER MEN. I HAVE NEVER GIVEN ANYONE SUCH TRUST.

THEY WERE WILLING TO GUARD SOMETHING MORE PRECIOUS THAN MY LIFE. THEY WOULD HAVE CARRIED MY REPUTATION... THE MEMORY OF ME.

IT WAS PART OF THE BARGAIN WE ALL MADE, THE REASON WE WERE ALL WILLING TO DIE FOR ONE ANOTHER. AS LONG AS I HAVE MEMORY, I WILL THINK OF THEM ALL, EVERY DAY.

I AM SURE THAT WHEN I LEAVE THIS WORLD, MY LAST THOUGHTS WILL BE OF MY FAMILY, AND MY COMRADES.

**SUCH GOOD MEN!"**

## Letter from the President

**NEW YEAR:** Oh my goodness! It is 2017 already? Where do this past 12 months go? I just barely got used to writing "2016" in my check book! As I speak to the membership, it seems that practically to the man, we all feel that it was just "yesterday" that we were serving our nation in uniform inside of our "iron monsters" dodging bullets and RPGs in that strange and sometimes deadly foreign country. I don't need to remind you that it was 50 years ago!!!

### HONOR THE PAST BY BEING PRESENT

Please join us in St Louis, Missouri on Thursday, Sept 21 – Monday, 25, 2017 as we continue to ensure our legacy through reunion, renewal and remembrance

**ST LOUIS:** And it is just nine months until we "meet & greet" in St Louis for our 10th biennial reunion! I am excited for the prospect of our next gathering. The board of directors met at the reunion hotel this past September in order to lay out detailed plans for our get together. We think that St Louis may turn out as good as (or maybe even better than) our 2015 reunion in Washington, DC. And that each and every attendee will have another really spectacular milestone to fondly remember.

**THE AUCTION:** Since the Minneapolis reunion in 2001, we have conducted a fund-raising "Live" auction that seems to be one of the highlights of our biennial gatherings. We now have a wonderful professional auctioneer, retired Master Sgt Tommy Ayers, who helps to make the event even that much more enjoyable. In the past we have been fortunate to be able to include auctioning off a lot of really terrific items that have been donated by the membership. For the upcoming St Louis reunion we are going to try to move all of the smaller and lower priced items to a "Silent" auction that will be conducted in the Torsion Bar hospitality room. We feel that this move will really help to shorten the time it takes for the "Live" action.

**TAKE ACTION:** What we would like for the entire VTA membership to do (and this request includes those of you who are not planning to attend our most meaningful gathering): Please scour your attics, garages and basements for your long-forgotten souvenirs of your time in-country. As well as items from any time that you served as a US Marine. When you have these mementoes assembled, packed up and ready to ship, please give me a call (215-794-9052) and we can provide the "Ship To" address in St Louis. And an even better idea would be that you bring the treasures with you when you come to attend the reunion in September. We will be happy to accept the donated items at the WELCOME TABLE at the start of the reunion.

**FUNERALS:** My wife's first cousin's father-in-law was a US Marine pilot who flew CAS (Close Air Support) in a F-4U "Corsair" during the Korean War. Unfortunately he passed away recently. I was somewhat involved with trying to secure a military funeral for him. I found out that HQ Marine Corps schedules and dispatches Marines to all over this nation for military funerals for US Marine veterans. Please take note of the number to call: 866-826-3628. Many, if not most, funeral directors know the proper procedure and they already have the phone number to make the arrangements. And by the by, the USMC sent two Marines in dress blues standing at the grave to fold the flag and they also sent another eight Marines as the rifle detail for the 21 gun salute. The farewell was spectacular! Another thing that happened was when I went to thank the NCOIC of the burial detail, I introduced myself as, "John Wear, Sgt, 3rd Tanks, Vietnam."

He smiled, shook my hand and said, "Ooo-Rah Sir! Welcome Home!"

That young Marine's reply meant the world to me.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John".

**"It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow fond of it."**

**Robert E Lee**



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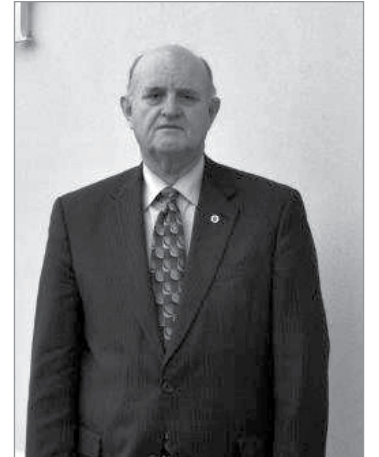
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**FRONT COVER PHOTO:**  
The St. Louis skyline with the Mississippi River and the “Gate Way to the West” arch.

### Meet your Board of Directors

A feature that provides some history about one of your board members



### Colonel William J. Davis USMC (Retired)

Executive Director, General Douglas MacArthur Foundation

Bill Davis was born and raised in the Mount Shasta, California area. Following his graduation in 1966 from California State University in Sacramento, he was commissioned a 2d Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. He served as an officer in the United States Marine Corps for 29 years before retiring in February 1995, when he became the Director of the MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, Virginia, where he served in that position until September 2013. He continues to serve as the Executive Director of the General Douglas MacArthur Foundation. A member of the Norfolk Rotary Club, Colonel Davis also serves on the Board of Directors of the Marine Corps Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation; the Norfolk Historical Society, and is the Chairman of the Virginia World War II Heritage Alliance as well as the Veterans Affairs Commission for the City of Norfolk, Virginia.

His assignments in the Marine Corps included Platoon and Company commands in 2nd and 3rd Tank Battalions, including Command of B Company, 3d Tank Battalion in Vietnam. Subsequent assignments included Guard Company, Marine Barracks Alameda, California; Assistant Inspector/Instructor, 4th Tank Battalion, San Diego, California; Commander, 1st Tank Battalion in Camp Pendleton, California, and Commander, Marine Barracks Japan. Staff assignments in the United States and Japan included tours as the Marine Corps Liaison Officer at the U.S. Army Armor Center, Fort Knox, Kentucky; Headquarters, United States Marine Corps; Exchange Officer with the Office of the Chief of Staff, Army; the G-3 Operations Officer for the 1st Marine Division; the G-3 Operations Officer for the III Marine Expeditionary Force; and as the Chief, Joint Training and Doctrine Division, and Chief, Special Operations

Division with the United States Atlantic Command in Norfolk, Virginia. His last assignment with the Marine Corps was as the Deputy Director of Marine Corps History and Museums.

He holds a BA degree in History from California State University in Sacramento, California and an MA degree in Political Science from Georgetown University in Washington, DC. Bill is married to Janice Weber Davis and they have two grown children, William Cameron Davis of Charlottesville, Virginia, and Sheryl Davis Searing of Norfolk, Virginia, and five grandchildren.

Military awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, two Legion of Merit Medals, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medals with V device, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry and numerous other awards ■.

## Our Readers Write

(Formally known as "Letters to the Editor")

### Corrections

**Dick Peksens writes:** I note some errors in the story that I wrote for the last issue of the Sponson Box which briefly mentioned Schrecongost and Epps. The SSgt on the tank with the RPG hole wasn't the TC when Epps was killed. At the time, both of the Platoon SSgt's were from Lithuania, I don't remember his name (but I can probably find it!) or which platoon he was with (since we had two platoons plus HQ tanks all located at An Hoa). The photo was taken at An Hoa a few days after the incident happened across the Song Thu Bon in "The Arizona." I was in charge of "both platoons" as the "Second XO" of Bravo Company. The CO and "real XO" of Bravo were on Hill 55. My two LT's were LT's Al Cohen and Ron Knight ... (and a few others over time). I did witness Shrecongost's death, as I was just returning from lunch when the gook 122 mm rockets hit. He was leaning against a tank telling the corpsmen to get the other wounded (there were two), and seemed to be OK until we put him on a stretcher and noted the "huge" exit hole in his back. He died either before we could medevac him or while he was on the helicopter to 1st Med in Da Nang.

### Write It Down or Forget It

VTA member Lee Dill has a part-time job working in the Security Department of a large electrical power plant in Maryland. During the 2016 Labor Day holiday he sent me this email message: *"Working today with some of my young people ... they never heard of Hue City or TET - John you were right - write it down or its forgotten!!!"*

**Lee adds:** I am so glad you harassed me into writing my own story. I always wanted to but I needed a push ... and you push good. Thanks for everything, really appreciate your friendship



(L to R) "Frenchie" Lavigne, Bruce Van Apeldoorn and Lenny Mendez

### n the Cover!



I got a call from Andy Anderson who was all atwitter about the cover photo of the **Forgotten Tracks, Volume 2**. It seems as if F-31 from 3rd Tanks was leaving the main gate of Con Thien sometime in the spring of 1969 when a USMC photographer took the above photo. Mike Andregg was driving and the gunner, Andy Anderson (wearing the "liberated" USMC chopper pilot's helmet) is standing in the TC cupola, while his TC, Sgt. "Rags" sits behind him. We cannot recall Sgt. "Rags" real name, but the nickname was because he always looked like a Rag Bag.

### Dennis Brummitt Writes

I am an avid bowler here in Phoenix and the vice president on the local association board of the Metro Phoenix U.S. Bowling Congress. USBC is the governing body for bowling across the country. In 1942, the Woman's Bowling Association started a charity program to assist returning veterans from WWII. This effort has been ongoing ever since then. The national charity is commonly referred to as the "BVL" (also known as "Bowlers to Veterans Link" or "Brighten Veteran's Lives"). I am the chairman for both our local and state BVL Associations. Each year we do a fundraising drive by visiting the bowlers when they are at the bowling centers. We also run a tournament every November. Last year we raised \$22,000 for the veterans here in Arizona, and nationally bowlers raised over \$945,000 to assist veterans with physical therapy, meals on wheels, and in getting them out of the hospitals/nursing homes to be outside with any kind of physical activity.

When we receive the checks, I drive around the State personally delivering them to the different hospitals, nursing homes, and hospices. As an aside, the former State Volunteers Administrator had a loved one return from Viet-

nam in 1967 to a very horrible reception by the public. She decided to take it upon herself to design, cast and distribute a commemorative coin to Vietnam Veterans.

I was honored to have been presented this coin when I presented this year's check to them. By the way, if any of our Brothers wish to help us send a check made out to MPUSBC, address the envelope to me:

Dennis Brummitt  
10902 W Canterbury Dr.  
Sun City, Arizona 85351

I spend all year working to raise money to help those who cannot help themselves.. They are our Brothers & Sisters. Thanks for listening.



### Russian Tank



### Speaking of Russian Tanks

**Mike Ledford writes:** After I completed my last hitch in the Corps in 1981, I switched to the Army to become a helicopter pilot. I volunteered for Cobras and received orders to fly out of Hanau, Germany. Before I could complete my final phase of training in the UH-1H Huey, I was grounded for eye problems during high "G" turns. I was mustered out on a medical discharge and it was several years later when the VA found "metal artifacts", i.e. shrapnel in my sphenoid sinus which is where my optic nerve was being touched by the shrapnel on these high G maneuvers. So, I still have a souvenir of my Alpha Company tour! I admit that I really miss my Huey.

The reason I was picked for Cobras was that on a computer simulation of shooting friends or foe tanks, I was the only one who could recognize Soviet model vehicles, thanks to my education at 3rd Tanks. I am also sending you a link to the new "Armada" Russian tank.

### Namo Bridge Sinks



**Richard Peksens writes:** Freedom Bridge? I remember "Freedom Hill" in Da Nang was the location for III MAF and 1st Mar Div. HQ .... and the big "Freedom Hill Exchange." It was also the location for Bob Hope's show in 1968. Coming North along Route 1, you crossed a bridge into Da Nang (forgot the name) on the west side of the airstrip. You could continue on with the 11th Marines HQ and 1st Tank Battalion on your left until you got to "DOG-PATCH" (a shanty town full of Vietnamese and deserters) and then you take a left to get to "Freedom Hill." I imagine that if you continued past the Exchange and 1st Recon, you would probably need to cross a bridge over the Song Thu Bon to get to Elephant Valley. I never went in that direction. On the East side of the Da Nang airfield was the MSR. Coming North from the Riviera, you entered Da Nang under the shadow of Marble Mountain and the village of Nui Kim Son. On the South side of the mountain was 3rd Amtracs. North of the mountain had the Green Beret HQS on the right and 1st MED on the left. Further along the MSR was Red Beach followed by the NAMO Bridge with the Hai Van Pass straight ahead and Monkey Mountain to the right.

### A note from Nick Warr

I hadn't picked up your magazine to read until just a few days ago, but then I saw and read the very nice book review (for my book on Hue City) and all the other attention I got. Thank you very much, John. My Pamela and I are really looking forward to our time with you and all the USMC Tankers in St. Louis next September.

I had a terrific time at Mayport Naval Station for the USS Hue City Memorial. I'll be back in touch again soon.

Nicholas Warr  
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### Stan Price shares a Photo



I have almost no pics from my tour in RVN, but I did find the attached photo of Cpl. Amil Jackson. He was killed while with us on Operation Meade River down in Quang Ngai. While he was evacuating a wounded Marine to a medivac chopper, he stepped on a "bouncing betty" mine. It killed him, the other stretcher bearer, and the wounded Marine on the stretcher.

In the picture above, he is the guy in the center top of the pic with the very dark skin. I'm the one with the goofy look on my face being ceremoniously stabbed by my crew member and other fellow Marines. Hope this is helpful.

CWO-5 Stan Price USMC/USMCR (ret)  
Phone: 432-386-0117 cell (leave a message)  
cwo5price@hotmail.com  
P.O. Box 127  
San Luis, CO 81152

### Vax is Down but Not Out

**Bob Vaxter writes:** My wife just brought my copy of the Sponson Box here to the Ann Arbor VA Hospital. I am spending a few days here with a badly infected hand (good part it is my right hand). Another great job. Started reading and did not stop until I had read the entire issue. See you in Saint Louis.

### You Can Learn A Lot In The Corps

San Diego, fall of 1965. We had pulled all the ice plants in front of our Quonset huts and that area became the sand pit. All of our punishment exercises were done in the sand pit. One day we did not fall into formation "on the road" quickly enough so we were ordered into the sand pits by Platoon Commander S/Sgt. Herring. After some exercise, we were ordered back on the road. . . still not quick enough. In the sand pits! On the road! In the sand pits! On the road! Over and over it happened, throwing ourselves face down into the sand pit and then scrambling to our feet to get into

formation on the road. This seemingly went on forever. Then one private gave up. He lay, face down, on the road saying, "I want to die! I want to die!" The platoon commander grabbed his shoulder, turned him over, and knelt on the private, both knees on the private's chest. He yelled, "Stop breathing! I order you to stop breathing!" Of course the private could not do this. The platoon commander got up, looked at us, and said, "When you think you are all done, that you have nothing more to give, you still have 25% left." He then marched us away, leaving the private on the road. He was gone when we got back, and he was never mentioned and we never saw him again. There have been times in my life when I have needed that 25% and it has always been there. You can learn a lot in the Marine Corps!

Dale R. Rueber  
Sgt. of Marines

### A Cheap Date?

**From a Vietnam Marine grunt and a good buddy:** Good Morning. Theresa and I went to the LA County Fair yesterday. We had not been there in a couple years so we decided an afternoon at the fair would be a nice date. When we arrived, the parking lines were short so I went to one lane over. I had the money in my hand to pay and the parking lady asked, "You a Marine?" I told her, "Semper Fi and OORRAHH!!!" She waved me on and said, "Thank you for your service." She saw my front plate that reads: 1st Marine Division. Wow! We saved 15 bucks on parking! We ran into a couple as we were walking and we chatted a bit. He said, "Seniors get in free before 4pm." Oh!. We got to the ticket booth and I presented our ID's for him to check and I said, "Seniors." He did look at our ID's and then pointed to my tee shirt with the Eagle Globe and Anchor logo and he smiled. We got our tickets, they said "Free." What a wonderful day at the fair. Holding hands, going separate ways when she wanted to see some crafts and the crowd was not too big. When we left, I told her, "Sorry it turned out to be a 'Cheap Date,' but you were worth it!!" LOL

### Camp Hanson, Okinawa, 1966

**Bobby Joe Blythe writes:** On page 28 of the latest edition of the Sponson Box in the back row of the photo is an old buddy of mine, DJ Clark. Here is a picture of him and me on Okinawa. I would sure like to find him and get him into the VTA brotherhood.

(L to R) DJ Clark, Bobby Joe Blythe and Amiko



### A Laundry Officer?

**Jim Coan writes:** I've been in contact recently with a retired Marine officer, Lt. Col. Bill Brignon. We were in the same TBS platoon at Quantico and we went to Tank School together. We flew over to Nam on the same plane and then both of us were assigned to Alpha Co., 3d Tanks. I've tried to get him involved in VTA without success . . . but that's another story. Anyway, he and I were talking recently about our former Alpha Company CO's, and I recalled this one captain who came to Alpha straight from the Armor School at Ft. Knox.

One day in the spring of '68, I took my tank back to Dong Ha for some reason — can't remember now. We were eagerly awaiting a hot shower and maybe some hot chow at 9th Motor's mess hall. Our brand new Alpha CO greeted me in the tank park, had me and my crew stand at attention for an "inspection" of us and our tank. We hadn't bathed in weeks and the tank exterior was dusty/muddy. He started chewing me out about the dirty tank! He reached into the sponson box and pulled out some stateside range firing flags and shook the dust in my face. "That is DUST, lieutenant!!" And I said, "Yes, sir, that would be dust." When he was done with his inspection, he walked away feigning disgust. When my business was completed with the Company 1st Sergeant, my tank crew and I re-mounted our tank and said screw the hot shower and hot chow, and drove back up to Con Thien. I heard that he got transferred a few weeks later to be the base laundry officer. Apparently, he was such a pain in the ass that the word went up the chain to the Bn. Sgt. Major who went to the Bn. CO, and that crazy captain was gone, much to the relief of Alpha Company.

### Photo Identified



**Rick Lewis writes:** The picture on Page 21 of the most recent Sponson Box was featured in the Sea Tiger newspaper. The Tank is C-25 and we are on "Operation Stone" in January of 1967. The TC of the tank is GySgt Jones. He was also our Platoon Sgt. The loader was Sgt. Mac. The driver is L/Cpl May, and I am not sure who the gunner was. The Marines riding on the tank are from 2/4. The operation was about 12 miles south of Da Nang where we were chasing down the NVA division that had hit a platoon from Kilo 3/1 on 17 Jan 1967. During the NVA attack, out of 67 Marines on their base, 17 were KIA and 33 were WIA. If the tank heavy section had not gotten there when we did, the surviving platoon of Marines would have not made it. The battle went on for hours. Tankers were awarded one Silver Star and two Bronze Stars for our actions that night. I was very busy in the gunner's seat of my tank. We caught the VC / NVA in the open as they were on the attack, and they did not have time to dig in. Confirmed enemy killed was 246. There were also many enemy soldiers wounded and some captured. If I remember, we had a dozen tanks from Charlie Company on this operation. It was the last time that many tanks from Charlie Company were together on one operation.

### Honor Flight

**Jim Coan writes:** I'm a volunteer with the Honor Flight organization in my county. Last October, I was part of the Welcome Home Committee greeting the World War II and Korean War veterans returning to Tucson from their Honor Flight visit to Washington, D. C. It was about 2200; I was four blocks from home, my mind recalling that wonderful evening's activities, when I saw red and blue lights flashing behind me. I said, "@%&@##" to myself as I pulled over and stopped, keeping my hands visible on the steering wheel and sitting real still. Our county has some trigger-happy deputies and I didn't want any problems. I had on my Vietnam Vet cover with an Eagle, Globe and Anchor showing; plus, I have a Purple Heart recipient license plate.

The deputy walked up to the passenger window and asked: "Do you know why I pulled you over?"

I said, "No, sir," knowing I was probably going a little faster than the posted speed limit, as my mind was not paying attention to the speedometer.

He said, "You were going 35 in a 25 zone." Then he surprised me when he looked at my cap and asked, "When were you in the Marines?"

I told him when and where and what unit I was with. He said he was also a Marine and had served in Iraq as a grunt.

I said, "You Marines did an awesome job over there."

He returned to his vehicle with my driver's license. A few minutes later he returned and said, "I'm not going to cite you, only give you a warning that the neighbors have complained about speeders in this area at night." He >>

reached his hand in the car, shook mine, and said, "Semper Fi, Marine. Have a nice evening." And then he was gone. The words Semper Fidelis sure took on a special meaning for me that evening.

17 October 2016

To: USMC VTA

c/o Bruce Van Apeldoorn

73 Stanton St. Rochester, NY 14611

Fm: (Capt.) John Voss... 2105 Laura Dr. Escondido, CA 92027

RE: Sponson Box 2016 Bonus Issue...Pg 44...3<sup>rd</sup> Tanks at Camp Carroll Sept 68

Bruce,

I had the awesome pleasure of being the Plt Ldr for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, Bravo Co, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tanks beginning in May 68, after the Plt was brought back to JJ Carroll, from it's tour at Khe Sanh.

We re-armed, re-equipped, re-trained and assumed Road Sweep Security duties, and joint ops with the attached Grunts.

I usually had the Heavy Section at JJ Carroll and the Light Section at the Rock Pile.

SSgt Jewell was my Plt Sgt, and along with Sgt Soto we were Locked and Loaded for anything that was placed on our plates.

In June my Company Commander offered me, my first of many, Special Deals...the chance to transfer to Mike Company, 3/3 as it's replacement 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt Ldr, for the 90 day, Lat-Move-Exchange-Student-Program.

Due to the heavy attrition rate of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lts, there was a desperate need for young leaders.

Completing that tour successfully...I thrived and survived in the Grunts...I was re-united with my 3<sup>rd</sup> Plt, back at JJ Carrol.

The Photo on page 44 was probably taken, as we were bore-sighting our main guns and fam firing the co-axel mg's.

Could you give me any info on the Leatherneck Magazine article, from which this photo was taken. If I can get a blow-up, I may be able to read the names on the Main Gun Barrels.

Sgt Soto's Tiger was named...El Degueo...the Battle Song, which Santa Ana played before his final assault on the Alamo...

I believe SSgt Jewell's Tiger was named...Ho Chi Minh's Nightmare.

In December 1968, my CO gave me the opportunity for another Special Deal...By this time, I was getting a little leery of 'Special Deals.'

But he offered me the job of selecting the best 5 Tanks in the BN and the Crews of my choice, to be the Armor Support, for BLT 1/26...so for the rest of my tour, I had the privilege of manning the defenses at

Da Nang and making amphibious landings up and down the coast...in support of Hammer and Anvil Assaults, off of the LPD-6, USS Duluth.

The Tracks would hit the beach at H Hour and our Tanks were in Open-Mike-Boats, landing at H Hour, plus 60 seconds...Since our guns were not gyro-stabilized, we could not fire over the heads of the Tracks, until the ramp dropped and we hit the sand.

At that time, Gy Jose Alvarado became my Plt Sgt and Sgt Timmy Tews became one of my trusted section leaders.

Upon leaving Viet Nam, the Marine Corps, in it's infinite wisdom, in helping me to de-compress...assigned me to become a Series Officer at MCRD San Diego...with the job of keeping 14 DI's out of hack...But we did excel in graduating the first ever, Honor Series.

It was quite a De Ja vu experience, since I had 'graduated' from this same Institute of Higher Learning, several years prior.

I received orders for Flight School, and within a week, I had married my Bride of 47 years...and experienced our Honeymoon, traveling to Pensacola, for Flight Training.

While stationed at MCAS Cherry Point, I selected the A6A-Intruder as my Steed of Choice and named it...Ho Chi Minh's Nightmare>Returns...in honor of SSgt Jewell.

I have had an interesting ride, but I would like to get some more info on the Photo...so that I can get a copy, to put on my I-Love-Me wall.

As an aside, my son was also a Marine Tanker with 2<sup>nd</sup> Tanks...M1A1 Abrams...who took his Plt aboard the Med Float and was able to cross-train with Israeli Tank Units. In having my Young Buck, push against the Herd, He Bull, he advised me that he mounted a 120 mm Main Tube...so I had to inform him that IF he NEEDED 120mm, then he was not 1/2 the man, that I raised him to be!!

Following this tour, he too transferred to the Air Wing and Flew in F-18 Hornets, out of MCAS Miramar.

While flying, he admonished me that HIS Hornet was SUPERSONIC...so I just had to let him know that the A6A was louder and uglier...

Not too sure if that was a high value statement...but it did give him pause...

Semper Fi,

John Voss

928-502-9926

Johnrachelvoss@cs.com

\$30. enclosed for subscription Renewal - Thank you -

# To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

“The memory of a good person is a blessing”

— Proverbs 10:7 —

## Lee Tannehill



Lee at Marble Mountain



Feb. 28, 1946–Nov. 6, 2016, Walnut Creek, California.

Lee passed away on November 6th, 2016 after a courageous battle with cancer. He was surrounded by friends and family during his final days and passed peacefully in his sleep. Lee was born in Oakland, California on February 28th, 1946 to Elsie Jacobs Tannehill and George Pleasant Tannehill. Lee spent his early years working on cars and riding motorcycles. In 1964, at the age of 18, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and was sent to Vietnam. He was a tank crewman during his time in-country.

After returning from Vietnam, Lee married and had four children, Tina, David, Aimee, and Heather. Then, in 1980, Lee met the love of his life, Candy Somers. They were married for nearly 34 years and were blessed with two sons, Derek

and Steven.

Lee joined the Oakland Fire Department in 1971 where he spent 31 years. Outside of his military and firefighting careers, Lee loved woodworking, motorcycles and traveling, but most of all, spending time with his family. He will be incredibly missed.

Lee will be laid to rest at the Oakmont Memorial Park. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the Marines' Memorial Association.

## ROBERT E. “Bob” LINTHICUM



ROBERT E. LINTHICUM “Bob” (Age 86) Of Ocean City, MD on June 24, 2016. Born in Washington, DC.

He was the son of the late Robert E, Sr. and Elizabeth Linthicum. He was a member of the United States Marine Corps

from 1948 to 1977, when he retired as a Lt Colonel. He was a Korean War veteran, having served in combat as a tank platoon leader. Donations can be made to Veterans of Foreign Wars, Marine Corps Heritage Foundation; and USMC Tankers Association.

## Robert M. Croll



Lt. Col. Robert M. Croll, USMC, Ret. Robert M. Croll was born April 15, 1930 in New York City, N.Y. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) in 1951. He was selected for Officer Candidate School and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in April, 1953

and later reassigned as a tank officer. After 23 years of service, he retired from the USMC in 1974 as a Lieutenant Colonel (Lt. Col.). He was a life member of the 1st Marine Division Association; USMC Tankers Association; Marine Corps Association; and the Vietnam Veterans Association, Chapter 436.

## Lawrence “Deto” Tellez

Lawrence “Deto” Tellez, 57, of Pacifica, Calif. passed away unexpectedly on January 2, 2007 in Spokane, Washington. He was born March 16, 1949 in San Francisco, Calif.

Deto served in the United States Marine Corps as a tank crewman; a Vietnam Veteran earning several decorations, including the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with PALM

## William T. Santos

Mr. William T. Santos, 73, of Methuen, MA. died Sunday July 5, 2015 at E. N. Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA. Mr. Santos was a Corporal in the United States Marine Corps and served as a tank crewman during the Vietnam War

## John Thomas Bailey

MSgt (ret) John Thomas Bailey, 71, went home to be with the Lord on Saturday August 27, 2016 at his home.

John was born November 7, 1944 in Glenville, GA to the late Marjorie Ellington and Cecil Bailey and was raised in Dublin, GA. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in 1944 where he proudly served for 21 years with tours in Vietnam, Okinawa, and Guam. Several of his most enjoyable accomplishments were being a drill instructor, working with tanks and the acquaintances he made during his time in service.

He enjoyed all aspects of being an avid outdoor sportsman, particularly hunting and fishing.

## ‘Hanoi Hannah,’ Whose Broadcasts Taunted And Entertained American GIs, Dies



One of North Vietnam’s most recognizable wartime voices fell silent in September 2016, when former radio broadcaster Trinh Thi Ngo, dubbed “Hanoi Hannah” by American

service members, died. Her former employer, the government-run Voice of Vietnam, reported the news on its website Sunday. The radio service says Trinh was 87 when she died, though there are conflicting reports about the year of her birth. Trinh broadcast under the pseudonym Thu Huong, or Autumn Fragrance. At the height of the war the Voice of Vietnam aired three 30-minute segments of hers a day. The North Vietnamese Defense Ministry’s propaganda department wrote her scripts, she told the Voice of Vietnam. Their aim was to degrade U.S. troops’ will to fight, and convince them that their cause was unjust.

## Randall A Browning



UNION. Kentucky—Randall A. Browning “Randy”, 68, passed away Thursday, September 15, 2016, at his residence in Union, KY. Randy worked as a salesman in the food and beverage industry for many years. He was a

member of St. Timothy Parish, lifetime member of VFW Post 7570 (Duwell), decorated Marine Veteran who

>>

served in the Vietnam War receiving multiple honors including: The Navy Cross for combat heroism, multiple Purple Hearts, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam

Service Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Citation and a Rifle Marksman Badge. ■

**The only Ontos Crewman to be awarded the Navy Cross**

**BROWNING, RANDALL A.**

**Corporal, U.S. Marine Corps**

**Company A, 3rd Antitank Battalion, 3d Marine Division (Rein.) FMF**

**Date of Action: September 10, 1967**

**Citation:**

For extraordinary heroism while serving as an Ontos Commander with Company A, Third Antitank Battalion, Third Marine Division (Reinforced) in support of the Third Battalion, Twenty-sixth Marines in the Republic of Vietnam on 10 September 1967. While engaged in a search and destroy operation in the northern sector of Quang Tri Province near the Demilitarized Zone, the Battalion came under a heavy enemy bombardment of artillery and mortar fire. Although painfully wounded by fragments from an artillery round, Corporal (then Lance Corporal) Browning quickly had his injury treated and immediately returned to his Ontos where he learned that his was the only tracked vehicle in operation. Rapidly assessing the situation, he maneuvered his vehicle through the intense hostile fire to a forward position and began delivering highly effective machine-gun and recoilless rifle fire against the enemy. Successfully repulsing the first of several human wave assaults, he remained undaunted by the vicious enemy fire and steadfastly continued to deliver a heavy volume of fire during ensuing fanatical attacks. His aggressive actions repelled the hostile force on each occasion and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. When his recoilless rifle ammunition was expended and his machine gun became inoperable, Corporal Browning unhesitatingly manned a sub-machine gun and continued to deliver devastating fire on the enemy. Due largely to his fearless initiative during the four hour battle, he was undoubtedly instrumental in thwarting the enemy's attempt to overrun the battalion's position and prevented the capture, injury or possible death of many Marines. By his resolute determination, dauntless courage and selfless devotion to duty at great personal risk, Corporal Browning inspired all who observed him and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service.

• Authority: Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals

\*\*\*\*\*

**Rick Walters Adds:** Randy was one of the BEST. During the operation affectionately known as "Ambush Valley" all of the Marine tanks were knocked-out and the two Ontos took RPG hits causing multiple deaths. Randy took the loader from one Ontos, as well as pulling all of his 106 rounds out. Then he loaded up and re-started his Ontos. Since his driver was dead, the other loader became his new driver. Randy pulled his Ontos up on the lines and started firing. There were mass human-wave attacks by an NVA regiment. After all of the 106 rounds were fired, Randy went to 30 cal. and mowed the enemy down like mowing a corn field. When he ran out machinegun ammo, he continued with the grease gun. When that sub-machine ran out of ammo, he went to his M-1911 pistol. At this point, the infantry commanders pull him off the lines.

Upon leaving Vietnam, Randy's records showed the Medal of Honor for "Ambush Valley." It was later reduced (among 7 others) by the Pentagon to a Navy Cross.

# Above & Beyond

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

- |                     |                     |                   |                         |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Michael Anderegg    | Danny Farrell       | Francis Kopf      | David Scanlon           |
| Andrew Anderson     | John Fay            | Steven Kriebel    | Douglas Schrivner       |
| Mark Anderson       | Robert Fierros      | Edwin Kues        | Donald Scott            |
| Gregory Auclair     | Michael Fischer     | Joseph Landaker   | George Search           |
| John Baccarie       | Lloyd Fitzpatrick   | James Langford    | Michael Shaw            |
| *Richard Beirne     | Marvin Fortney      | Richard Langley   | Robert Skeels           |
| Donald Bell         | Mario Fuentes       | Harlan Langlitz   | Steve Skinner           |
| Michael Belmessieri | Ramon Funes Jr.     | James Ledford     | Lemuel Sloan            |
| Sammy Binion        | David Gehrman       | *Richard Lewis    | *Mike E. Smith          |
| Eddid Blanchette    | Jackie Glisch       | Peter Limanek     | James Stayto            |
| *William Bohlen     | Frederic Goger      | Willard Lochridge | Robert Stokes           |
| Reed Bolick         | Jeffrey Griffith    | Richard Lorance   | Guy Thoms               |
| Robert Bonderud     | Robert Gulbranson   | James Lungford    | Edward Tierney          |
| Frank Box           | James Gullede       | Gerald Maddox     | Janice Trantham         |
| Max Brazeau         | Timothy Hackett     | Gerald Maddox     | Everett Tunget          |
| Vicki Brown         | Garry Hall          | James Manson      | *Bruce Van Apeldoorn    |
| Joseph Brusha       | *Anonymous          | Carolyn Martin    | Dyrck Van Dusen         |
| Dennis Burmitt      | John Harper         | Greg Martin       | Michael Vaughn          |
| John Byrne          | John Harper         | Kim Marvin        | Robert Vaxter           |
| Richard Carmer      | Paul Haustowich     | John McGuire      | Bruce Wahlsten          |
| Thomas Cassidy      | Thomas Hayes        | David McKee       | David Walters           |
| Michael Castillo    | John Heffernan      | Kenneth Metcalf   | Michael Waters          |
| Edward Cercone      | Rodney Henderson    | Harold Miller     | *John Wear              |
| John Chambers       | Rodney Henderson    | Jon Morrison      | Walter Wells            |
| Roger Chaput        | Douglas Hightshoe   | Craig Newberry    | Charles West            |
| Darrell Clock       | Eugene Hika         | Craig Newberry    | Kenneth Whitehead       |
| Ronald Colucci      | Theodore Hildabrand | David Owen        | Stanley Williams        |
| Richard Coulter     | Carl Hokanson       | Gary Owens        | Daniel Wokaty           |
| Monty Cramer        | Gordon Hollister    | *Larry Parshall   | Stanley Woodward        |
| Thomas Crossman     | Glen Hutchins       | Richard Peksens   | *Anonymous              |
| Stephen Curti       | Richard Jugenheimer | Gary Peterson     | Adam Zlotek             |
| Kenneth Dahl        | Ronald Kalanick     | *Harold Riensche  |                         |
| Florindo Deroma     | Fred Kellogg        | Peter Ritch       | <b>Scholarship Fund</b> |
| Buster Diggs        | Thomas Kelly        | Chester Ruby      | *James Coan             |
| Justin Donnelly     | Raymond Kennedy     | Dickie Russell    | *William Bohlen         |
| Justin Donnelly     | Michael Kirk        | Joe Sanders       | *Robert Lynch           |
| Richard English     | Michael Kirk Jr.    | LL Santos         | *Thomas Barry           |
| Edgar Evans         | Ron Knight          | James Sausoman    |                         |
| Douglas Ewers       | Clyde Knox          | David Scanlon     |                         |

**Please note: The \* next to the name are Life members who reached into their pocket and donated.**



## Looking for

### 1967-3RD TANKS AMMO TRUCK MISHAP



I don't know if you remember me, but I was the red-headed ammo tech from Alpha Company from September 1967–October 1968. Some Marines remember me for taking fresh hamburger to all of the positions in 1968. Every now and then I'll take a peek at the web site and I noticed the attached photo of the damaged ammo truck in H&S Company photos. I was wondering if it was my truck. I was towed across an anti-tank mine on 17 Dec 1967. It is listed in the 3rd Tank Bn. unit diary as an M54 truck USMC #302421. I was wondering if whoever took these two photos would remember if it was the truck towed down to H&S Company from Alpha Company?

Also, did anyone ever see the publication of the unit award we got for the Battle of Dong Ha Bridge in 1968? When I was attached to the I&I staff at Raleigh, N.C. USMCR Center in 1976, I saw it but wasn't able to get a copy of it. It mentioned that the fighting sounded like 90



mm guns and it mentioned all of us by name. I was Cpl. James Ledford at that time. I would like to get a copy of it to send to my children.

James M. (Mike) Ledford  
11701 St Charles Blvd  
Little Rock, AR 72211-1629  
Phone: (501) 551-0289  
Email: jamesledford99@comcast.net

Greg Martin, our webmaster replies: I took those photos. I was riding on top of 90mm ammo when a mine was detonated. I was sitting right behind the driver with me feet dangling over the side. The driver's left leg was really messed up. I was knocked out when I hit the ground and a crate of fifty ammo was just a few feet away from me. My back has never been the same since. We were on an ammo run from H&S 3rd to a base (but I don't remember which one) around Jan or Feb 1967.

### A CO, 5TH TANKS ON OKINAWA IN 1967



Bob Bonderud writes: Here is my photo of the Marines of A Co. 5th Tank Bn. that was taken in late April or May 1967 at Camp Hanson, Okinawa. The same photo sent to you by Howard Blum appeared in the #4-2016 issue of the

Sponson Box on Page 15. I added to the photo the names on Howard Blum's list along with the names of Marines I remember. In mid-April 1967, Bert Trevail, Tim Teague, Dean Browder, Tom Tippett, Clell Osburn, Rick Allen and I reported to A Co. 5th Tanks from Staging Bn at Camp Pendleton. Some of the Marines in the photo including me spent our entire 13 month overseas tour with A Co. on Okinawa. I then extended my tour an additional three months and was assigned to Third Platoon, C Co. 1st Tank Bn. (via BLT 3/1) from mid-May to mid-August 1968.

Not long after this photo was taken, a number of Marines including Howard Blum, John Kennedy, Anthony Bennett, Terry Broussard and Clarence Obie (not shown in group photo) were ordered to RVN. The rest of us went to the Mount Fuji, Japan Firing Range in early June for a two-week firing exercise using the only tanks we had in the company. There were three flame and two gun tanks. After we returned from Japan, Bert Trevail was ordered to RVN. Others left the unit at about that time. A Co. was used as a replacement draft unit for tankers needed in the 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions. Our tanks were sent to RVN sometime around July '67. After that, no replacement tanks came into the company and we spent our time training in infantry tactics at the Northern Training Area or doing mess and guard duty at Camp Hanson.

The scuttlebutt in A Co. 5th Tanks after August 1967 was that Anthony Bennett's tank had rolled over a 500 lb. bomb rigged as a land mine. He died on August 16, 1967. I remember Anthony Bennett as an intelligent Marine with a great sense of humor. After Christmas '67, we heard that

Clarence Obie died from an RPG hit to the turret. He was the loader on C-33 which was in the tank platoon assigned to BLT 3/1. I was later assigned to the same tank when I joined BLT 3/1 in May '68. After the Tet Offensive in late-January and February 1968 we heard that another Marine from the Company had died at Hue City. The story I remember hearing at the time was that an RPG had hit the turret and the concussion killed one of the Marines who had left A Co. in late May '67. That Marine was Wesley Hodges from Lufkin Texas.

In September 1967, another RVN draft came through and Tim Teague, Clell Osburn, Rick Allen, William C. Davis, and Dennis Cook (Davis and Cook are not pictured) went to war. Some, if not all of them, fought in the Battle of Hue City with A Co. 1st Tanks. Several months later, Dennis Cook was killed by a sniper round while on an operation near Da Nang. He died on May 6, 1968 just short of his rotation home. Dennis was a big



(Left) Clarence Obie and (Right) Dennis Cook

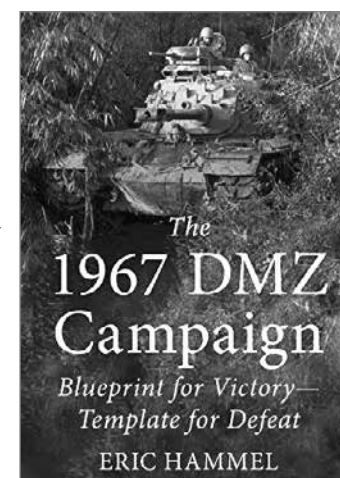
man who took crap from nobody. Rick Allen returned to the states after his tour was up and was featured in an article about Marine Tankers in Leatherneck Magazine.

In April 2015, thanks to Mike "Belmo" Belmessieri, I regained contact with Bert Trevail in San Francisco after 48 years. I am sorry he and his wife Sheila moved to Texas. My wife, Pat, and I had some good times with them. Bert and I reminisced over one or two drinks, maybe more, about those days at the Camp Del Mar Tank Training School, Staging Bn. and A Co. 5th Tanks.

Comment: If you can help ID any of the nameless faces please give John Wear a call at 215-794-9052 or send him an email at johnwear2@verizon.net

### DOES ANYONE RECOGNIZE THIS TANK?

Ben Cole found this Kindle-only pamphlet on Amazon.com. He wonders if anyone has ever seen this photo image and if so, can they identify the vehicle?



### FROM THE VTA WEBSITE GUESTBOOK

While serving in Nam in 1956, I was wounded at Marble Mountain on 9-25-65 by a 57mm recoilless rifle. I was driving the lead tank (B-35) with Lt. Mathews as TC. Eventually, I went back to LeJeune to Alpha Co.

I got out in August 1967 as a Sgt. (E-5). I was wondering if any of my friends remember me.

Terry McKeel

Email: terrybeck19@att.net

**Note:** We have sent two email replies to Terry asking him to join the VTA with no response from him.

If any of you do get hold of him, please invite him to join the VTA!!! ■

# Tanks & Medals of Valor

Bruce R. Wahlsten

Home of record: Minneapolis, Minnesota

## AWARDS AND CITATIONS



Silver Star—Awarded for actions during the Vietnam War

The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Corporal Bruce R. Wahlsten (MCSN: 2313619), United States Marine Corps, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving as a Tank Commander with Company B, 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. In the late afternoon of 21 February 1969, during a search and destroy operation, Corporal Wahlsten's platoons was supporting Company D, First Battalion, Seventh Marines when it was hit by a heavy volume of automatic weapons, small arms, and rocket-propelled grenade fire from an estimated North Vietnamese Army battalion, his well-concealed entrenched positions. When the tank commanded by Corporal Wahlsten was hit by a rocket round, the driver, killed instantly, depressed the accelerator ceasing the tank to hurl directly into the entrenched enemy positions. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, Corporal Wahlsten, with

complete disregard for his own safety, left the turret, thereby exposing himself to the heavy volume of enemy fire and, although painful wounded, moved to the front of the tank and removed the body of the driver from the compartment. Continuing to display exceptional courage, he returned to the tank, commander's cupola and encouraged his wounded loader to drive the tank as he himself began to place accurate .50 caliber machine gun fire on the enemy positions. Covering the withdrawing infantry, while simultaneously directing the tank's withdrawal from the fire-swept area, Corporal Wahlsten attended his wounded comrades until the corpsman arrived. His heroic and timely actions inspired all who observed him and contributed immeasurably to the accomplishment of his unit's mission. By his courage, aggressive fighting spirit and selfless devotion to duty in the face of great personal danger, Corporal Wahlsten upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and of the United States Naval Service.

**Action Date:** February 21, 1969

**Service:** Marine Corps

**Rank:** Corporal

**Company:** Company B

**Battalion:** 1st Tank Battalion

**Division:** 1st Marine Division (Rein.), FMF

## Guest Opinion

### An Open Letter to the Membership of USMCVTA

BY LEE DILL

You know me, I'm just like you. I am just a nobody that joined the "Corps" during the Vietnam War. I did my job and I came home. Am I famous? No! Am I forgotten? Absolutely. Was anything I did special? No, not to us, because we all just did what we had to do. Did I do a good job? Absolutely, I survived my tour, and built a life. Will you be remembered? Only if you want to be. How will I get to be remembered or how will others that died in battle along side of me get remembered? It has taken me a long time to try to figure out an answer to that last question.

Picture this: it's football season, a 10-yard pass is thrown, the receiver catches it, the crowd roars, and he and the quarterback do a 10-second dance contest to celebrate. Why? Because they did their job. Did we get to celebrate on coming home from Vietnam? We did our job. You know the answer to that!

I was lucky. I got to go to college as a history major. Later, I earned my living in it, but at heart I am a history buff and a "wannabe writer." When I talk with people my age, whose fathers have just passed away, and I see a flag on the coffin, I asked where did he serve, or what ship was he on, or what did he do? Most of the time the answer is "I don't know." My mouth drops open and I say, "How could you not know, didn't you ask, didn't he tell you or write it down?" And most time the answer is: "He did not want to talk about it or he didn't think it was important." But the absolute truth of the matter is that it was important and he was special and what he did should be remembered, but his story is now tossed into the dust bin of history; like it never even happened.

So why am I bothering you with this? Because that pain-in-the-ass, John Wear, asked me to. So, here's the scoop on me: I joined USMCVTA early (in 1999) but never attended a reunion. My reasons were that I only kept in touch with two of my Marine tanker buddies from Vietnam, Tim Hanks and Dennis Martin, and to be very honest I really didn't keep in touch with them very well. I knew almost no Vietnam veterans; somehow it turns out that all of my friends have always been 5 to 10 years younger than me, and the vast majority still are. From 1997 until 2013, I was a Boy Scout leader, and while I stressed love of God and Country to the Scouts, I still didn't have time for reunions, I was too busy.

It did occur to me that I did want to leave my history (Tour of Duty) on paper and I decided to write it for friends and family. So I wrote it and I included photographs, maps, and basically I did a memory dump of what I thought was important from Day 1 of my tour in Vietnam to my last day. I was very pleased with the results, printed the document, and it was well received by my family and a few selected friends. It did generate some questions that I explained as they came up, but overall it helped them to understand me. Things we Marines considered normal were hard for the non-military friends and family to imagine.

So what brought me to a VTA reunion and led me to write to you-all? I read the Sponson Box article written by Ed Hiltz that ran a few issues ago. I had spent time with Ed in An Hoa from January '69

until he went home in April. When we were in-country, he and I had exchanged home addresses since we were both from Baltimore. I actually called Ed about 15 years ago. We were cordial to each other, but were both too busy with our families and careers to do anything else. Ed wrote the article and it was pretty good. It was a normal type Vietnam article with no "John Wayne stuff." It was just "Here's what I did" sort of stuff. Long story short; I reconnected with Ed and we both went to the 2015 Washington, D.C. reunion. It turns out that we both just did one day but, we both went in order to see up close and personal exactly what USMCVTA was all about.

Well, it was there I ran into John Wear, and things have been different since then. In our conversation, I admitted to writing my own Vietnam history and John asked, if I had written pages of stuff for friends and family, then why I had not contributed them to the Sponson Box. I replied to John that, in all honesty, even though I did a tour and a six-month extension, my tour really wasn't that "bad" or glorious. I never hit a mine, took an RPG, or was wounded; I thought my story would be boring and uninteresting. John replied the VTA wanted to document everyone's tour, no matter how mundane or boring, and he said that they were all important. Since then I have looked at my book and have recently been feeding John stories, non-heroic as they are.

Which now brings me to you. Have you told your family anything about Vietnam? Have you written anything down? Here is the part you may have a hard time believing: They really do want to know what you did. There were very few tankers out of all the Marines who served in Vietnam. I ask you: Who could cause more damage in an hour? A company of grunts or one tank working out? Correct. The one tank. We were the equalizers, so your family and friends need to know what you did. We need to know what you did.

Yes, I know it's hard to write, but the more you do it the easier it is. Write an outline of the months you were there. Try to remember each month and who you were with, what tank, what job, and what you did. Even an incomplete story is better than no story. So please write or have a son or daughter write while you talk. If parts of the tour hurt to talk about, leave it out, but anything is better than nothing.

The history books are filled unfortunately about how the war was stopped, thanks to the protestors. We all know most of the protestors where limp-dick males that were afraid to go. We were not afraid; we served loyally and faithfully until we rotated home and moved on with life.

When we went in, we all loved the Corps. Some of us, when we left, it was not so much love. I will honestly admit, when I got my 6-month early out, I ran for the gate and never looked back. It seems that I could not adapt to the stateside Marine Corps after Vietnam. In Vietnam, I felt I was doing something important, but in LeJeune I was dying in place.

"Write my friend; just write something on paper and take it out of your memory bank where it's been just sitting dormant for nearly 50 years." — Lee Dill 3/6/16 ■

# What Members Are Doing

## A Fort Benning Happening



Rick Lewis and Bruce VanApeldoorn visited the USMC Tank School and the US Army Armor Museum at Ft Benning, Georgia during the MCTA reunion in October 2016. This is where Rick passed the word inviting the MCTA to join the VTA in St Louis.

## Teaching Gun Safety

Guy Everest and his grandson, Ty review gun safety



## This One Did Not Get Away!

This 20 pound Salmon was caught by Joe Tyson on Lake Ontario in August 2016



## Another Mini-Reunion



(L to R) Bob Willoughby, Stan Williams, Ned Schultz, John Hunter...

**John Hunter writes:** 3rd Platoon, Bravo Co, 1st. Tanks has had another mini reunion at the "Pendleton Round Up" in Pendleton, Oregon. We attended on September 15, which was National Breast Cancer Day, so pink shirts were the uniform of the day. Some Marines were out of uniform! As you can see, we have a complete tank crew here, and as you can see we are ready for action.

## Marine Corps Marathon 2016



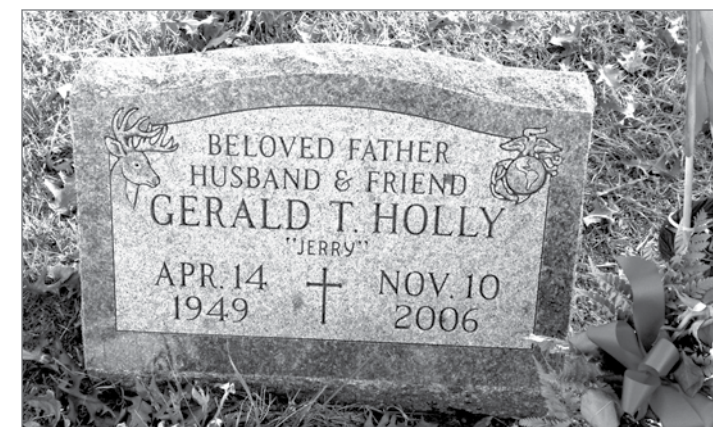
Corpsman Up!!!

**Bruce Van Apeldoorn writes:** Prior to the beginning of the MC Marathon I met a new Marine Lieutenant from Chattanooga, TN. He found me at the end of the Marathon and presented me with my Eagle, Globe & Anchor and I presented him with a challenge coin from the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. Shortly after reuniting with my wife, Nancy and my three sons, I had a hard time breathing and was dizzy. I was well taken care of by Navy Corpsmen (in

the photo above). Within an hour I was back to normal. Thanks Doc! Not sure what the next challenge will be for me but I have officially removed "Marathon" from my vocabulary. My thanks to all who wished me well and to my Marine Buddies...Semper Fi!

About a week later, Bruce adds: Just had an interview with the local newspaper for Veterans Day about the MCM. Thought you might enjoy seeing a picture of the medal. I told the folks at the paper, "The Marines treated me as if an exhibit from the Night of the (Marine) Museum had come to life."

## Remembering a Good Friend



Todd Phillips celebrated the 241st Birthday of the USMC

and the 10th Anniversary of the passing of his best buddy and brother Vietnam Marine tanker, Jerry Holly.

## USMC 241st Birthday in Philly



Every year on November 10th in Philadelphia, there is a gathering of Marines at Cookie's Tavern to celebrate the birthday of our beloved Corps. The Philly cops block of busy Oregon Avenue for two blocks in both directions and the beer and the good times flow for 24 hours. If you look close you might see John Wear in the crowd. ■

## Photos from Vietnam



1st Platoon, Charlie Co, 1st Tanks with a "conga line" to unstuck the mired tank on the left. (Photo by Dick Peksens)

# SHORT TIMER!!!

**Tom Fenerty wrote:** In July '68, after my post-Nam leave, I was on my way back south to finish my last nine months in the Corps which remained on my four year enlistment. Another Marine and I, both of us E-4s, had just returned from Nam and we looked it. He had been with 1/5 and had fought in Hue City. We stepped off the bus in DC together. We'd met on the Trailways bus in New York and were getting off in DC for a rest stop. Our summer service uniforms were wrinkled, covers off, our sleeves rolled up with our Nam ribbons on. We'd both just woken up from a snooze on the bus. A young, short guy in civvies with a tight buzz cut, filled with piss and vinegar, confronted our sleepy faces. He said he was an "officer," he had his little boy at his side who was grinning up at us like we were about to get our ragged asses chewed. The "officer" looked Quantico green. No mention of his rank. No show of ID card. He proceeded to chew out two tired, very skinny, just-back-in-the-World vets towering over him. In front of his son, he yelled at us for "being out of uniform." Adding, "Did we know how many men bravely died for that uniform we were disgracing?" Neither of us said a word. We just turned and walked into the snack bar and left him standing in the crowd, his son at his side, his head up his tight ass.

**Another Vietnam Marine veteran buddy, Jim McPeak, replied:** A very similar thing happened to me. Upon getting out of the Philadelphia Naval Hospital after my WIA convalescent leave, I had to report in to MCB Philadelphia. Since all my Marine stuff: my sea bag of uniforms; personal effects, etc. had been left on Okinawa before I went to Vietnam, I had to borrow a uniform off a friend of mine named Tom Savory. Tom was already out and did not need the uniform anyway. Needless to say, the trop uniform (a.k.a. "tropical worsted wool") was not in the best shape with no ribbons, etc. My check-in officer, a 1st Lt., jumped all over my shit about the uniform, my long hair and God knows what else. A 1st Sgt. intervened and explained to Lt.



Marvel my story. The Top then proceeded to get me up to Broad & Washington to get me "squared away." That was where the U.S. Marine Corps Supply Center was located at the time. Later on, that Lt. turned out to be an ok guy and we even had a laugh about me reporting in that day. I spent the rest of my time there at the Navy Base Main Gate on Broad St. And I even made Sgt. two months later. God bless the Marine Corps. What can I say?

**Jim Coan also wrote:** My last morning in Nam, I was standing beside a shallow ditch outside the Da Nang air terminal, anxiously awaiting my flight back to the World. On the other side of the ditch was a barbed wire fence. To my right were a dozen nervous Marine "newbies" who had either just deplaned or were awaiting a flight out to their units. I didn't care either way, because I was going HOME!

An NVA rocket impacted about a half-mile away from us. All those "new boots" on my right charged toward the ditch, carrying me along with them. I got thrown into the barbed wire fence and one utility trouser leg was ripped open from knee to ankle. My flight was arriving at any minute and I did not have time to change, so I flew all the way to Okinawa with ripped trousers.

As we Vietnam "survivors" exited our plane in Okinawa, no doubt saying a little prayer of thanks, a pint-sized Marine captain wearing starched utilities and spit-shined jungle boots confronted me. He had spotted my ripped trousers. I stared straight ahead (over his head) while he chewed me out. I tried to explain, but he didn't want to hear it. I felt a rage roaring up inside me as my fists tightened. I was a 1st Lt., having been to Hell and back, and this little \*&%#%#@ wanted to throw his bantam-weight around at my expense. I was ready to put a fist in his face when a voice in my head reminded me: "You will surely go to the brig if you do this, you'll face a courts-martial, and your long-awaited reunion with your family will be delayed for a very long time." So, I bit my tongue and unclenched my fists, and a few days later was back home. But I had that captain's name memorized, and if we ever met up again . . .

*Editor's Comment: We all have a story or two about being a short timer. It could be a story about a buddy while you were together in-country or about your own return to the "World." Please consider jotting down your own short timer story and sending it to John Wear to share it with the membership!!!* ■

# Corporal Ronald W Knosky Park Linden, New Jersey

BY: BILL "JJ" CARROLL

As many enjoy the playground, play basketball, or the activities of Summer Recreation Camp, I'll bet that many don't know who Second Ward's 2-acre main park at Stiles and Elm Streets is named in honor of. Ronald W. Knosky was born on January 27th, 1946. Although attending school in Elizabeth, his listed home of record after graduation from high school was Linden, New Jersey.

Ronald Knosky served proudly in the U.S. Marine Corps and attained the rank of corporal. He lost his life while serving with Alpha Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, in the defense of his country on May 14th, 1967, in South Vietnam. He was 21 years of age. He will always be remembered as a Linden resident who sacrificed all for his country. He is proudly remembered with a monument in the park which receives municipal recognition every Memorial Day. The next time you stop by the park, please visit the monument and pay tribute to a local hero.

**- Knosky's name can be found on the Vietnam National Memorial in Washington DC on Panel 19E, row 119.**



Bill "JJ" Carroll writes: I received a message from John Wear that you wanted to contact me about your brother, Ron Knosky. I remember the day that Ron Knosky and Dale Otto were killed at Gio Linh. We were under enemy artillery and rocket fire constantly. On May 14, 1967, I was on a tank crew that was at the next position up from Ron's tank. I had to go by his

tank to go on an errand to get something. I stopped and talked to Ron. He was writing a letter, I believe to your mother. I seem to recall that Mother's Day 1967 was on May 14th. I made a stupid joke about "writing to mommy" or something like that. Ron called me an asshole and we both laughed out loud. As I left Ron, I got about 100 feet from Ron's tank when we received incoming artillery fire. I dropped down into a nearby trench until I figured it was clear to return to my tank. When I got back to my tank, the infantry passed the word that two tankers were hit near our position. I ran back to Ron's tank only to discover that it was Ron and Dale Otto. It was only by the grace of >>



Cpl. Ron Knosky with Martha Raye



**Alpha Company, 3rd Tanks**

Front Row (L to R): S/Sgt. Roberts; Cpl. Washington; L/Cpl Milos (KIA); Cpl. Knosky (KIA). Back Row (L to R): Cpl. Cooper; L/Cpl Rigsby; Cpl. Baker; Sgt. Short, Lt. Beck; L/Cpl Langley, L/Cpl French; Sgt. Fare.

God that I was not killed with them. The other two crewmen on their tank were Johnny Holmes and John Hahn.

I found out about the park in NJ that honors Ron from his good friend, "Cappy" Everhard, when Johnny Holmes and I met Cappy at our Charleston reunion in 2009. Johnny and I were headed to the hotel bar when we saw a message on the reunion bulletin board that Cappy was looking for anyone who knew Ron.

I have attached our platoon roster from Vietnam which includes Ron and Dale Otto. I have also included pictures of our platoon. There is one of Ron and Dale together taking a break from swimming. As you can see by the roster, our platoon took a lot of casualties. I was wounded on Sept 2, 1967, while fighting the North Vietnamese Army in a bunker complex. The fighting was intense. My tank took a direct hit under our turret machine gun and penetrated our tank. I spent 5 weeks in the hospital recovering. I then was sent back to our platoon at Con Thien.

I am originally from Wilmington, Delaware. However, I now live in Stillwater, Minnesota. I plan on visiting the park and Ron's gravesite as soon as I can.

Dale Otto and another Marine from our platoon, Miles Jansen, were from here in Minnesota. In 1987, I had the opportunity to visit with both their mothers. Each year during Memorial Day weekend, my wife Millicent and I visit their graves. So, when I visit Dale, I always think of Ron and say a prayer for them.

Bill  
SgtMaj William F. Carroll USMC (Ret.)  
2725 Saddle Court, Unit 4  
Stillwater, MN 55082  
651-342-0913

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Karen Knosky Lindow Replies: I received your note, thank you. I am sorry to admit but I am a terrible procrastinator. I said to myself, "I'll get to it tomorrow" and I don't. It only took me two years to contact Pappy Reynolds to add addi-

tional pictures to Ronnie's web page.

I want to thank you for writing to me about your time with Ronnie and your comments about his park in Linden, NJ. Both were very special. Every so often I will Google search Ronnie's name and find something new written about him, even after all these years. I just found an article written by "Cappy" (Everhard) who was at the Draft office in NJ on Feb. 2, 1966 with Ronnie. Cappy writes about Ronnie and about their time in California training on the tanks. I'm sorry I didn't know about the Tankers Association beforehand. I only found it a few years ago when you all were in Charleston in 2009. I was living in downtown Charleston—funny how paths cross.

My mother was able to track down the Otto family in '68 (?) and they came out to visit us in NJ. We kept in contact for a few years. Also, Captain Beck from New Mexico contacted my mother and they kept in touch.

Again, thank you for your kind words and prayers. Please take care.

Karen Knosky Lindow  
1700 Franke Drive – Apt. 304  
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464  
Phone: 843-870-1011

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From the Virtual Wall website:  
The most squared away Marine I ever knew—POSTED ON 4/1/14 BY RIC LANGLEY

I served with Ron as a tank crewman in Vietnam many years ago. Ron was the most squared away Marine I ever knew, even in Nam. We served together for many months under some very bad conditions. We formed a bond that only combat can form. We were truly Brothers in Arms. I held Ron in my arms as he took his last breath on that day in May, 1967. I only wish there had been something that I could have done to prevent his death. Rest in peace, brother. Semper Fi. ■

## Task Force Robbie: "Mobile" Division Reserve – 1968

BY: LT. COL. BRUCE MCLAREN, USMC (RET.)

Please refer to my earlier input to an article that would appear in the Leatherneck magazine entitled "Battle for Hue City" (that appeared in a past issue of the magazine). What follows are events which occurred in the northern I Corps, after the commencement of the Tet Offensive in 1968.

**Background:** In January, 1968, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division in I Corps was heavily committed across the entire front from Phu Bai to Hue City to Quang Tri, Dong Ha, Gio Linh, Con Thien, Cam Lo, Camp Carroll, the Rock Pile, Mutter's Ridge and Khe Sanh. When Tet '68 broke, Major General Rathvon McC. Tompkins, CG 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division, needed a very flexible mobile reserve capability which could be mounted out at a moment's notice to either reinforce existing defensive positions anywhere in I Corps or to attack the enemy at their vulnerable areas.

On 2 February 1968, I attended a briefing held by Colonel James R. Stockman, Division G-3 at the time. Also in attendance was Colonel Clifford Robichaud, the Division's senior colonel who was Division Inspector. Lt. Colonel Fred Chapman, former CO, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion, was also an attendee. Chapman was recovering from a broken leg and was an assistant operations officer at Division. When I learned what the topic of discussion was, I understood why my presence was requested. The Division Commander had proposed the creation of a "mobile" division reserve. These officers were to determine the feasibility, requirements, and planning for such an innovation. After the CG's desires and expectations were presented, it was announced that Colonel Robichaud would be the CO of the new Task Force... and the general named it "Task Force Robbie" (TFR). Wing representatives and other supporting unit reps soon joined the briefing. Our group settled down for in-depth discussions for about a seven-hour initial briefing. In sum, the

personnel and equipment for the implementation of the armored Task Force would come from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Reconnaissance Battalion, and the current infantry battalion that was located on "C-3" (Cam Lo Hill). Other supporting units would be the 11<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Communication Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> MT Battalion and US Army "B" Battery, 1/44th Arty (M-42 Dusters and Quad -50's). The 12<sup>th</sup> Marines would provide FSCC support and pre-planned fires. The Division Air Officer would provide TACP capabilities.

We were all quick to learn what a hard charger Colonel Robichaud was, and was going to be. The initial Task Force Robbie staff were as follows:

CO Colonel Clifford Robichaud—WW II and Korean War infantry officer  
XO Lt. Col. Karl J. Fontenot—Currently CO 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion  
S-1 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant Richard A. Kawanis, "A" Co, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion  
S-2 GySgt Carl W. Keegan, Hqs. Battalion, (G-2) 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar Div.  
S-3 Major Bruce Mac Laren, XO, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion  
S-3A 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Douglas Barney, S-3A, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion  
S-4 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant James T. Donlan. (I had asked Col. haudearlier in an aside conversation to consider Donlan as the Task Force S-4. "Deuce" Donlan had a lot of experience in the logistics field as a former tank SNCO as well as in his current duties in the tank battalion as atank platoon leader and working in S-4. More on Donlan later...)



Comm. O  
Major David Murch  
(Murch was a most professional communications officer, probably the best in the Division. In a short period of time, he was instrumental in assuring that TFR had good tactical comm. for forthcoming mobile operations. A very sharp 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant Budinger reported in as Major Murch's relief shortly after TFR moved to S-3.)  
Engr. Team  
Sweep/Demo Team Leaders, "B" Co, 11<sup>th</sup> Engineer Bn.  
Sgt. Harold Myers  
Sgt. Leonard West  
"C" Co,  
Captain Warren J. O'Buch  
1<sup>st</sup> Plt. 2nd Lt. Stephen P. Larson  
2<sup>nd</sup> Plt. 2nd Lt. John T. Mero  
Note: "A" Co, 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Bn. frequently contributed tank support to TFR on call. Truck Det.  
1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant T.W. Mosser, 3rd MT Battalion.  
"H" Co 2/4  
Captain J.L. Williams  
(Note: H/2/4 was the initial infantry company located on C-3. As infantry battalions moved off-line to Cam Lo for limited R&R, the designated infantry support company for TFR changed.)  
On 3 February 68, I had occasion >>

## SPECIAL REMINDER

REMINDER- THE USMCVTA BOOKS, "FORGOTTEN TRACKS VOLUME 1 & 2", WHICH IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE VTA HISTROY PROJECT, ARE AVALALBE FOR SALE TO OUR MEMBERS AND FRIENDS. THE COST OF THE BOOKS ARE \$40.00 FOR VOLUME 2 AND \$35.00 FOR VOLUME 1. THESE PRICES INCLUDE SHIPPING COSTS.

CONTACT PETE RITCH AT PHONE: 850-734-0014 OR E-MAIL: GOLDENDOG@MCHSI.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING THE PURCHASE OF OUR BOOKS.

to meet with Colonel Robichaud alone. He told me, in no uncertain terms, just what he expected. While he was experienced with tank support during his career, he had little knowledge of the efforts needed to keep the tanks on line and ready to go. I remember telling the "Old Man" (and I use this term in a professional and personal sense) that for every hour of operation, the tank(s) would require at least three (3) hours of maintenance. Also, tank movement was roughly at three (3) gallons of diesel fuel per mile. Just starting a tank engine cost an estimated \$10.00. I also encouraged the colonel to get "dirty" with the tankers whenever he got a chance. And he did just that! I also suggested that he establish a close personal relationship with our new S-4, Lieutenant "Deuce" Donlan. Donlan bore most of the load for TFR's logistics, but he would need the Colonel's muscle (influence). I also advised the colonel that Donlan was a real "scrounger" ... learned in his former enlisted status. Donlan would often bypass normal logistic protocols to get what TFR needed. Colonel Robichaud was, likewise, a shortcut taker! He and Donlan got along well professionally as well as personally.

Later in the afternoon on 3 February 68, the Old Man fragged a helicopter for an aerial recon of our TAOR. Col. Robichaud, Lt. Col. Fontenot, Captain O'Buch and I made the flight. Flying at 1500 feet, the area looked pretty good to most, but I had some real reservations about choke points and off-road traffic ability. We needed good ground reconnaissance input. I expressed my concerns to the Old Man, and he told me to fix it.

Planning went on at Dong Ha until 5 February 1968, when the elements of TFR moved out to Cam Lo (C-3) for defensive posturing. TFR moved by echelon to reduce traffic on Route 9. Two command bunkers had been designated for TFR use at C-3. Attached engineers worked to improve these bunkers and also to prepare other pro-

tective bunkers for our Marines. Efforts to improve the position remained continuous.

(Let me deviate here from actual events as they unfolded.)

At that time, a mobile task force in the Marine Corps was a tanker's dream! Most 1802 MOS types have been to the Associate Armor Officers Course at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. Several SNCO's had also received armor training at Ft. Knox. While I carried an additional 0302 MOS, my four (4) years of armor training at Norwich University initially placed me in the 1802 MOS in my Corps career. Interestingly enough, Colonel Robichaud advised me one day that he also was a Norwich grad.... Class of 1938! (The difference in our training was that I learned about M-4A3E8 "Sherman" tanks, and the Colonel was into horse cavalry. I did not express this opinion to the Old Man! He was fast becoming a tanker.) In the days following, I did spend much time with the Old Man, Doug Barney and "Deuce" Donlan. The colonel went after every suggestion we passed him. I am sure Division headquarters personnel and FSR logisticians hated to see him coming ... and especially when accompanied by "Deuce" Donlan!

While the tank's ANGR-3 radios and Aux. receivers were good for inter-tank communications, Major Dave Murch had to work very hard to create a blend of mobile communications, which kept our infantry and supporting units on line at all times. Under Murch's direction, our TFR communicators did this very quickly. The Communications Battalion provided most of our needs expeditiously via Major Murch and later 1st Lieutenant Budinger.

One of the first coordinating measures I briefed the Old Man on was the immediate integration of tankers into infantry and Recon patrols ... less Recon's Sting Ray-type operations which were coordinated by their parent battalion. In addition to normal patrol

activities, we needed information on the possibilities of mobile operations off the main MSRs. The less time our vehicles spent on major traffic routes, the less mine damage we would experience. Choke points at major river and stream crossings, culverts, etc. needed to be by-passed. Major routes were designated as Strike Routes (We changed the names daily). All major strike routes were reconnoitered for parallel traffic means, but this was accomplished by tankers working with infantry... afoot. Surprisingly, traffic ability was reasonably feasible paralleling all major roads. To consolidate the traffic ability input, either Lieutenant Barney or I would brief and debrief daily patrols.

I can't say enough about our two engineer sweep/demoteams. These young men were sweeping on the roads daily, and also integrated into patrols to survey fords, choke points, river bank, etc. for possible clearance with their 40-pound shape charges. A Corporal Beeler was particularly adept with explosives and could reduce barriers or open up a tank passage in quick time. (Beeler also broke my leg when we both leaped into the same fox hole at the same time during a breakfast incoming on C-3).

Our TACP and FO personnel all learned to operate from either jeeps, M-35's or, when necessary, from a tank deck on the move. Herein, Major Murch, and later his relief, 1st Lieutenant Budinger and Comm. Battalion personnel, kept us up to speed.

Artillery fire was preregistered on all strike routes and possible enemy ambush sites. FO's and infantry units worked with artillery call signs daily as did tank commanders. Occasionally, recon by fire was authorized to the tanks depending upon our movement locations and tactical situation. Repair of external T/I phones on the tanks' sterns was continual.

After a solid week of vehicle maintenance, tactical briefings, and ground reconnaissance of our TAOR, TFR

was ready. Colonel Robichaud went to the Division CP almost daily. He was usually accompanied by S-3A or S-4. He also started to visit our tank crews daily to learn more about the vehicles and required maintenance. I watched him one morning helping the retriever crew break track on a damaged tank. He was as pleased with himself as the tankers were to have him get his hands

dirty. Colonel Robichaud stimulated TFR morale!

Roughly, it took us about ten days from TFR inception to become tactically proficient and meet the CG's requirements. When the Tet/NVA threat was reduced, TFR was disestablished on 29 May 68. A greatly reduced Task Force Mike was left in its place to continue defensive measures, ground

patrolling, and terrain appreciation-gathering for the Army's inbound 3rd/5th Brigade. I faded away just before the Army rolled into C-3.

*Editor's Note: Col. McLaren passed away in 2011. This story was discovered in an email archive and we are publishing it in his memory. Rest in peace, Sir. ■*

Editor's note: This newspaper article appeared in a New York City newspaper back in the middle 1960's. It sounds as if today's anti-military Westboro Baptist Church may have gotten the idea for their own despicable behavior from this horrible event.

**It Serves You Right**

## Viet Victim's Widow Ridiculed over Phone

By PAUL WEISSMAN  
Herald Tribune News Service

NEW YORK — It was Memorial Day in Viet Nam's Ba Gia area and battle-hardened Marine helicopter crewmen blanched with horror, according to correspondents.

There before them was all that was left of the 39th Ranger Battalion that for 20 hours had been locked in combat with Communist forces. The two Americans, Capt. Christopher J. O'Sullivan and an unidentified sergeant, had apparently been shot repeatedly after they fell. They were surrounded by the corpses of 107 South Vietnamese soldiers.

More than 8,000 miles from the battle scene, the captain's widow picked up her telephone in New York and one of several anonymous callers screamed:

**"He didn't belong in Viet Nam. Your husband got what he deserved. I'm glad, it serves you right."**

Then he laughed and hung up. Mrs. Eleanor O'Sullivan fainted after the first call. The letters that followed made her ill.

Not too long ago, Mrs. O'Sullivan and her two sons, Michael, 4, and Stephen, 3, had received a letter from their father:

**"I cannot protect you from all the**

hurts of the world," it said, "but I can try to protect you from one of its major dangers.

"And that, my sons, is why, though we are thousands of miles apart, yet you are still before my eyes, and I must try to protect you from this war."

A 29-year-old career soldier, Capt. O'Sullivan was born in New York and was graduated from Fordham University in 1958 as an ROTC lieutenant. He had been in Viet Nam since September.

Mrs. O'Sullivan said the captain was offered and refused a desk assignment when his tour was up. He felt his place was with his Ranger battalion, "the little soldiers" that comprised the 39th. He was 6 feet 2.

Since January, 442 casualties have been reported in the Ba Gia area, 65 miles north of Da Nang Air Base.

Mrs. O'Sullivan said she did not know what prompted the calls and letters and has had her phone number changed to an unlisted one.

William O'Sullivan, the captain's father, heard of it and broke into a rage: "The dirty, dirty rats," he said. "My boy died over there. He loved those people. What a lovely boy he was."

# THIS JARHEAD'S STORY

BY: CAPT. ALLEN COHEN

John has been cajoling me for many years now to write an article for the Sponson Box. I must admit that I truly enjoy receiving this publication to read about the many experiences of our Viet Nam Tankers in action over the course of the many years of the war. Although I could share the stories of the firefights and gruesome experiences of war, I think that letting "sleeping dogs" alone to their dreams is a better bet for my mental well-being.

I grew up in Norwalk, Connecticut, the son of a Jewish couple who raised me in Orthodox Judaism from childhood through my young adult life. Dad was a tanker in the 11th Armored Division of the 3rd Army (General George S Patton Jr., Commanding). He fought in the Battle of the Bulge in early 1945. He was wounded and lost three of his fingers on the battlefield. Dad was a highly respected warrior and tank commander as a Staff Sergeant and leader in his platoon. Like his father before him who fought in WWI as a member of Patton's tank battalion in France, Dad followed the tradition of tankers in our family, according himself as a brave and honorable warrior in the fight to defeat the Nazi scourge.

Following the war, I heard all the stories of the Holocaust and the survivors. Many family members from the old country displayed tattoos on

their wrists and discussed the atrocity of having lost brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers. I was the benefactor of the life America offered to our family and this instilled in me the pride of being an American and a Jew. When the nation of Israel was formed in 1948 as a result of the Zionist movement over the past century, I was inculcated with strong Zionist feelings about Israel and the Jewish people. I knew I had an obligation to this nation who adopted my family and me at the turn of the century. I knew I would follow in the footsteps of my grandfather and Dad in service to my country. I also knew that I wanted to be prepared to defend myself, my family, and all Jewish people should the need ever arise again. This was my motivation for joining the United States Marine Corps in time of war (1967), following my college education. I sought to prepare myself and receive the training necessary to achieve a level of fighting ability with arms that only the Marine Corps could provide. So, following my college days of playing baseball and poker, I met with an OSO in Pennsylvania and put my name on the dotted line.

When I arrived at OCS in October, 1967 (if you recall your history, this was about the same time that the Israelis defeated the armies of Syria,

Egypt, Jordan and Iraq in a war which brought them the capture of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Sinai peninsula). I quickly learned that there weren't too many other Jews in my OCS platoon of 73 candidates. In fact, there weren't any other than me. Most of my brethren on the college campuses sought ways to evade the draft and many ran off to Canada (a fact I truly could not comprehend, nor is it a source of pride). As I later found out, there were plenty of Jews in the Marine Corps, albeit they kept a low profile as they performed their duties. General Lenny Fryberg comes to mind. I met other lieutenants following OCS who served as infantry officers with distinction (Les Levi, Burt Cohen, Major Cohen, instructor at the Basic School)

My platoon Sergeant was a fellow named Staff Sergeant Terry Puida who was the "meanest MF in the valley." He reminded me daily with terms of endearment such as, "Kike, get up that hill." I look back now and truly appreciate what he did for me to get me over any emotional response that his nastiness might have evoked. In fact, out of the 73 original candidates, we graduated 27 and, of that group, he selected me to assist my Dad in pinning on my shiny new brown bars. Best of all, he trained me to have a warrior mindset and taught me the essentials for survival on the

battlefield. "Remember the small details, the big things will take care of themselves." I truly owe him.

For the next 26 weeks, Basic School was the order of the day to teach us young Lieutenants how to lead men in combat, platoon tactics, land navigation, and the entire arsenal of weapons systems at our disposal. I still reflect fondly on the day they rolled out an M48A3 to acquaint us with armored warfare. I almost wet my pants with excitement. Our cavalry officer tradition from the Army excited me to think about riding into battle rather than hoofing it, and the thought of two machine guns and a cannon just made this training day the cat's meow! When it came time to put in for an MOS, I knew the future was to be exciting as a Marine Corps tanker. Only two officers were selected from my class to go to tank school and I had to personally interview with my platoon commander to explain to him our family tradition and my desire to be prepared for warfare in defense of our nation and my people, should the need

arise. Another officer, Dan Carradice, also was in the running for the MOS. When the Captain explained to him my story, he deferred to me, allowing me to attend Tank school.

So, off to Camp Pendleton I went. I met Lieutenant Pete Rich, Lieutenant John Heffernan, Lieutenant Ron Knight, and Lieutenant Kent Hughes (Rommel) while there, who all served in Viet Nam as platoon commanders during 1968 and 1969. These friendships have lasted a lifetime. Ron, Kent and I were attached to the 5th Marines at An Hoa during our tours. It was during this time that I learned of the death of Lieutenant Richard Cotter, who was my roommate in Basic School. Two members of my platoon were killed in action: Lance Corporal Phillip Epps and Lance Corporal Schrecongost (Ghost). I had a great bunch of Marines in my platoon to include Staff Sergeant Hoover (the most sullen guy I ever met, but truly a great leader of Marines), Lance Corporal Charles Hiltz, Sergeant Yakabovich, Corporal Jellerson and many others

who I revere to this day for having stood up when their country called. There were many firefights to remember on the Go Noi Island and in the Arizona territory during this time.

I just turned 70 years old...hard to believe the time has gone by so fast. My life has been blessed with 5 children, two of whom have served in the Navy and the Army during time of war, and both have participated in combat operations. Funny thing, both are girls. I have had a good career in the IT world, met the love of my life, Carol, and have had the friendship of Marines for my entire lifetime...who could have it better than me?

In 1973, Israel was once again attacked during the Yom Kippur War in October. The tank battle on the Golan Heights, that I missed, is my only regret in life. At the time I was serving at Marine Barracks Treasure Island. If interested in tank warfare, I have attached the link for your viewing pleasure.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvtU8QdpJPU> ■



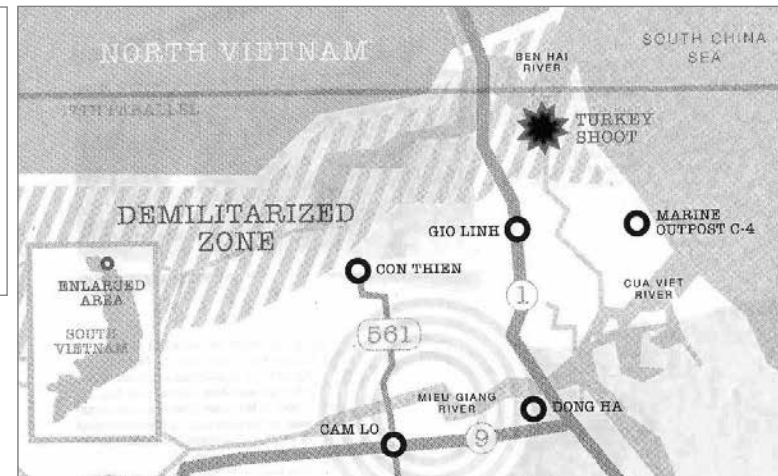
(L-R) L/Cpl. G. Araujo, Sgt. R. L. Lynch, and Cpl. P.M. Robinson from A-23 and A-24 of Alpha Company, 5th Tank Battalion (we were the tank platoon of BLT 3/26) displaying souvenir enemy weapons the morning of March 19, 1969, after they returned to An Hoa from Phu Lac (6).

# Turkey Shoot at the DMZ

BY: JAMES P. COAN

15 August 1968

10 tanks from A and B Companies, in support of the 1st and 2nd ARVN Regiments, made contact with NVA on the south side of the Ben Hai River. Tanks got 189 KIA(C), 70 KIA(P), destroyed 1 truck and 2 boats. All, 413 and G13 damaged by mines. Tanks fired 126 HE, 34 Beehive, 10 Canister, 21,675 .30 Caliber and 2,000 .50 Caliber rounds.



From the 3rd Tank Battalion Command Chronologies

One of the most devastating defeats ever inflicted upon the North Vietnamese Army by U. S. Marines and their South Vietnamese Army allies occurred on 15 August 1968 in the coastal sand dunes northeast of Gio Linh and on the south bank of the Ben Hai River dividing the Demilitarized Zone separating North from South Vietnam.

Ten M-48A3 tanks from 3rd Tank Bn., 3rd Marine Division, surprised an enemy battalion at dawn while they were eating breakfast among the dunes. In conjunction with elements of the South Vietnam Army's 2d Regiment, the Marine tankers opened fire and attacked, overrunning an NVA battalion and destroying a "frogman" training facility at the Ben Hai River. The tankers, who described the day's action as a "turkey shoot," also destroyed several trucks and sank two enemy boats in the river. No Marine casualties were incurred. Unfortunately, that remarkably successful joint Marine Corps/ARVN operation called Lam Son 250 by the ARVN received almost zero recognition in the American Press.

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In July, 1954, at a Big Four armistice conference in Geneva, Switzerland, to finally resolve the Korean War stalemate, the focus shifted to Vietnam after the French Army's disaster at the battle of Dien Bien Phu. Russia's delegate to the conference, Molotov, proposed dividing Vietnam at the 17th parallel, with a demilitarized zone (DMZ) five miles wide generally following the course of the Ben Hai River (Song Ben Hai) from east to west. His plan was agreed upon by the major powers, thus setting in place the scenario for

years of continued conflict between Communist North Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of South Vietnam.

The DMZ eventually evolved into anything but "demilitarized" as the North Vietnamese Army moved its forces in there, utilizing both sides of the Ben Hai River as staging areas for attacks and infiltration routes into South Vietnam. For many years, the South Vietnamese and their American allies decided to play by the rules of the Geneva agreement and keep their ground forces out of the DMZ.

In May, 1966, after an attack by the NVA 324B Division against two ARVN outposts just below the DMZ at Con Thien and Gio Linh, that "hands off" policy changed. Four USMC battalions, in conjunction with a sizeable ARVN infantry unit, commenced Operation Hastings/Lam Son 289 and invaded the southern part of the DMZ for the first time. One year later, in May of 1967, after a massive NVA attack that nearly overran the U. S. Marine firebase at Con Thien, Operation Hickory was launched with the intention of clearing the North Vietnamese out of the southern portion of the DMZ. It was definitely a setback for the NVA; but, as history had proven, the setback was only temporary. In July, 1968, the entire 9th Marine Regiment, accompanied by three tank platoons from 3rd Tank Bn., invaded the DMZ on Operation Thor. Once again, this highly successful operation supposedly cleared the North Vietnamese out of the southern half of the DMZ "permanently" . . . but not for long.

August, 1968, following a week of bloody clashes around the firebase at Gio Linh with the 1st Bn., 138th NVA Regiment, the commander of the 2d ARVN Regiment, Lt. Col. Vu Van Giai, asked permission to launch another attack into the southern half of the DMZ. Final approval for the attack was granted by

U. S. Marine Corps General Ray Davis, when allied intelligence reports indicated that the NVA were building up their forces in the DMZ for an Autumn Offensive.

After several B-52 bombing runs blasted known as well as suspected enemy locations in the DMZ, a diversionary attack was launched before dawn on 15 August by elements of the USMC 1st Amphibian Tractor Battalion (15 LVTs and 2 tanks). Rolling noisily out of Marine outpost C-4, the amtracs and tanks halted one kilometer south of the DMZ's southern boundary, then reversed course back to C-4. This diversion set the stage for the joint Marine/ARVN attack into the DMZ later that same morning.

Five tanks from 1st Platoon of Alpha Company, 3rd Tank Bn., were led by 2/Lt. Frank Blakemore, who had only been with the platoon for a month. Captain R. J. Patterson, the new CO of Alpha Company, was the overall detachment leader and rode aboard tank A-15. That tank ("Stink-Finger" painted on the main gun barrel) was normally commanded by Cpl. Virgil Melton, Jr., a lanky, combat-wise Marine from Canton, Texas. When the lieutenant informed Melton, "The captain will have to ride on your tank, so you'll have to move over into the loader's spot," Cpl. Melton had a few anxious moments. "I'd never seen the new CO, so I could only hope that this captain had his act together." The other five Marine tanks participating in the operation, home-based at Camp Carroll, were the 3rd Platoon of Bravo Company (also 3rd Tank Bn.), led by Gunnery Sergeant Kent Baldwin.

At 0400, the USMC/ARVN detachment moved out north from their overnight location east of Gio Linh. In addition to the ten Marine tanks was a tank retriever (C-43) commanded by Capt. Dan McQueary, the 3rd Tank Battalion, H&S Company CO. Five ARVN soldiers rode aboard each tank. The remainder of the force was carried in accompanying armored personnel carriers (APCs) from the ARVN 11th Armored Cavalry.



Moving single file to minimize risk of mine damage, their

path illuminated by moonlight and periodic artillery flares, the allied attacking force continued slowly north. At first light, they turned northwest, coming to a halt atop an extended sand dune ridge running east to west. To their complete astonishment, directly down in front of them were an estimated 600 to 700 unsuspecting NVA cooking breakfast among the dunes. Cpl. Melton recalled, "We were so close to them we could smell their food cooking."

Taking full advantage of the unsuspecting NVA battalion being caught off guard, the ten USMC tanks first dismounted their ARVN soldiers, then pulled up abreast and, in response to the "Open Fire!" command from Captain Patterson, they commenced blasting away in unison with their 90mm cannons and machine guns. Some NVA stalwarts attempted to fire back wildly with their weapons at hand, but tank armor was impervious to bullets.

Despite the ear-deafening blasts of the adjacent tank cannons, Capt. Patterson, the detachment leader aboard A-15, was able to bring up the ARVN commander on the radio and instruct him to flank the enemy on the west. Once that flanking movement was completed, the ARVN soldiers dismounted their APCs and attacked eastward towards the coast. The boxed in, panicked enemy soldiers began a hasty, disorganized retreat north on foot towards the Ben Hai River. The tanks soon outdistanced the ARVN and from then on it was a "turkey shoot." The shock and awe factor of ten Marine tanks bearing down on them was overwhelming.

Corporal Claude (Chris) Vargo, the gunner on B-34, described what he witnessed: "It was a wild melee; the NVA broke ranks and scattered. Many ran off leaving their weapons behind. We were all roaring down on them, firing point blank with our canister and 'beehive' rounds."

Sgt. Sal Soto, tank commander on B-34, described the devastating effects of his tank's beehive rounds on enemy soldiers: "Those beehive rounds were awesome. They practically vaporized the NVA caught in the open. When we fired that round and it detonated, hundreds of inch-long steel darts [flechette] exploded out in all directions. Sometimes, all that remained of an enemy soldier was a few body parts enveloped in a pink mist cloud."

From his perspective aboard the USMC tank retriever, Capt. McQueary observed the attack unfold. He witnessed several Alpha Company tanks led by its gung ho platoon sergeant, S/Sgt. Waggle, roar into the NVA's battalion command center with their machine guns chattering. "Our tanks crushed every bunker they rolled over, then shot down the fleeing bunker occupants."

Cpl. Melton recalled: "Several bunkers had secondary explosions when the tanks fired HE into them."

At one point, despite all the smoke and dust swirling around him, Melton spotted an NVA RPG team rise up from behind a nearby bush, attempting to fire an RPG >>



(anti-tank rocket) at S/Sgt. Waggle's tank. Melton pulled out an M-14 rifle stowed inside his turret and squeezed off several well placed rounds, taking out both enemy soldiers.



Virgil Melton and Eddie Miers

Cpl. Eddie Miers, the soft-spoken but hard-charging tank commander of A-14, had "The Believer" lettered on his main gun barrel. He was raised in the same area of Texas as his buddy, Cpl. Melton. The two met for the first time at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, then went through tracked vehicle school at Camp Pendleton together and ended up in the same tank platoon in Vietnam.

Miers spotted an NVA soldier hiding in some bushes atop a sand dune. He directed his driver, PFC Harold Schossow, to steer their tank in the direction of the enemy soldier. As Schossow pulled the bow of his tank up into the bushes, he saw the terrified look on the man's face. "He knew he had two choices: surrender or die. Fortunately for him, he jumped out and ran towards our tank with his hands up." Miers dismounted, tied up and blindfolded his compliant prisoner, then loaded him aboard the tank. The enemy soldier was turned over to South Vietnamese authorities back at Gio Linh later that evening; he turned out to have valuable information for his South Vietnamese captors.

Captain Patterson made radio contact with a Marine Corps Huey helicopter in the area and brought it into the fray. The awesome firepower of a heavily armed Huey was something to behold. The Huey swooped down and attacked, unloading its deadly ordnance upon the fleeing NVA soldiers.

As the morning wore on, the tankers began to experience an increasing number of incoming mortars, rockets and artillery fired at them from enemy positions north of the Ben Hai. Sgt. Soto's tank experienced a near miss by a 122mm rocket that rocked their tank. Luckily, none of the tanks were disabled and none of the tank crewmen became casualties from that incoming. According to Cpl. Melton, "A few of our tanks suffered damage to their searchlights, vision blocks, and antennas from flying shrapnel, but we didn't lose anybody."

Due to the Sav-A-Plane policy put in place the previous year

by MACV, the Marines could not call for artillery counter-battery fire to neutralize the enemy's guns north of the Ben Hai as long as there were friendly aircraft in the attack area. This rule came about after an incident at Con Thien when a Marine Corps helicopter was shot down by "friendly fire." A UH-34D helicopter from HMM-161, MAG 16, had just picked up a medevac casualty and was climbing for altitude when an explosion blasted the helicopter out of the sky, killing all five men aboard. The craft had been struck by an American artillery shell.

Once the Huey helicopter that Capt. Patterson called upon had expended its ammo and left the DMZ attack area, then the artillery firebases immediately below the eastern DMZ could train their guns on the known and suspected enemy positions north of the Ben Hai that were firing on the Marine tanks and their ARVN allies. "The results were almost instantaneous," recalled Gunny Baldwin, platoon leader of the Bravo Company tanks. "That friendly artillery fire support drastically reduced the amount of enemy incoming we were taking."

A camouflaged enemy encampment was spotted by an aerial observer on the north bank of the Ben Hai River. Three Bravo Company tanks led by Baldwin ranged in and opened fire with their 90mm cannons and destroyed the camp, subsequently determined to be a training site for frogman sapper teams. The Bravo tankers also fired at several large boats circling in the river, sinking two.

Later that afternoon, with nearly all of their 90mm and machine gun ammunition expended, Capt. Patterson ordered all Marine and ARVN units to depart the DMZ and return to the assembly area south of Gio Linh.

Along the way, Capt. McQueary's tank retriever crew spotted an abandoned U.S. Army tank retriever. The retriever had obviously suffered serious mine damage—several road wheels were blown off and one track was broken loose. The Army crewmen had abandoned their vehicle with all of its weapons, communications equipment, and everything else left intact. After conferring with his XO, 1/Lt. Jim Spalsbury, Capt. Mc-



Abandoned Damaged U.S. Army M-88 Tank Retriever

Queary determined that the retriever was not salvageable. "We did some 'selective interchange' (the term McQueary preferred to use rather than scavenging parts) and then blew the Army retriever in place." Having travelled through an area where U.S. Marine and Navy jet fighters unloaded their excess ordnance before returning to their carriers, all Marine and ARVN tracked vehicles somehow made it through that hazardous area unscathed. Further south, however, they entered an unmarked minefield outside of Gio Linh. S/Sgt. Waggle's tank ran over and detonated an anti-tank mine.

"When Waggle's tank hit that first mine, I saw a set of road wheels go flyin' up in the air. I knew we were in for it af-


ter that," recalled Sgt. Soto. The resulting damage was repaired sufficiently with the aid of the tank retriever crew and that enabled the "short-tracked" tank to drive under its own power.

Shortly after that incident, 2/Lt. Blakemore's tank and Capt. McQueary's tank retriever also detonated anti-tank mines. Despite having to duck sporadic enemy incoming mortars and artillery, the crewmen on those armored vehicles made the temporary repairs necessary to move out of that minefield and head for the assembly area south of Gio Linh.

The 1st Bn., 138th NVA Regiment was no longer a threat to launch their planned Autumn Offensive. Its shell-shocked survivors were pulled back north across the Ben Hai River to re-

group and refit. Lt. Gen. R. G. Stilwell, the XXIV Corps Commander, reported to General Creighton Abrams, MACV Commander: "The 1st Battalion, 138th NVA Regiment, was to have attacked south across the DMZ last night; it will do no attacking for some time to come!"

Operation Lam Son 250 was a tank-er's dream. Participants at Vietnam veteran reunions still refer to it as the "DMZ turkey shoot." U.S. Marine tanks were credited with 189 enemy KIA and 70 "probables" out of a total of 421 reported. All tank and retriever crewmen and attached personnel were authorized to wear the Meritorious Unit Commendation ribbon. ■



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20380

IN REPLY REFER TO

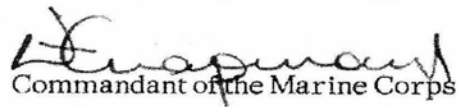
The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION to

DETACHMENT, THIRD TANK BATTALION  
THIRD MARINE DIVISION (REINFORCED), FLEET MARINE FORCE

for service as set forth in the following  
CITATION:

For meritorious service in action against North Vietnamese Army forces in the Republic of Vietnam on 15 August 1968. During Operation LAM SON 250, a detachment of ten tanks and a tank retriever from Third Tank Battalion was assigned the mission of clearing a suspected North Vietnamese battalion area and frogman training site just south of the Ben Hai River. Maneuvering swiftly, the detachment caught the enemy by surprise, and despite enormous opposing numerical odds and heavy small arms and artillery fire, the tanks resolutely maintained their unit integrity and fire control and inflicted heavy losses on the hostile force. Due to their courage, skill, and professional discipline, the tankers successfully secured the area without sustaining any friendly casualties. The action of this detachment substantially contributed to the success of Operation LAM SON 250. The gallant fighting spirit and professionalism of this armor unit upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

All personnel attached to and serving with the detachment of Third Tank Battalion in the action of 15 August 1968 described above, are hereby authorized to wear the MERITORIOUS UNIT COMMENDATION Ribbon.

For the Secretary of the Navy,  
  
Commandant of the Marine Corps

*Editor's Note: This article is a condensed version of author Jim Coan's original story published in the December, 2016, issue of Vietnam magazine.*

# MARINE FAMILY

BY MICHAEL GIOVINAZZO

Sgt. 3rd.Plt. "A" Co. 1st A.T. Bn

I originally submitted this story for publication in The Sponson Box in 2006. This is the original story with the inclusion of events that occurred since that time.

I would think that most Vietnam veterans have stories to tell of some combat experience that they may have endured while serving in Vietnam. However, the story that is most meaningful to me is one that involves a personal relationship with combat buddies and their families. I know that my greatest fear was my family getting news of my death or serious injury while I was in Vietnam. It is, for this reason, when I was wounded I never wrote home about it. The wound was not serious and I believed the corpsman who treated me and who told me that my family probably would not get notified. Well, soon after I was wounded, a young Marine officer and his wife came to my parents' home and informed my mother that I had been injured in combat, but not seriously and that a telegram would follow. My mother, my sister and my girlfriend (at the time) became hysterical. My father, a three time wounded infantryman of the European campaigns of WW 2, who suffered from unknown and untreated PTSD, held his emotions in check—until he was at his parents' 50th wedding anniversary party, which occurred while I was still in Vietnam. The emotions of me being hurt coupled with his own experiences and the anniversary caused him to break down, which was most unusual for him. After I got back to the World, when I learned of this emotional outpouring over my well-being,

I went off by myself and broke down.

I was raised to believe that family was the most important thing that God has given to us. To imagine how many families were permanently adversely affected by the personal notification and telegram for an injury or a death is unthinkable. To try to understand what it is like for a family to learn of the death of a member of their own family is impossible for me to comprehend. These dreaded thoughts of what it must have been like for the loved ones of those killed have always been with me since I left Vietnam. I had always wondered if I should make some attempt to contact the families of my buddies who were killed in action.

Finally, 31 years after returning home, I worked up the courage to seek two of the families in a geographic proximity within 500 miles from my own home in Carmel, New York. There were others, but they were at a greater distance. I found the two KIA Marine buddies' hometowns that I wanted to visit that were listed in the directory at "The Wall," in Washington, D.C. They were: Victor Tarasuk from Rachel, West Virginia, and Michael Romanchuk from Hellertown, Pennsylvania.

Michael was the Ontos platoon's 2500 (radio operator) and had been assigned to us several months prior to Victor's arrival. Victor had arrived in-country sometime in August 1966 and was assigned as a crewman to my Ontos. This was in addition to another new Marine, Bill Walters, from New York City. I was a corporal, Ontos commander, while Victor and Bill made up my crew. They would al-

ternate as driver and loader. Michael would often fill in as an Ontos crewman within the platoon.

On December 22, 1966, one month after I had returned home, the Ontos that Victor and Michael were riding on hit a mine. Victor was killed instantly and Michael died of wounds four days later. Staff Sergeant Pandavella, the platoon commander, and two infantry Marines were also seriously injured in the deadly explosion. This horrible news was relayed to me in a letter from Bill Walters, who thankfully was not on that ill-fated Ontos.

Upon receiving Bill's letter my immediate feelings were of great sadness and guilt. I was particularly emotional in my feelings for Victor. He was one of my crew and in the four months that we served together we had a very special relationship. When Victor was assigned as my crewman, he had been in the Marine Corps for only six months. At that time, I had over three years in the service and eight months in Vietnam. I felt very responsible for my crew. This feeling pressured me to give all I had to train them so that they knew everything they needed to know in order to take over my job at any time. In fact, they were well-trained on the Ontos, having gone to Ontos School at Camp Pendleton before deploying to Vietnam. That is as opposed to me, where I learned what I knew about the Ontos from on-the-job training. My main contribution to their education was my in-country experience, whatever that meant. Being new they viewed me as an experienced "old hand" at the game. This caused me to do my very best to live

up to expectations. Thankfully, they never knew I was as bewildered as they were. I was just good at playing the part. For one of the first times in my life I was now responsible for someone other than myself. If there was one word that would sum up the overall picture of what I remember of our time together, it is laughter. In spite of all the hardships, we were only 19 and 20 years old. Nineteen-year-olds can make a joke of anything. They excelled in dark humor. In my mind we will be 19 forever. We were a good tight crew.

As I mentioned previously, after 31 years, in mid-November 1997, I decided to attempt to locate the parents and/or families of Victor Tarasuk and Michael Romanchuk. On the appointed day, I could not find a listing for "Tarasuk" in Rachel, WV. So I drove to the nearby town of Fairmont and checked into a motel. I then went to a gas station near the motel and inquired where the town of Rachel was; it was listed on one old map that I had. Fortunately, the gas station attendant knew exactly where the town was. He called it a "camp," which I later found out means a place where coal miners live. He instructed me to stop at the general store in Rachel and ask the proprietor where the Tarasuk family lived. When I arrived at the general store, I explained to the proprietor who I was and why I was there. He listened intently and then gave me directions to the house.

As I drove up the hill toward the house I had a very uncomfortable feeling. Would I be welcomed? Did Victor's parents want to be reminded of that tragedy in their lives? The only thing that made me go forward was reading stories of people who had been in this same situation, going as far back as WW 2. I firmly believed that most people want to know that their child is remembered and that he truly meant something to someone other than themselves.

As I approached the white house that the store owner had described,

I was very nervous, as nervous as I have ever been (even in a combat situation). After I climbed the stairs, I knocked on the door several times, but there was no answer so I walked over to the basement door and knocked several times. All of a sudden the door opened and in front of me was a big man, just as Victor had described his dad during many of our long conversations back in Vietnam. I told this man who I was and asked him if he had a son named Victor. When he said, "Yes", I told him that I served with his son in Vietnam. He then invited me in to his home and introduced me to Victor's mother. The woman was dumbfounded and just stared at me. I could tell that she was in shock. Who could blame her? I then told Mr. Tarasuk that I had pictures of Victor taken when we served together in Vietnam in my car if they would like to see them. I wanted to give them some reassurance that I was who I said I was. After we looked at my photographs, many which contained Victor, Mrs. Tarasuk took out an album of photographs that were sent home from Vietnam before Victor's death. For some reason none of the photographs contained me nor anyone who I recognized. I guessed that, after I left Vietnam, perhaps my old Ontos platoon must have exchanged personnel with another platoon.

In practically no time it was like we had known each other for years. Victor's mother even sat on my lap and gave me a kiss and hug. After being with them for over three hours, I finally left for my motel around 5 PM. I returned the next morning at their request and Mr. Tarasuk took me to the cemetery where Victor was buried. He also showed me where Victor had gone to high school, the ball field where he had played baseball and football. He also gave me a general tour of the area.

Since my first visit, I have been back to see them twice a year, usually Memorial Day and Veterans Day. The reason for these days is to attend the

ceremony at the Marion County Vietnam Memorial that is in Fairmont, WV. This memorial is in a park and consists of a granite wall on which is inscribed the names, rank, and date of the supreme sacrifice of the town's residents who served in Vietnam. The memorial area has a long wall on which murals of the Vietnam experience are painted. In addition, there is a Huey helicopter and 3 statues of combat soldiers. This memorial is a fitting tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice in the name of our country.

In 2004, the Tarasuk's moved to Texas to be near their daughter, Tina, who is their only remaining child. I have developed a brother/sister relationship with Victor's sister. I made it a point to visit the Tarasuk's every Mother's Day. I did this until Mrs. Tarasuk passed away in 2011. Mr. Tarasuk passed away in 2009. In addition to Mother's Day, I have made other trips there, such as when Mr. Tarasuk passed away, on Mrs. Tarasuk's 85 birthday party, and Tina's 60th birthday. On most trips I was accompanied by my wife, whom the Tarasuk's loved.

During the return trip home in 1997, I stopped in Hellertown, Pennsylvania. I located an address that was the only listing for "Romanchuk" in the phone book. Just as I had done in West Virginia, I knocked on the front door of the house, and even though I had done this just a few days before in West Virginia, it didn't make me any less nervous. After several knocks an older woman answered the door and I told her who I was and the purpose for my visit. She acknowledged that she was Michael's mother and invited me in. To my surprise, Michael's younger brother happened to be home as well. I learned that he wasn't yet a teenager when Michael was killed. He seemed to be in much more of a shocked state than his mother and I could understand why. I can only imagine the trauma that he must have suffered at such a young age by having a big brother killed—a brother who was his >>

hero and would never see again.

As I did with the Tarasuk's, I excused myself to go to my car for the picture album that I had brought with me, since it contained several pictures of Michael. After we looked at my photos, his mother then brought out Michael's album which to my surprise did contain several pictures of me. During our conversation, I learned that Michael's father, a Marine from World War 2, had passed away just three weeks before I arrived. In addition to having a physical ailment, I could see that this woman's life had been shattered. Thankfully, she had twin daughters and a son to help ease the pain of her loss. She was a very gentle lady and was very polite to me. She told me that both Michael and her husband were buried in the cemetery at the end of her street. When I was leaving she gave me a kiss and I told her

I would contact her again. I then visited the graves of Michael and his father. I had an overriding feeling of regret that I had not visited sooner. I am sure that Michael's father would have liked to hear about his son and to swap "sea stories" about the Marine Corps.

I do remember both Michael and Victor speaking of their fathers. I have always noted that boys seem to talk about their fathers much more than their mothers – I guess that there is a special bond between fathers & sons.

Six months later, prior to making a vacation trip to North Carolina with my wife, I called Mrs. Romanchuk offering to take her out to lunch or to dinner, either on my way down to North Carolina or returning home. She said she was not available for either of the dates. I am pretty sure that she just didn't want to be reminded anymore of her long departed son and husband,

or perhaps her physical ailment that required braces on her legs. I think that I can understand her feelings. She was a lovely lady who seemed to have suffered much. She will always be in my thoughts and prayers.

Since 1997, it has been a personal priority to make a trip to Rachel, West Virginia and return via Hellertown, Pennsylvania on both Veterans Day and Memorial Day. I have made new friends there, who are all Vietnam Veterans. When I attend for the Veteran's Day ceremony, I arrive on November 10th and attend the Marine Corps Birthday. Now, when I visit the cemeteries, the parents are alongside their sons. May they all rest in peace.

I will always be glad that I made this effort to re-connect with my past; although, it was the hardest thing I have ever had to do. I only wish I had done it much sooner. ■



## Photos from Vietnam



3rd Tanks with wounded

# So you want a service dog?

BY CLYDE HOCH

Like most of us, I served on a U.S. Marine Corps tank in Vietnam. The tank I was on struck a large land mine. I thought I was invincible until this happened. I was never the same person after that. Then, when I came home, my life was miserable like many Vietnam veterans. I went to the Veterans Administration for help. All they did was piss me off and I never wanted to go back. Sometime later, I found out that is what they do. They piss you off so you don't come back. I filed again and was rejected. I talked with people who were better off than I was, who were getting compensation.

One day I was walking on the boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey. I came to a booth for Disabled American Veterans. The guy asked me if I was ever in the military. I told him I was in Vietnam. He asked what kind of compensation was I getting. I said none. I am making a living. I'm having a very hard time but I'm surviving.

He said, "Don't be a fool. Our government pisses away so much money on stupid things, so why shouldn't you take advantage of it." I thought long and hard about it and realized he was right. So I found a lawyer who gets involved in these types of cases. He filed for me. They denied the claim and the lawyer appealed it. Eventually, they gave me 30% for PTSD. He filed for a higher rate. They gave me 50%. A few years later, I was at a Josh Smith Memorial Run; it was to collect money to help veterans organizations. Josh had died while serving and his family set the run up in his memory.

While there, I saw a puppy that was taken from a pound and was in training to be a service dog. The puppy was named "Josh" in honor of Josh Smith. I asked the people what you had to have to qualify for a service dog. They said, "You have to be disabled."

On the way home I thought about it. I'm considered disabled. Wouldn't it be great to have someone with you all the time to have your back like the guys in Vietnam? A friend you could totally trust? Someone you knew would never let you down?

With PTSD there is a great distrust with other people, but not so with a dog. I called Heather Lloyd, who runs "Tails of Valor." I told her I always wanted a Doberman. I asked her if I could get my own dog and if they would train it and me together. She said she would. But as of that time they did not have the finances or trainers to do this for others.

My wife was planning on retiring soon. She said she didn't want a dog after our 13-year-old Husky would pass away. She wanted to be able to travel and not worry about a dog. I asked her, "Can I get a dog to train as a service dog?" All of a sudden she turned into a drill instructor and many bad words came out of her sweet mouth. The bottom line is that she asked me: "How could you do this?" My wife was not very understanding. She said that we will never go on a vacation with a dog. We will never go into a restaurant with a dog. But, you know? It was my birthday so I was going to get myself a birthday present.

I called several breeders who carry Dobermans. I found some very inexpensive ones on the other side of the U.S. I didn't want to send money for something I never saw. Who knows what you may get? It's a long way to get your money back. I found a breeder in PA. He was more expensive but I could see what I was getting. I called the breeder and told him that I would take a male black and tan. The breeder said that he wouldn't be ready for another month. The breeder sent me photos over the internet. The pup was a cute little guy. When I talked to the breeder again, he told me that the pup was not house broken. That would go over great with my wife.

Not long after, I got him and I took him everywhere I went. I named him "Cooper" after B. D. Cooper. How many of you remember him? The breeder called him "Bandit"—how appropriate! If Cooper wasn't with me, I put him in a crate. All the stories I heard about Dobermans being aggressive went away when I got him. He is one of the most lovable and friendliest dogs I ever met. I never saw him act aggressively, except with our Husky. They would go at it and the little pup, Cooper would get bit but he'd go right back at the Husky. Cooper and I go to Service Dog School once a week. They teach me what to teach Cooper. He was so wild as a pup. He just wanted to be petted and get attention. He is getting better as he gets older. Just the other day he turned 9 months.

I have had dogs all my life and I thought I knew dogs well. The school

teaches me things I never thought of about dogs. He is a lot of work but well worth it. He is with me pretty much everywhere I go. I feel great comfort being with him. At times I get very upset and he comes and licks me. I have to smile.

I just read a report where a dog and its owner's heart rate go up when they are separated. When they are reunited, their heart rate goes down, and eventually their hearts beat in unison. At times when he chewed up my favorite pair of shoes or some paperwork I had, I became very annoyed. I never hit him. I knew in the long run he would be worth it.

I take him more and more into restaurants and to meetings. As he gets older, he is calming down. As I drive, he puts his head on my shoulder. My wife still works while I'm retired. When my wife gets up to go to work,

Cooper jumps into bed with me. When he gets into the bed he always walks around a bit and flops down partially on top of me. He weighs almost



I have talked to many veterans who said, if it was not for their dog they wouldn't be alive today. I trust Cooper more than any human. I know it's him and me to the end.

I know many people will never understand the bond between a veteran and his dog. At this time the Veterans Administration say there is no conclusive evidence that a dog helps with PTSD. Many organizations that have studied human and animal relations for many years disagree.

Organizations like "Tails of Valor" take puppies from a pound, thereby saving a puppy's life. They train the puppy and when it's ready, they present it to a veteran at no cost to the veteran, thereby often saving a veteran's life. They do this by donations only and I have the greatest respect for Heather Lloyd and Tails of Valor.

[www.tailsofvalor.org](http://www.tailsofvalor.org) ■

# amTRACS in Da nang

BY: RICHARD PEKSENS

Down south, we were always travelling with amtracs ... maybe we should include some of their photos in a Sponson Box? When I arrived in-country, Bravo Company, 1st Tanks, was at Hill 55 with the 5th and 7th Marines of the 1st Mar Div; Charlie Company, 1st Tanks, was south of Marble Mountain with the 26th Marines of the 5th Division and 1st and 7th Marines of the 1st Division, plus the 5th ROK Brigade. While Alpha Company, 1st Tanks, was north of the Hai Van Pass at Phu Bai, one platoon of Charlie Company was with the BLT in the Cua Viet.

I replaced Lt. Parrish with Charlie-3 after his return from the Cua Viet (where he received the Silver Star) and Charlie-1 replaced his platoon with a Lt. Gee. I was then to replace Lt. Gee, but, fortunately, he extended his tour with Charlie-1 and I was able to stay south of the border in 1968.

I arrived in Da Nang during the first week of May, 1968, along with two amtrac officers and a Lt. Jenkins (1800) who was



## Service Dog Etiquette

What should I do when I see a Service Dog?

Smile; be polite to the Service Dog's handler, most of all:

Do not pet the Service Dog

Do not distract the Service Dog in any way

Please ignore the Service Dog entirely. You're not being rude if you don't acknowledge the Service Dog's presence.

When a Service Dog has a vest on or is in public with its disabled handler (or trainer), it is working, even if it appears as though it is not. Distracting a Service Dog by making noises, offering food, water, toys or petting may be dangerous to the dog's disabled handler, especially if the dog is a medical alert dog or brace/mobility support dog. Many handlers have "invisible

disabilities," such as diabetes, hearing loss or other symptoms not readily apparent and if a Service Dog is paying attention to someone who's distracting, and then the dog is not doing the job for the handler.

If you would like to pet the Service Dog, ALWAYS ask the handler first, but don't be offended if they refuse. The dog is working and if it is allowed to be petted regularly in public, the dog then looks for that which is distracting the dog from doing its job. Service dog handlers like to go about their day, just like you! Never ask personal questions or intrude on their privacy.

Keep these simple Service Dog etiquette tips in mind, and you'll have a far smoother experience when you see a Service Dog in public. ■



sent up north to 3rd Tanks. My good buddy, Steve Day, reported to Division and was told to report to 3rd Tracks. When he arrived at the chopper pad, the flight officer booked him to Quang Tri, believing incorrectly that 3rd Tracks was north rather than south at Marble Mountain. He flew to Quang Tri and then to Khe Sanh. They discovered he was in the wrong place and scheduled his return the following day. In the meantime, he was sent to a position on the perimeter which was in need of bodies .... just for the night! As it happened, they came under attack by a battalion of NVA with an NVA officer reaching his fox hole where he and an amtrac corporal killed the officer in hand-to-hand combat. Lt. Day still has the NVA officer's Makarov pistol. The next morning, he made it back to Da Nang. How's that for a first day in country story? He was actually medevaced later that year when he was shot in the back by another pistol-wielding NVA officer on Go Noi Island. Some people got no luck! >>

## HONOR THE PAST BY BEING PRESENT...



My successful attack in Little Creek, Virginia (1967). Note the M14.

A cold day in Quantico in 1967 showing me eating an apple? The heavy-set 2nd Lt. standing behind me was another tank Lt. sent to the 3rd Division and who lost a leg in the war. I remembered his name a few months ago, but it has since slipped my memory. Probably too small of a picture to recognize him... maybe his name will return to me by tomorrow. Do you remember a Lt. losing a leg in 68-69?

### Photos from Vietnam



Bob Haller says that this is what was left of a hapless Ontos that hit a mine.



Tank Tracks

Marine – It’s a word that is not given, but earned. I have got to get something off my chest. I attend my grunt unit reunion each year, which consists mostly of my platoon from Vietnam. These are guys who know each other inside and out. You would think that a bunch of combat Marines would drink heavily, start fights and talk of their heroics in battle? Not so!! What we do is take our wives and kids to dinner or shopping, see the sights etc. And then, at night, we sit around and have some beers amongst ourselves and talk of the stupid things we did in Vietnam. Most people think Marines are egotistical and full of bravado! Combat is a great cure for that. All of my friends are Marines, since I don’t trust civilians very much. Civilians seem too interested in money, while Marines just want to be comfortable. As we sit around during a small ceremony at the end of the reunion, I look around. I don’t see older guys. I see 19-year-olds who fought like junk yard dogs. And these same guys trembled at night, standing watch, thinking that, “I could have been killed today,” as we all saw our friends killed or wounded. Charlie Co. 1/4 was lucky to have fine officers and NCOs, or a lot of us would not be sitting in that room. So, I sit there in that room in awe, wondering if I should be in their company. This not in Honor of our Fallen Marines ... for we live that. But it is to honor each Marine who lives with the memories and nightmares. Also, it is for their wives, who suffer more.

Submitted by a Vietnam Marine veteran who calls himself “Mudcat.”

### REUNION THOUGHTS

BY BOB VAXTER

For a long time I wondered why veterans attend reunions. I used to think that it was to sit around with other veterans, to drink adult beverages and to tell sea stories. As I have gotten a little older and hopefully a little smarter, there is no question on the former, but a lot of controversy on the latter. After having attended several reunions of both the Third Marine Division and the USMC VTA, I finally think that I know the reason why we do what we do.

We attend reunions to once again bathe in the camaraderie that we knew when we served with these brave men from our youth. It is once again to feel that bond that we felt such a long time ago. It is not so much to feel young; it is to feel that special bond again. It is a feeling of closeness. It is knowing that your life depended on someone else and that their life depended on you.

So we go to our reunions, we sit with our brothers-in-arms telling stories of long ago. It matters not whether the stories are true or simply innocent exaggerations. It is the recalling and the telling that is important. For these are men who were there with us. Who carry our memory with them and we carry their memory with us.

We sit with our brothers and remember those who are no longer with us. We wax nostalgic for their presence in our memories.

We tell tales of them. We speak of them with hushed voices. We speak of them with laughter and pride, because we knew them.

For the past couple of years I have been attempting to locate the men I served with in the 3rd Platoon, Charlie Company, 3rd Tanks, 3rd Marine Division. I have been able to locate many of them and, thankfully, they now attend our reunions. It is with sadness I have learned that many of them have transferred to “The Great Tank Park in the Sky.” So I raise my glass in a toast to those that have gone before. Semper Fidelis my brothers. As long as our memory exists, you exist along with us.

Jimmy Jaynes	1968
Tom Freeman	1996
Donald Bell	1996
Neil Trudeau	2004
John Rodriguez	2009
Kurt Foster	2010

*Editor’s Note: This story first appeared in an issue of the Sponson Box in 2011. It seemed fitting to reproduce it again.*

### IT IS AN AMAZINGLY SMALL WORLD.

**John Wear writes:** One of the most fantastic realizations that I discovered after attending my first VTA reunion way back in 1999 was that the vast majority of us old Jarhead tankers are very similar in thought, word and deed. We seem to have come out of a very similar mold and that many years ago each of us had fallen off of the same turnip wagon. I am pretty sure that this outcome was due to: (a) Our parents’ tow-the-line upbringing; (b) a nation-wide pride in our country; (c) our own self-respect ... as well as respect for others and (d) a common thread of the USMC, tanks and the Vietnam War.

For me, every time we have a USMC VTA gathering, there always seems to be someone who ends up reminding me about a something that happened or someone that I knew while I was in-country and that for whatever reason, I had completely forgotten. To my own rusty dusty brain housing group, the incident may not have been that big of a deal ... but to the other guy who was reminding me, it may have been HUGE. So my vague memory coupled with his vivid recollection forms a renewed story that might morph into yet another chapter in the saga. When you think about it, we were 18–20 years old and that was 50 “freaking!” years ago. How many 18 year olds do you know today that are highly-functioning adults with actual adult perspectives and fully formed adult ideas? ■

### The Marine's Reunion

Autumn leaves rustling, together at the appointed place, the old warriors came.  
 Pilgrims, drifting across the land they fought to preserve.  
 Where they meet is not important anymore. They meet and that's enough for now.  
 Greetings echo across the lobby. Hands reach out and arms draw buddies close. Embraces, that as young men they were too uncomfortable to give, too shy to accept so lovingly.  
 But deep within these Indian Summer days, they have reached a greater understanding of life and love.  
 The shells holding their souls are weaker now, but hearts and minds grow vigorous, remembering.  
 On a table someone spreads old photographs, a test of recollection. And friendly laughter echoes at shocks of hair gone grey or white, or nearly gone.  
 The rugged slender bodies lost forever. Yet they no longer need to prove their strength Some are now sustained by one of "medicines miracles," and, even in this fact, they manage to find humor.  
 The women, all those who waited, all those who loved them, have watched the changes take place.  
 Now, they observe and listen, and smile at each other, as glad to be together as the men.  
 Talk turns to war and battles and foreign lands. Stories are told and told again, reweaving the threadbare fabric of the past.  
 Mending one more time the banner of their youth. They hear the guns, the snarl of shrapnel tearing through the air, the chatter of the machine guns and the hissing of the grenade. They can feel again the agony and pain of wounds that are now stripes and gouges across their limbs.  
 They can feel again the comradeship that comes with sharing the last few drops of water in a canteen.  
 Dead comrades, hearing their names spoken, wanting to share in this time, if only in spirit, move silently among them. Their presence is felt and smiles appear beneath misty eyes.  
 Each in his own way may wonder who will be absent in another year.  
 The room grows quiet for a time. Suddenly an ember flames to life. Another memory burns. The talk may turn to other wars and other men, and many "remember when's."  
 So this is how it goes. The past is so much the present. In the ceremonies, the allegiances, the speeches and the prayers, one cannot help but hear the deep eternal love of country and Corps they will share forever.  
 Finally, it is time to leave. Much too soon to set aside this little piece of yesterday, but the past cannot be held too long, for it is fragile.  
 They say "Farewells"... "See you in another year, God willing."  
 And always each keeps a little of the others with him forever.  
 Semper Fidelis  
 (This poem attributed to Adolph P Sgambelleri)

### Reunion Joke

A large group of USMC Vietnam Tankers, all aged 40, discussed where they should meet for a reunion lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at the Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington, DC, because the waitresses are pretty; have big breasts and wore mini-skirts.

Ten years later, at age 50, the same friends once again discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at the Old

Ebbitt Grill in Washington, DC, because the food and service was good and the beer selection was excellent. Ten years later, at age 60, the friends again discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at the Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington, DC, because there was plenty of parking, they could dine in peace and quiet, and it was good value for money.

Ten years later, at age 70, the friends

discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at the Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington, DC, because the restaurant was wheelchair-accessible and had a toilet for the disabled.

Ten years later, at age 80, the friends discussed where they should meet for lunch. Finally it was agreed that they would meet at the Old Ebbitt Grill in Washington, DC, because they had never been there before.



### USMC Vietnam Tankers Association Reunion

Thursday, September 21 – Monday, September 25, 2017

#### Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet Hotel

191 Westport Plaza  
 St Louis, MO 63146

Reunion room rate: \$119 per night.

This room rate is good for three days before and three days after the reunion dates.

Call 1-888-627-7066 to make your room reservations.

Be sure to mention both:  
 "Sheraton Westport Chalet" and "USMC Vietnam Tankers Reunion"  
 when making your room reservations.

All room reservations must be made by 8/30/2017.

Hotel has a free shuttle bus to and from the St Louis Airport.  
 The bus runs every ½ hour from 6:30 AM to 11:00 PM

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#### Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet Hotel

Indoor/ Outdoor Pool, Sauna, Exercise Room, Business Center  
 and a walking path surrounding Westport Lake.

There are over 14 outside eating and entertainment venues within easy walking distance of the reunion hotel, so a rental car is not necessary.

Restaurants and Lounges:

Backstreet Jazz & Blues—Bradford's Pub—Drunken Fish  
 Family Nuts—Funny Bone Comedy Club—Kobe Japanese Grill – McDonald's  
 Paul Mineo's Italian—Patrick's Sports Bar and Grill—Fuzzy's Tacos  
 Jive and Wail dueling Piano Bar/ Restaurant – Starbucks—St. Louis Bread Co  
 Trainwreck Saloon—Imo's Pizza—Dino's Subs

www.westportstl.com

If you do drive, there is plenty of free indoor and outdoor parking ... including parking for RVs ... but there are no RV hookups.

**St. Louis Attractions**

- \* Anheuser Busch Brewery Tour–(314) 577-2626 www.budweisertours.com
- \* Art Museum–(314) 721-0072 www.slam.org
- \* Blueberry Hill–(314) 727-2277 www.blueberryhill.com
- \* Busch Stadium – Cardinals (314) 345-9600 www.stlouis.cardinals.mlb.com/stl/ballpark/
- \* Cathedral Basilica–(314) 373-8200 www.cathedralstl.org
- \* City Museum–(314) 231-2489 www.citymuseum.org
- \* Edward Jones Dome – Rams (314) 342-5201 www.stlouisrams.com
- \* Fort Casey State Park – (360) 678-4519
- \* Forest Park–(314) 367-7275 www.stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/parks/forestpark
- \* Gateway Arch/Riverboat Cruises–(314) 982-1545 www.coreofdiscovery.com
- \* Grants Farm–(314) 843-1700 www.grantsfarm.com
- \* History Museum–(314) 746-4599 www.mohistory.org
- \* Missouri Botanical Garden–(314) 577-5100 www.mobot.org
- \* The Magic House www.themagichouse.org
- \* Science Center/Omnimax/Planetarium–(314) 289-4400 www.spsc.org
- \* Scott Trade Center – Blues (314) 622-5400 www.scottradecenter.com
- \* Soldiers Memorial–(314) 622-4550 www.stlsoldiersmemorial.org
- \* St. Louis Zoo–(314) 781-0900 www.stlzoo.org
- \* St. Louis Ballpark Village stlballparkvillage.com

**Shopping**

- West County Center–(314) 288-2020 www.shopwestcountycenter.com
- St. Louis Premium Outlets–(314) 399-8163 www.premiumoutlets.com
- St. Louis Galleria–(314) 863-5500 www.stlouisgalleria.com

**Transportation**

- St. Louis MetroLink–(314) 231-2345 www.metrostlouis.org
- Hours: 4:40 AM to 11:00 PM
- The MetroLink fee is \$1.25 per ride
- (The complimentary hotel shuttle bus will take you to the closest MetroLink stop which is at the St Louis Airport)
- St Louis County Cab–(314) 991-9500
- Hours: 24 Hours
- Currently it is \$25.00 for a cab to downtown St Louis

**How To Win A Free Hotel Room!**

You can win a free hotel stay for this year’s reunion when you fill out and submit the entry coupon that will be provided in your reunion Welcome Bag and then bring and deposit it when you arrive at the Thursday’s Opening Meeting no later than 07:59 EST

Rules: The coupon will be your raffle ticket to be surrendered at the door of the meeting room before 07:59 EST for a chance to win a free 4-night stay during the reunion. The prize covers the basic room rate (\$119) plus taxes. Prize value: \$476.00+.

The drawing will be held at the conclusion of the same meeting. Tickets will be selected from the people who are in the meeting room prior to 07:59 EST. No latecomers will be permitted to enter in the drawing. Correct time is determined by the President’s watch set to atomic clock standards.



**2017 St Louis Reunion Schedule**

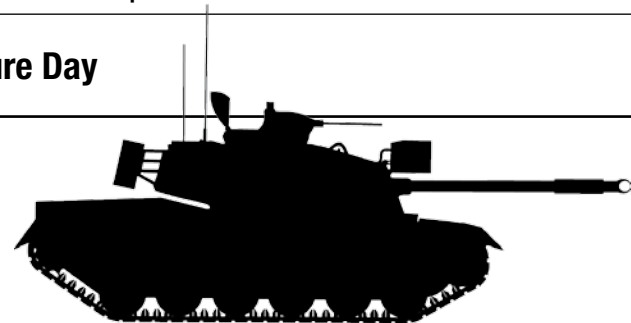
**Thursday, September 21 – Monday, September 25**

*NOTE: Schedule is subject to change before the start of the reunion.*

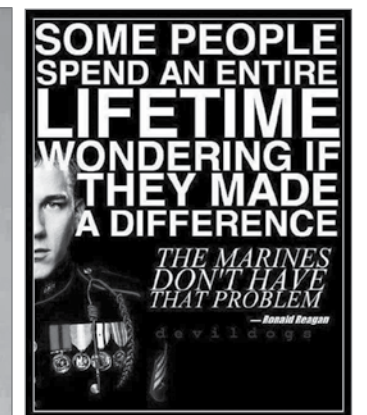
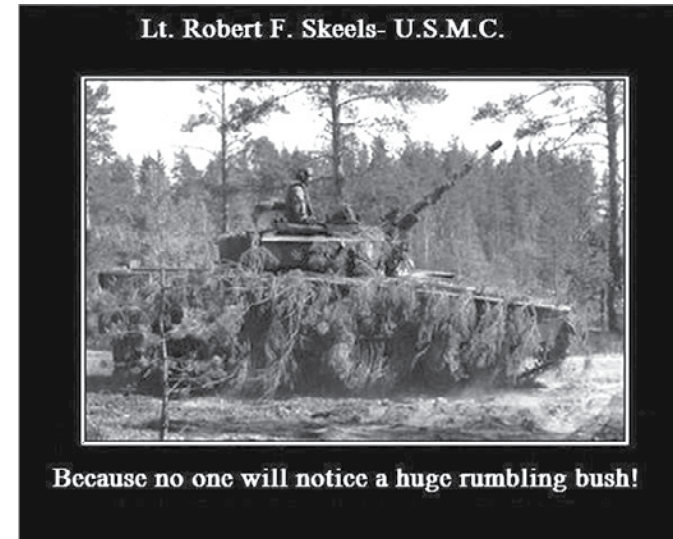
<b>Thursday</b> (Sept. 21)	0900 – 2330	<b>Arrival Day</b> – Register and pickup Welcome Packet outside The Torsion Bar hospitality room (in the Alpine Foyer). <b>Sign up for VTA History Interviews Sat and Sun</b>
	0900 – 2330	The Torsion Bar is Open <b>Lunch &amp; Dinner on your own</b> <b>Wear your reunion T-shirt today!!!</b>
<b>Friday</b> (Sept. 22)	0800 – 1000	Reunion kick-off and VTA Business Meeting (The Matterhorn Room) Enter to win a FREE hotel room for reunion! Must submit ticket before 0800 in the meeting room and be present for the drawing to win.
	0800 – 1000	Ladies Coffee (The ____ Room)
	1015 – 1030	Load buses for St Louis Arch and downtown visit (In front of hotel)
	1100 – 1115	A group photo will be taken <b>Lunch on your own</b>
	1500 – 1600	Riverboat Tour (1 hour)
	1630 – 1645	Board buses for return to hotel
	1730 – 1830	BID & BITE Italian Buffet Dinner (Versailles Ballroom)
	1830 – 2030	Live Auction! (Versailles Ballroom)
2030 – 2300	The Torsion Bar Open	

**(See reverse side)**

<b>Saturday</b> (Sept 23)	0800 – 0900	<b>Breakfast on your own</b>
	0915 – 0930	Load buses to Budweiser Brewery and Boeing tours (In front of hotel)
	1000 – 1300	Tours
	1315 – 1330	Return to hotel <b>Lunch on your own</b> <b>Interview Schedule Posted in Torsion Bar</b>
	1400 – 2300	The Torsion Bar Open <b>Dinner on your own</b>
<b>Sunday</b> (Sept. 24)	<b>Open Day – All Day</b> Open day to tour city if you choose <b>Interview Schedule Posted in Torsion Bar</b> <b>Lunch on your own</b>	
	1000 – 1600	The Torsion Bar Open
	1700 – 2130	<b>FAREWELL BANQUET</b> (Versailles Ballroom) NOTE: Dress for this function is a shirt with a collar, dress slacks, shoes and socks. Coat & tie optional. Wearing of military ribbons or medals on a jacket is highly encouraged.
	1700 – 1745	Cocktails – Cash Bar
	1800 – 1815	Presentation of Colors and remarks
	1815 – 1900	Dinner Served
	1900 – 1905	05–minutes–Head Call
	1905 – 2130	30 minutes – Guest Speaker 45 minutes – Fallen Heroes 05 minutes – 2019 Reunion
	2130 – 2400	The Torsion Bar Open – Last Call.
<b>Monday</b> (Sept. 25)	<b>Departure Day</b>	



“Our young friends—yes, young friends, for in our hearts you will always be young, full of the love that is youth, love of life, love of joy, love of country — you fought for your country and for its safety and for the freedom of others with strength and courage. We love you for it. We honor you. And we have faith that, as He does all His sacred children, the Lord will bless you and keep you, the Lord will make His face to shine upon you and give you peace, now and forever more.”  
**— Note left by President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, November 11, 1988**





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

Please check your address label. If the last two digits of "EXPIRES" is "16" then your 2017 membership dues are now payable. Make your check out to:

USMC VTA for \$30\* and mail to:

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

\*Over & Above donations are always gratefully appreciated.

