



# Sponson BOX

*Voice of  
the USMC  
Vietnam Tankers  
Association*

Ensuring Our Legacy Through Reunion, Renewal & Remembrance™



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## Marines Buy Mobile Mortar

February 9, 2010 | Greg Grant



Turning to Marine Corps procurement, the Marines are requesting \$9 million next year to buy 62 - 120mm towed mortars along with the small jeep like vehicle that hauls them around and accompanying ammo trailers. The total package is called the Expeditionary Fire Support System (EFSS) and includes the mortar, the hauler, ammo trailer, fire control equipment and an ammunition supply vehicle.

Built by General Dynamics, the rifled mortar can send rounds out to 8 kilometers, and more than 13 kilometers if they use the rocket assisted round. The mortar package and vehicle is designed to be light enough to fit inside the Marine's big lifters, the CH-53 helicopter and the MV-22 Osprey tilt rotor. Agility and lethality were key design parameters. The

mortar isn't new, in fact its in use by a number of NATO countries.

The Marines say the EFSS is a key piece of their "distributed operations" puzzle. That's the new operating concept that calls for small, highly mobile teams, usually company or smaller, to operate independently over a large battlespace. The concept is still being fleshed out, but recent exercises show promise.

For those who are familiar with the military's 1980s-90s love affair with "maneuver warfare," think of distributed operations as the same idea just with infantry as the basic unit of maneuver instead of tanks and armored personnel carriers.

It's like having your own 5" artillery at your beck and call

## Army Spends Big on Smart Grenade Rifle

February 2, 2010 | Greg Grant



The Army is moving ahead smartly with its XM25 shoulder fired, semi-automatic 25mm grenade launcher with plans to spend \$34 million on further development in 2011 and a production start slated for 2012, according to service budget documents. The Army plans to buy at least 12,500 of the weapons beginning in 2012, enough to put one in each infantry squad and special forces team, according to PEO Soldier.

The futuristic looking XM25 fires a "smart" High Explosive Airburst round out to around 600 meters. The smart round is a "counter defilade" round, designed to blast enemy infantry taking cover behind walls, cars, in trenches as well as enemy fighters dumb enough to be standing out in the open. The Army calls the weapon a "leap ahead" technology.

The XM25 uses a laser rangefinder to target the enemy, then the weapon's micro-computer accounts for air pressure, temperature and

the 25mm round's ballistics, feeds that information to a microchip in the round itself programming it to detonate directly over the target. With a 600 meter effective range, it would provide small teams greatly enhanced lethality well beyond that of rifles and machine guns. The Army claims that tests showed the XM25 with the high-explosive round is 300 percent more lethal than current squad level weapons.

The XM25 could prove enormously useful to troops in Afghanistan battling Taliban insurgents that typically fire from the cover of tree lines and from behind mud walls. This is the first weapon, at least that I have seen, that could provide infantry with a lethal, accurate and effective grenade launcher that exceeds that of the ubiquitous RPGs carried by insurgent groups around the world.

One potential weakness I've noticed is that the XM25 only has a four round magazine. The Army believes the weapon's lethality will come from its pinpoint accuracy rather than rate of fire.

## Letter from the President

By the time that this issue of the Sponson Box is on the street, the VTA Board of Directors will be getting together for our annual meeting to work on positive changes for the organization as well as hammer out solutions to any impending problems that we may have encountered in the past year. As always, any time a member has an issue that they feel is worthy of discussion and seeking a possible resolution, they should contact any board member for inclusion in the next Board meeting.

In just over a year from now, we will be packing our bags and heading to San Diego for our seventh biennial reunion. I am just now coming down from the fun & excitement of our time last year in Charleston, and I am very much looking forward to meeting & greeting all of the attendees (new and old) on August 16 - 21, 2011. It does not seem possible that it was just twelve years ago when we met as a group for the first time since we were together In-country so long ago. Time is passing us by seemingly faster and faster. What do they say about life being like a roll of toilet paper? The closer it gets towards the end, the faster it seems to go! My advice to everyone is to find a long lost tanker buddy and get him to join the organization, then make sure that he attends the next reunion with you.

If anyone has a qualified Vietnam Marine buddy or acquaintance that is not a current member, he should contact any Board member...or our National Recruiter, Robbie Robinson, so that we can have a recruitment package (with a sample of the Sponson Box and a membership application) mailed to the prospective member. Also, in order to keep finding new members and building the membership roster, we have re-enacted a 2010 - 2011 **Membership Recruiting Contest**. The VTA member in good standing who recruits the most members from January 2010 to July 1, 2011, will have his San Diego reunion registration fee paid by the association. Please get busy!

I am happy to report that more and more of you seem to be breaking out your old Vietnam photos & other memorabilia from your time in-country and sharing them with your buddies and with the organization to be published in this magazine. I cannot encourage you enough to keep this up. I have recently received a few phone calls from members who report that, as a result of a marriage split up, their ex-wife had taken all of their photos and threw them away or destroyed them in a fit of rage or retribution. What a sad turn of events! This is a good example of the importance of those who still have them to share them. We can archive them for recording our history as well. That way they'll be safe from any vindictive ex-wives of the future!

Sadly we still have roughly half of the current membership who has not paid their 2010 dues. Please make your \$30 check to "**USMC VTA**" and mail them to: USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938. Of course, we are a 501 (c) 19 IRS-approved nonprofit organization, so any additional tax-deductible donation that you may send with your membership dues payment will be very much appreciated.

Semper Fidelis,

John

"Your love of liberty - your respect for the laws - your habits of industry - and your practice of the moral and religious obligations are the strongest claims to national and individual happiness."

[George Washington]

## Board of Directors 2007–2009

### Executive Directors

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#### Lt Col Raymond Stewart, USMC (ret)

*President, Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation*  
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### Committees & Chairmen

#### Mike Burnett

Awards & Medals  
209-383-2261 PST

#### Bruce "Boston" Manns

Association Archives  
603-448-3305 EST

#### CW04 Bob Embesi

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#### Bob Peavey

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

Robert Peavey – Editor & Publisher – repv@comcast.net

Tuyen Pham – Layout and Design

Sandra Coan – Proofing

Printed in the USA

ON THE COVER: F-32 from 3rd Tanks, Charlie West as the TC, takes care of several snipers that were taking out grunts from Alpha 1/1. Charlie was fed up with the rules of engagement in the early battle for Hue City and saved several grunts with his action. The driver was Bradford "Goodie" Goodin and the gunner's name was lost but his nickname was "Scoobie".



## New Members for 2010 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sponson Box

#### Johnny L Evans

2215 Choctaw Road  
Thibodaux, LA 70301  
(985) 633-2265  
No email

B Co, 1st Tanks '68 – '69  
MOS: 1811

Wife: Deanna Lee  
DOB: 7/11/43

Recruited by: Tom Cleary

#### Stephen Falk

509 Plainfield Ave  
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922  
(908) 665-6896

Email: pop1sttanks@verizon.net  
H&S Co, 1st Tanks '67 – '68

MOS: 0411  
Wife: Marcia

DOB: 10/11/45

Recruited by: Web site

#### Ramon Fuentes

534 Grosvenor Street  
San Antonio, TX 78221-1521  
(210) 922-6004

Email: twocan5thtanks@aol.com  
H&S Co, FSR '67 – '68

MOS: 2141  
Wife: Janie

DOB: 8/5/47

Recruited by: John Wear

#### Theodore K Hildabrand

90 Chevalier Court East  
Eighty Four, PA 15330  
(724) 942-2125

Email: tkhaquariusnetwk@comcast.net

B Co, 1st Tanks '67 – '68

MOS: 3516  
Wife: Jacque

DOB: 12/11/44

Recruited by: John Wear

#### Alonzo Jacobs

301 Park Street North  
St Petersburg, FL 33710-6739  
(727) 343-5747

Email: Alonzo.jacobs@gmail.com  
H&S, B Co, 1st Tanks '69 – '70

MOS: 3531  
Wife: Sharen Marie

DOB: 11/30/49

Recruited by: John Wear

#### Edwin J Kues

6381 Lake Athabaska Place  
San Diego, CA 92119  
(619) 463-7093

Email: londis1@cox.net  
FLC Reaction Pit '68

MOS: 1800, 2100, 8511, 9999

Wife: Yukiko  
DOB: 3/28/29

Recruited by: Website

#### Daniel F Martin

59 West School Street  
Bonne Terre, MO 63628  
(573) 358-0472

No email  
A Co, 3rd Tanks '65 – '66

MOS: 1811  
Wife: Belinda Susan

DOB: 5/25/46

Recruited by: Bob Embesi

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

## Meet Your Board of Directors

A feature that provides some history about one of your Board members.

# Raymond A. Stewart



Lt. Col. Ray Stewart, USMC (Ret.) (1802/0302/0202) joined the Marine Corps as a Private in 1955. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt, USMC in 1964 upon graduation from the University of Idaho under the Naval Enlisted Scientific Education Program (NESEP). Stewart served two and a half tours in Vietnam. The first extended tour ('65-'66) was with the 1st and 3rd Tank Battalions as Platoon Commander, 3rd Plt., Bravo Company in support of BLT 3/7 (Operation Starlite) at Chu Lai and then Asst. S-4, Da Nang. Stewart extended his tour 6 months to join the Second Battalion, Fourth Marines as a Platoon Commander, 1st Platoon, "F" Company and then as the Company Executive Officer, F/2/4 from Da Nang to the DMZ. Returning to MCAS, El Toro, CA and after a year at Arabic Language School in Wash., D.C., he served C.O., H&S Company 2nd Radio Battalion at Camp Lejeune, N.C. and served in Morocco. Stewart attended Amphibious Warfare School (AWS), Quantico, VA before returning to RVN. During his second tour, Stewart was the Operations Officer of the "Da Nang Defense Battalion" (S-3, 1st Military Police Bn). He returned

to CONUS via the Bremerton Naval Hospital on the way to I&I duty, Rome, GA. Stewart was promoted to Major in Rome and posted to AWS as an instructor and seminar leader. From Quantico, he was assigned to the Foreign Area Officer Studies Program, Beirut Lebanon, followed by a tour with the Navy's Commander, Middle East Force, Bahrain as the Force Plans Officer (N-5). After a short CONUS tour at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Stewart returned to the Middle East for 3 years as the Defense and Naval Attaché and Security Assistance Chief accredited to the Sultanate of Oman. He retired a Lt. Col. in 1983 after a tour as the Arabian Peninsula Desk Intelligence Officer (J2) with the U.S. Central Command, Tampa, FL.

Stewart has been awarded the Bronze Star Medal w/Combat "V", Meritorious Service Medal w/Star and Cluster, Navy Commendation Medal w/Star and "V", Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry w/Bronze and 2 Silver Stars, and Palm, the Combat Action Ribbon w/2 stars, and the Marine Corps Good Conduct Medal w/2 stars.

Ray has master's degrees in Education, Middle East Studies, National Security

Management, and Business Administration. He is retired from with The Boeing Company as an Education & Training Manager. He is married to the former Julia Lynne Austin of Spokane, WA and has two adult children and four grand children. His daughter is a Secondary School Teacher in Arlington, VA. Ray's son is an Attorney who practices law in Tacoma, WA. Ray is President of Mountain View Consulting, an educational company; a Marine Corps historian; a published author; and a nationally certified counselor in the field of chemical dependency and substance abuse. Ray is President of the Marine Corps Vietnam Tanker Historical Foundation, a nonprofit organization, with the mission of writing and archiving the personal histories of Vietnam War-serving Marine Tankers.

Raymond A. Stewart  
707 S.W. 350th Court  
Federal Way, WA 98023  
Office: 206/484-0871  
FAX: 253/942-9083

## Membership Information Changes for 2010 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sponson Box

#### Art Allen

3630 S Peninsula Dr (#105)  
Port Orange, FL 32127  
Cell:(386) 882-4020

#### Mike Brandi

MBR6527857@aol.com

#### Tom Colson

tcolsonsr@hotmail.com  
**Charles "Corky" Cummings**  
7135 Mamouth Street  
Englewood, FL 34224  
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#### Ken Dahl

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Church Point, LA 70525  
Kendahl67@yahoo.com

#### Robert "Bob" Dougherty

4323 Moxley Valley Dr  
Mount Airy, MD 21771-4815

#### Donald J Gehl

Dontanker2@charter.net  
**"Doc" Gene Hackemack**  
Squeezeman123@gmail.com

#### John Harper

3360 S Hydraulic  
Wichita, KS 67216  
Home: (316) 554-1093  
Cell: (316) 650-9447

#### Roger McVay

Sgt.jarhead1941@hotmail.com

#### Jon Morrison

Email: bromoe10@gmail.com

#### Ken Pozder

99 Crescent Circle  
Jasper, AL 35503-7522

#### Bobby Ruble

1614 – 14th Ave (Apt F-1)  
Central City, NE 68826  
(308) 946-3152

#### Joseph D Torres

Eljosefo2@gmail.com  
James R Williams  
(910) 652-2437

#### Tony Willis

Cell:(505) 301-0180

## Letter to the Editor

Dear John,

I am now just trying to catch up with my mail. I have been hospitalized from 20 Sep 09 until 24 Dec 09 with complications resulting from foot surgery at the VA Hospital in Minneapolis - St Paul. I am now free of cast, but have to wear a support boot for a couple of more months. Three feet from my heart!

I'll survive.

Please thank the VTA for the flowers they sent me while I was incarcerated at the Three Links Care Center after leaving the VA Hospital.

Good to be home, but too cold to get out and walk like I use to do before I decided to get my ankle squared away.

Col. Bruce M. Mac Laren USMC (Ret.)  
1014 Division Street South  
Northfield, MN 55057  
Phone 507-301-2289.  
Email: grumpycol@charter.net  
Semper Fi  
Mac

Dear John,

I wish to extend a Thank You to the Membership of the Vietnam Tankers Association for sending the beautiful plant in memory of my Dad, Louis McCormack.

My Dad was a quiet man who loved his family, worked hard and made a success of his business and still quietly helped others in need. He served in the Army artillery during the Korean War, and all we ever knew about his time in service was "Korea was hot in the summer and cold in the winter." It wasn't until William & I married that I got a glimpse of what my Dad went through. William convinced him he needed to go to the VA Center for evaluation, where he was given a combined 100% disability due to frostbite.

I don't know what my Dad and my husband talked about over the years but I do know it was a bonding. My Mom called last night to tell me she is finally going through my Dad's things. In my Dad's wallet and the last 5 before, he carried a coin. My Mom thought it was a silver dollar she had given my Dad... what

she found was a coin William had given him when he made SgtMaj. For almost 24 years my Dad has carried that coin - one warrior honoring another.

My Dad was from another branch and served in another war but I really think he would have been humbled to know the Marine Corps "tankers" thought of him as a comrade.

Millicent McCormack-Carroll  
D. Millicent Carroll  
Portable Sanitation Association International  
Industry/Regulatory Standards  
Tel: 952-854-8300; 800-822-3020  
E-mail: info@psai.org  
Web site: www.psal.org

Dear John,

I read an article in my local paper today that caught me off guard. It concerns Marines that served at Camp Lejeune from around July 1984 to 1992 and were exposed to benzene in the drinking water. An environmental contractor under-reported the level of a cancer-causing chemical at Camp Lejeune, then omitted it altogether as the Marine Corps Base prepared for a Federal health review. The Marine Corps had been warned nearly a decade earlier about the dangerously high levels of benzene, which was traced to massive leaks from fuel tanks at the north end of the base on the North Carolina coast. This was an eye-opener to me because of the lung fibrosis I am now living with. I will be asking my doctor a lot of questions when I see him. I suggest that anyone with a lung cancer or any lung disease makes their doctor aware of this finding.

The article I read came from the Minneapolis Star Tribune, February 18th.

Jim Littman  
Champlain, MN  
(763) 323-1481

*Editors Note: We have done three warnings on this health issue over the last year. It appears that it has now hit the mainstream media.*

Dear John,

I saw this at the Tuscaloosa Veterans Hospital this past Thursday, so Friday

when I went back I made sure to take my camera and took the two attached photos.

I think this is very good for the VA



to give us veterans who don't see so well anymore a good aiming point.

Take care and God bless,  
Semper Fi,

Chris Spencer

Dear John,

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial — The Wall — is the most visited memorial in our nation's capital and a powerful symbol of courage and sacrifice. An exciting new project will make the stories behind the 58,261 names on The Wall come to life to ensure they are never forgotten.

Nearly half of the visitors to The Wall were born after the Vietnam War. To them, the names cut in the smooth black granite have no context, there is no connection. The new Education Center at The Wall will enhance the visitor experience for young and old alike, and honor the values of service demonstrated by all those who have served in our country's armed forces.

Already approved by Congress, the Education Center will be an underground state-of-the-art facility on the National Mall. It will feature photos of those named on The Wall, a chronology of the conflict, and a selection of the more than 100,000 personal items that have been left at The Wall in memory of those who gave their lives for their country.

The Education Center will give generations to come a deeper appreciation of the courage, sacrifice and devotion of those who fell, those who returned and those who waited.

Please join me and General Colin Powell, our Honorary Campaign Chairman, in making the Education Center at The Wall a reality.

The Education Center is funded exclusively with private donations, so we need your help. Please consider supporting this important effort by making a donation today.

Together we can build a place that provides future generations with a better understanding of the meaning of service, sacrifice and courage. Click here to donate now or visit [www.BuildTheCenter.org](http://www.BuildTheCenter.org) for more information.

Chris Spencer  
[bamamarine7276@gmail.com](mailto:bamamarine7276@gmail.com)

Hi, John,

Sorry to be late with my annual dues. I've included an extra amount due to my tardiness. Please buy a case of "Specialty Ale" for the Board for all of their great USMC VTA work. Again, excellent reunion in SC and excellent 1st trimester 2010 edition of the Sponson Box, most especially all of the helpful and informative information on Veterans' Benefits.

Hey! Pete Rich in his letter gave me a chuckle when he embellished my conversation with him on hitting AP mines. My platoon has a total of hitting 12 mines but I only hit two myself! The reason I am correcting his account of this conversation is that I don't want to be known as "the FNG in 3rd Tanks with the super magnet ass!"

You can print this correction in the next Sponson Box so I am not known as

the member who largely embellishes Nam incidents.

Semper Fi,

Bob Skeels  
(860) 658-2164  
[robertfskeels@aol.com](mailto:robertfskeels@aol.com)

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for the article on our daughter's travel agency business in the last Sponson Box. It was very nice of you to take an interest in our family. Leroy is doing fine, even with his issues he is still able to drive and get around on his own. We are holding on and doing what we need to do to get by. This snow has been horrible this winter but Leroy has been out shoveling the yard for the dogs, the sidewalk and for getting the cars out. He does not mind being active. Sometimes his back starts getting him down, but once he starts, he keeps right on pushing. I guess that's his Marine Corps training kicking in—never give up and keep on pushing. Sometimes I just think the Corps made him nuts and that's why he does it... LOL

I sent a check for his 2010 VTA membership today.  
Thanks again, John  
Semper Fidelis

Leroy & Lois Kramer  
[captcrabde@verizon.net](mailto:captcrabde@verizon.net)

I love the last issue of the Sponson Box and the soft cover design. It has to be one of the best veterans information "newsletters" ever done; and I should know as I have published newsletters for the local chapters of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and the Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA).

Keep up the good work.

Mike Burnett  
[khesahn068@aol.com](mailto:khesahn068@aol.com)

Bob,

I just wanted to take advantage of the spirit moving me to tell you what a fine publication the "Sponson Box" has become. I can't put it down until I read it from cover to cover. It's all good!

The Charleston reunion was good but the Philly reunion was "gooder" and my

first. Keep up the good work. Just like to let you know you're appreciated.

Semper Fi,

Marshall "Jamie" Jameson  
C & H&S Co., 1st Tanks 1967 - 69.  
Seven Springs, NC

*Editor's Note: Your note was a pleasant surprise and really appreciated. Bob*

John,

The latest issue of the Sponson Box (Jan - April 2010) was most outstanding! The photos and articles, especially from 1968 when we were over there, made me so excited and happy to see them. You guys are doing one heck of a great job! You get a major "Atta boy!" from me!

Maj Frank Box, USMC (ret)  
Volcano, Hawaii  
(808) 987-0631  
[febox@aol.com](mailto:febox@aol.com)

Hi John,

Just got my Sponson Box and saw (to my surprise) my story "Charge" in it. I had to smile because I was on the verge of contacting someone regarding the story that I thought had been lost.

After not seeing it posted under "Sea Stories", I thought I may not have sent it in, but only "thought" I had. So, I quickly wrote it up again (leaving out some of the details of the original) and sent it in again for a posting under Sea Stories.

Now that I see it in the Sponson Box, I think it is best there and not under Sea Stories at all. More readers will read it now, etc.

Thanks for putting it in there! Makes me feel as though I have contributed a little, and hopefully some of the members will get a kick out of it!

Semper Fi...

Greg Kelley

John,

The Sponson Box got here today. What a nice job you guys do with this thing! A great magazine. Congratulations. My wife was very impressed. You made me look good being included. I recognize some of the pictures and I'll read the articles

*(Continued on page 9)*

# To the Great Tank Park in the Sky

## E.D. DIAL

I'm sad to report that MGySgt E. D. Dial passed away in his sleep on Friday night, 2/4/10. After weeks of thrashing red tape, Mrs. Margie Dial got a hospital bed provided by the VA at their home. E. D. had been in and out of the hospital and caretaker home and was in pain the past 15 months. They just had the bathroom remodeled for wheel chair access and they were looking forward to having him at home. He had come home on 2/3/10.

He was a very special Marine. I knew him as the driver on A-32 and later as A-32's TC. He was a great asset in keeping the platoon's morale at a high level. He is probably most remembered for the black and white fur hat he wore in the field during the Korean winter of 1950-51. God speed E.D..

Margie has indicated that those who wish to honor E.D. to please make your donations to the MCTA John Cornelius Scholarship Fund which was specified in his Trust.

Semper Fi,

Roger Chaput

MGySgt E. D. Dial was a magnificent Marine, tanker, and leader. Tough as nails but had a fabulous sense of humor once you got to know him. He had a tremendous ability to cut through the chaff to get to the wheat on every issue of substance. He had an amazing impact on so many officers, SNCO's, NCO's, and

enlisted Marines. He was a model to emulate. He had a major impact on developing leaders within our tank community. May he rest in peace.

Semper Fidelis,

Martin R. Steele  
LtGen USMC (Ret).

## JACK WILDER

I got word today (4/20/10) that one of our own, Jack Wilder, passed away after putting up a valiant fight with an advanced case of diabetes. There was a memorial service at the Chapman Funeral Home in Brunswick, GA on Wednesday, April 28.

Semper Fidelis,

John

I remember the first time I saw Jack. The look on his face, wounded and leaning against the hull of his busted up tank in "Ambush Valley" as my tank came upon him the morning just before the gooks found the range on our relief column. He was a great Marine.

Ben Cole  
b\_cole@bellsouth.net

## Looking For

### OCEANVIEW - JULY, 1968

Looking for the tank crew that fired a couple of beehive or canister rounds one night in early July using their searchlight at Oceanview. The famous photographer Henri Huet was also there and may help jog someone's memory. I was the amtrack CO on the hill that night.

Richard Lennon  
170 N Shelmore Blvd  
Mt Pleasant, SC 292464  
843-856-3216  
rlennon@aol.com

### Letter to the Editor

(Continued from page 7)

tonight. I'll give you a better report in a day or two. Thanks again.

Michael Ryerson  
c/o Buffalo Specialties  
10706 Craighead Drive  
Houston, Texas 77025

*Editor's Note: Mike is the author of "Man in the Doorway" which appeared in the last issue.*

I read PR Emmitt's article about his encounter with TJ Siva with great interest.

When I reported in to Charlie Co, 1st Tanks in 1962, TJ had been a staff sergeant and through some disciplinary action had just been made an E-5. When on duty, he was a squared away as any Marine but ABSOLUTELY NOT politically correct. At a point in time in early 1963, TJ would only be given liberty at the end of the month and, under the watchful eye of Charlie Company members, usually to no avail. When I departed Charlie Co in late '63 for 3rd Tanks in Okinawa, Sgt Siva had become Cpl Siva. He was definitely an old school Marine, enormously talented but he just had a problem with liberty. If anyone else had pulled the stunts that he did on liberty they would have been out of the Marine Corps.

Semper Fidelis,

Kevin Flynn

If you can please pass on my congratulations to the editor and staff who compile the Sponson Box magazine. The last two issues - Charleston and Going Back - were outstanding. And the memories of swim call to China Beach still remain with me today.

Semper Fi,

Russell Walters  
Tura Beach, Australia  
rw73045@bigpond.com

*Editor's Note - Thanks, Russell. It's addresses like yours that makes us an international publication. Bob*

Enclosed is a check for my annual dues. I can't find anything to indicate any paper work that is necessary for my first renewal. I got my latest issue of the Sponson Box and want to say "Thanks" for the outstanding job that you folks have done putting it together. Keep up the good work!

Semper Fi,

Wayne Young  
Hudson, NC  
usmcent159@hotmail.com

Hi John,

When I saw the picture of Hill 43 in the last issue of the Sponson Box, it brought back some old memories. Way back when I was a motor transport

platoon sergeant and we were in support of Alpha Company, 1st Tank Bn, 1st Mar Div. We had to go to TAM KE on a daily basis to get supplies. We rotated who would go on the "water run" (as we called it). On the return trip there was a very nice place to swim and we normally took full advantage of the cool water. One day it was my turn to go on the mission, but for some reason I had to stay in the Alpha company area. On the way back my two trucks hit mines (and the engineers had just swept the road!!!). GOD was with me that day since I was not able to make the run... and PRAISE GOD, no one was hurt in the mine detonation.

SEMPER FI To all my brothers

S/SGT William "Bill" Cotton

*Editor's Note: Bill sent in several pictures that we were unable to run do to their small size. Thanks for trying, Bill.*

We usually send flowers to a down comrade, but after our illustrious leader broke his wrist, which required surgery, we instead sent flowers to John Wear's wife with the following note:

"To Jeanne - From all of us, we express our sorrow at having to put up with John's whining. Our condolences go out to you.

From your USMC Vietnam Tankers Association family." ♦

# The Creation of Vietnam Vets

When the Lord was creating Vietnam veterans, He was into His 6th day of overtime when an angel appeared.

“You’re certainly doing a lot of fiddling around on this one.”

And God said, “Have you seen the specs on this order? A Nam vet has to be able to run 5 miles through the bush with a full pack on, endure with barely any sleep for days, enter tunnels his higher ups wouldn’t consider doing, and keep his weapons clean and operable. He has to be able to sit in his hole all night during an attack, hold his buddies as they die, walk point in unfamiliar territory known to be VC infested, and somehow keep his senses alert for danger. He has to be in top physical condition existing on c-rats and very little rest. And he has to have 6 pairs of hands.”

The angel shook his head slowly and said, “6 pair of hands....no way.”

The Lord say’s “It’s not the hands that are causing me problems. It’s the 3 pair of eyes a Nam vet has to have.”

“That’s on the standard model?” asked the angel.

The Lord nodded. “One pair that sees through elephant grass, another pair here in the side of his head for his buddies, another pair here in front that can look reassuringly at his bleeding, fellow soldier and say, “You’ll make it” .... when he knows he won’t.

“Lord, rest, and work on this tomorrow.”

“I can’t,” said the Lord. “I already have a model that can carry a wounded soldier 1,000 yards during a fire fight, calm the fears of the latest FNG, and feed a family of 4 on a grunt’s paycheck.”

The angel walked around the model and said, “Can it think?”

“You bet,” said the Lord. “It can quote much of the UCMJ, recite all his general orders, and engage in a search and destroy mission in less time than it takes for his fellow Americans back home to discuss the morality of the War, and still keep

his sense of humor The Lord gazed into the future and said, “He will also endure being vilified and spit on when he returns home, rejected and crucified by the very ones he fought for.”

Finally, the angel slowly ran his finger across the vet’s cheek, and said, “There’s a leak...I told you that you were trying to put too much into this model.”

“That’s not a leak”, said the Lord. “That’s a tear.”

“What’s the tear for?” asked the angel.

“It’s for bottled up emotions, for holding fallen soldiers as they die, for commitment to that funny piece of cloth called the American flag, for the terror of living with PTSD for decades after the war, alone with it’s demons with no one to care or help.”

“You’re a genius,” said the angel, casting a gaze at the tear.

The lord looked very somber, as if seeing down eternity’s distant shores.

“I didn’t put it there,” he said.

## Khe Sanh Reunion

The 2nd Bn 1st Marines fought alongside Marine tanks in Vietnam and they are the grunt Marines who were with us during the ambush at Khe Sanh on May 19, 1968. They are having their annual reunion in November 2010 in San Antonio, TX. They are inviting any and all tankers who would like to come. So far I know Rick Oswood, Rene Cerda and I are attending.

If you recall a few years back, Harris Himes and a few of us tankers who fought in the May 19th fight held a small reunion in Washington, D.C. to celebrate and remember that fateful day. About 15 to 20 Marines from 2/1 also attended and it was outstanding to share what had happened from both perspectives.

Here’s the detailed information regarding the grunt reunion in Texas:

2010 Reunion  
November 6 - 12  
Holiday inn El Tropicano Riverwalk  
110 Lexington Ave  
San Antonio, TX 78205  
Room Rate \$95 (same rate for single, double, triple or quadruple)  
Reservation Code:  
2nd BN 1st Marines Reunion  
Toll Free 866-293-1842

Tankers are invited and encouraged to attend.

## Gunner Embesi’s Dual Reunion

If you served with Sgt. Robert Embesi in B Co during 1966, or with him on his second tour as a SSgt & Platoon Sergeant with 2nd Platoon, Bravo Co., 5th Tanks in 1968, he is holding a reunion in Conner, Montana at his place on July 8, 9 & 10. Barbecue is his specialty and you’ll get a chance to see the beautiful Bitter Root Valley. For more information call Bob Embesi directly at 406-821-3075 ♦

## Special Extra Earnings for Military Service

Since 1957, if you had military service earnings for active duty (including active duty for training), you paid Social Security taxes on those earnings. Since 1988, inactive duty service in the Armed Forces reserves (such as weekend drills) has also been covered by Social Security. Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for your military service from 1957 through 2001 can be credited to your record for Social Security purposes. These extra earnings credits may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit.

Special extra earnings credits are granted for periods of active duty or active duty for training. Special extra earnings credits are not granted for inactive duty training.

If your active military service occurred

- From 1957 through 1967, we will add the extra credits to your record when you apply for Social Security benefits.
- From 1968 through 2001, you do not need to do anything to receive these extra credits. The credits were automatically added to your record.
- After 2001, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

### How You Get Credit For Special Extra Earnings

The information that follows applies only to active duty military service earnings from 1957 through 2001. Here’s how the special extra earnings are credited on your record:

#### Service in 1957 Through 1977

You are credited with \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay.

#### Service in 1978 through 2001

For every \$300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100 in earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year. If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, and didn’t complete at least 24 months of active duty or your full tour, you may not be able to receive the additional earnings. Check with Social Security for details.

The information in the link below will be of interest to veterans!

<http://www.ssa.gov/retire2/military.htm>

Don’t forget your DD214 if you go to apply.

## “Just Stay”

*Submitted by Ted Wunsch*

A nurse took the tired, anxious serviceman to the bedside. “Your son is here,” she said to the old man. She had to repeat the words several times before the patient’s eyes opened.

Heavily sedated because of the pain of his heart attack, he dimly saw the young uniformed Marine standing outside the oxygen tent. He reached out his hand. The Marine wrapped his toughened fingers around the old man’s limp ones, squeezing a message of love and encouragement.

The nurse brought a chair so that the Marine could sit beside the bed. All through the night the young Marine sat there in the poorly lighted ward, holding the old man’s hand and offering him words of love and strength. Occasionally, the nurse suggested that the Marine move away and rest awhile.

He refused. Whenever the nurse came into the ward, the Marine was oblivious of her and of the night noises of the hospital - the clanking of the oxygen tank, the laughter of the night staff members exchanging greetings, the cries and moans of the other patients.

Now and then she heard him say a few gentle words. The dying man said nothing, only held tightly to his son all through the night.

Along towards dawn, the old man died. The Marine released the now lifeless hand he had been holding and went to tell the nurse. While she did what she had to do, he waited.

Finally, she returned. She started to offer words of sympathy, but the Marine interrupted her. “Who was that man?” he asked.

The nurse was startled, “I thought he was your father,” she answered.

“No, he wasn’t,” the Marine replied. “I never saw him before in my life.”

“Then why didn’t you say something when I took you to him?”

“I knew right away there had been a mistake, but I also knew he needed his son, and his son wasn’t here. When I realized that he was too sick to tell whether or not I was his son, knowing how much he needed me, I stayed.”

“I came here tonight to find a Mr. William Grey. His son was Killed in Iraq today, and I was sent to inform him. What was this gentleman’s name?”

The Nurse, with tears in her eyes, answered, “Mr. William Grey...”

The next time someone needs you... just be there. Stay.  
*Editors Note: Ted Wunsch is the brother of Fallen Hero, Captain Michael Wunsch, 3rd Tanks. ♦*

# What Members are Doing

## Dick Carey

VTA Life Member Richard (Dick) Carey was the guest speaker at the Marine Corps Ball held on Cape Cod in his home town of Sandwich on November 10th, 2009.

Carey spoke about the actions that took the life of his 3rd Tank Bn company commanding officer, Daniel Kent, and the brave actions of then Corporal Harry Christensen who was awarded the Silver Star. Richard also participated in the cutting of the cake ceremony. The local Marines presented him with a K-Bar knife.

Richard is the Founder and President Emeritus of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association and Co-Founder, Director of Public Affairs and Web Master for the Marine Corp Vietnam Tankers Historical Foundation.

## Chris Spencer Veteran of the Year

Yesterday morning was the awards day at the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center and, as I've told all of you earlier, they for some

reason chose to name me the Veteran of the Year for 2009.

I had several friends and fellow Marine Corps League detachment members there, and I very much appreciate all of you coming out on a very cold and rainy morning. My preacher, Mike Griffin, and deacon Foster Abernathy were there from my church, Grants Creek Baptist, also Gary and Forrest Fitts, Jim Burch from my Marine Corps League (I feel like I'm forgetting someone, my apologies if I have), and my dear friend Kay Stephens. Plus I know many of the VA employees and a lot of them were there. I thank you all for being there.

It was a very humbling experience. When I thought about all the honorable veterans who had been named Veteran of the Month in 2009, it humbles me to be selected from such a noble group. They all deserve this more than I. I tried to say a few words of thanks but got choked up. I did manage to say that I did not see this as an individual award, but it was for ALL

the veterans who come there for their medical care.

And there was another award that was a complete surprise. I am also a member of the American Legion. Herb Champion, the commander of Post 208, was there and presented me with a check for \$100. He also told me he had nominated me for Veteran of the Year for the State of Alabama American Legion. I asked him before we left if the Legion has a scholarship fund and he said yes, so I asked him to take the check back and donate it to that fund.

Tricia Hill, a retired Navy Chief and VA employee, made the presentation. She got back into her dress uniform for the occasion, she said, because she knew the Marines would be all dressed up. And Tricia, I thank you for everything you did.

I got only 2 photos with my camera, but April Jones, the VA photographer, got several that I'm sure she will email to me soon.

In this one photo are L-R, Tricia Hill, me, Jim Burch, one of my fellow Marine Corps League members, Kay Stephens and Herb Champion. The other is just photos of the awards. I was told they are going to make a new one for this because it says the same thing as the Veteran of the Month award and they felt it should say more, or at least something different for the Veteran of the Year award. Both are fine with me now.

I just wanted to share all this with y'all. It has been a very humbling experience and none of it could have happened without the grace and blessings of our loving God. Thank you all for your support and, most of all, your friendship.

Love and God bless,

Chris



Chris Spencer, second from left, receives Veteran of the Year Award.

Lieutenant Colonel Willard F. Lochridge was raised in Scarsdale, NY.



He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps in April 1961. Upon graduation from Western Carolina University in 1965, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant.

While in the Marine Corps, he served two tours of duty in South Vietnam, with 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division; 1st Tank Battalion, 1st Marine Division; and USMC Combined Action Program (CAP). He also served as Battalion Assistant S-3 Officer, S-5 Civil Affairs Officer, and Southern Sector (DaNang) Reaction Force Commander. Returning to the U.S. in December 1967, he was transferred to the Office of the Secretary of Defense as a Systems Analyst. Shortly thereafter, he became Executive Officer, Guard Company, HQ USMC; and, later became Commanding Officer of H&S Company, HQ USMC.

LtCol Lochridge joined the NY Naval Militia in 2000.

In the aftermath of the attacks of 11 Sep 2001, he served for 51 days as Military Liaison Officer to NY City's Office of

Emergency Management (OEM). Later, he was assigned as Officer in Charge of maritime security at the Indian Point Nuclear facility.

In 2002 he was tasked to develop specifications for high speed patrol boats that eventually became the Naval Militia's Military Emergency Boat Service (MEBS). Over the next five years he launched ten state-of-the-art patrol boats and trained a number of personnel to crew them.

LtCol Lochridge's personal decorations include: Silver Star Medal; (2) Bronze Star Medals with Combat 'V' for Valor; Purple Heart Medal; US Coast Guard Commendation Medal with Operational 'O' device; and, Combat Action Ribbon. His New York State awards include the Conspicuous Service Medal, and The Life Saving Medal from The Board of Commissioners of Pilots of the State of NY.

In civilian capacity, LtCol Lochridge was Vice President, Federal Computer System Division, Motorola Inc. in Washington, DC. Prior to that position he was a founding Vice President for GRiD Systems Corporation.

LtCol Lochridge is married to Ms. Kirsten Hansen Lochridge. They reside in Averill Park, NY.

## Belmo Gets Award.

John, It was great speaking with you. I hope that arm heals up fast and that all is well. As we both agreed, for Marines it sure is tuff getting old. But, much like that old saying, "we may not be as lean nor near as mean but we're still Marines".

Per our discussion regarding my experience at the fire on 1/29/10, it shows that at times that old saying has a lot of truth to it. You can take the Marine out of the Corps, but the Corps stays in the Marine.

I have as you requested attached a copy of the two letters of commendation that The Marine Corps League Detachment Commandant, Mike Nicolet (2/4, 67-68), received from the City of South San Francisco, and an account of what happened. I appreciated the thanks from

the City, but I know that you or any of our brothers would have done the same thing. It is all about who we are and what we do so, no biggie for us, but for others I guess it is.

John, as you may recall I am now rated as 100% disabled by Social Security due to my back and knees, and at times I actually have to use the cane they gave me, but not too often. Anyway, my point is what amazes me is that the apartment that was on fire was on the 4th floor, and at no time during the entire event did I once feel any

(Continued on page 15)



## Can anyone ID the tanker on the right?

A Vietnam Corpsman from Kilo, 3/9 sent this great photo to us. He got it from a Doggie M42 "Duster" commander who took it in '67 - '68 around Ca Lu on Rt 9, west of the Rockpile. The tanker on the left is Tom Wharton but does anyone know who the tanker on the right is?



## Guess Who Contest Winner

Last issue's photo contest winner was a member from the Phoenix, AZ area whose name the editor lost. Please call Bob Peavey again so we can get you your "priceless" prize. The winner correctly ID'd Guy Wolfenbarger as the second person from the left. It is also interesting to note that the individual in the very back is Frank Vinning who passed away just a few years ago.



*Being all they can be!*

We are looking for the correct identity of the guy on the far right who is posing with two other tank officers. The one on the right should be moderately easy, who is he?

## What Member Are Doing! (Continued from page 13)

pain or inability to function below the normal 200% that would have typically been expected of us when we served in our Corps. I wish someone would make a something that would make me feel like that all the time.

By the way, we got so focused on talking about so many other things before you had to leave for physical therapy that I forgot to give an up date on my son, Dominic.

This photo was taken during the 65th Anniversary of the Battle for Iwo Jima Memorial Luncheon that was held at the Marines Memorial Club in downtown San Francisco in February 2010.

From left to right : Me, Lt. Gen. Snowden USMC (ret); Iwo Jima Marine Dale Cook; Vietnam Marine Mike Nicolet (4th Marines '67 - '68) and Korean War Marine Marlin Gill ('50 - '51).

Gen. Snowden was a rifle company commander in battles on the Pacific islands of Roi-Namur, Tinian, Saipan and, Iwo Jima. He later served in Korea (1953) and Vietnam (1966).

Semper Fi,

Mike "Belmo" Belmessieri  
ZippoF11@aol.com

His orders to Afghanistan were canceled, and much to his disappointment he may not be able to share Afghanistan stories with you and the rest of our brothers at the next reunion. However, it is much to my joy that he may not be able to do so. The two tours in Iraq, as well as his Okinawa, Korea, and other Marine Corps vacation lands will just have to do. Hopefully, he will remain at and enjoy Camp Pendleton or some other garrison spot for the rest of his enlistment. However, as things appear to be developing, that may be an unlikely

thing to expect. I'll be seeing him in mid-April when I visit Camp Pendleton with a group from a brother Marine Corps League Detachment. He has been advised that he will be picking up Sgt on April 1, so that will be cause for a celebration while we are there. Two times a Lance Cool, 2 times a Cpl, and now finally a Sgt. A hard road to travel to E-5 but, I think even Chesty would have approved. Take care, brother.

Semper Fi

Belmo



## Challenge from Apeldoorn,

Enclosed please find my donation for this year. I might refer to it as a response to the "Doc Forsyth request for Life members to continue to contribute" letter of 2009. I think it is a great idea and proudly continue to contribute.

Semper Fidelis,

Bruce  
MSgt Bruce C Van Apeldoorn,  
Sr., USMC (ret)  
73 Stanton Street  
Rochester, NY 14661  
bvanapeldoornwsr@gmail.com  
(585) 640-6564

Well, we actually have someone other than Belmo who did something this tri-mester – Doug Scrivner got a Fatboy and his own plate! Cool!





# A Fish Story

BY JIM GUFFEY

This is an unusual but true story out of the pages of the Viet Nam war. It doesn't involve a firefight or an ambush or a tank hitting a mine. But it does involve a "KIA". Remember, this incident happened over

a major event that has remained with this writer for over forty years.

Our paths did not cross again after my tour in Viet Nam until our association began. I saw his name on the roster and



LST 715 served in WWII at Iwo Jima, at Inchon in Korea & Vietnam.

forty years ago. My recollection of the event may differ from those that were also on the scene observing this tragic event.

As I recall, it is April 23, 1967. The remainder of the 1st Tank Battalion boarded the USNS LST 715 De Kalb County in Chu Lai to travel to DaNang. Along with the 1811's and other Marines is a United States Navy Corpsman attached to 1st Tanks; one Jake "Doc" Keasling. Doc is tall, lanky with a mustache, and a kind and gentle person. A person that you would think could not be involved with a KIA. But, as war will have it, this kind and gentle Navy corpsman became involved in

wondered if this could be the same Doc Keasling. So I picked up the phone and called. I said is this the same Doc Keasling that was with me on the LST from Chu Lai to DaNang. After confirming it was we recalled the events about the KIA.

On that April day in 1967, several of us tankers and Doc Keasling were on deck getting some fresh air. Doc was of all things fishing. Of course we ribbed Doc about how a sailor couldn't catch a fish. We loved Doc but you know how it goes between Marines and the other part of the Department of the Navy. Well out of all things Doc makes a catch. It wasn't

the biggest fish I had ever seen but it would do. Matter of fact, I guess it is considered a fish. It was a sardine.

As the story is recalled, I believe Doc was challenged to eat the whole sardine alive. This meant he couldn't upchuck it or anything. Eat the sardine alive and keep it down. The bet was around \$20.00. Now remember this is 1967 in Viet Nam. Twenty bucks is a big deal. How much was combat pay?

So not wanting to be shown up, Doc took up the challenge. He took one good look at the sardine and down it went. Kind of. A little bit at a time. His eyes were watering and they got bigger and bigger as the sardine struggled not to meet its maker. Hand to mouth combat ensued. The struggle was on.



Doc Keasling in Chu Lai

Sardine versus corpsman. After a lengthy battle, the sardine fell mortally eaten. The first and last KIA aboard the LST De Kalb County. Doc got his money and the legend began. ♦

# Ahh, THE MEMORIES!

BY TOM FENERTY

Over the years I've read many books about Viet Nam: military, political, fiction and fact. Maybe I missed the few that dealt with the grunt's fight with a different enemy, infection.

The infection I am talking about was, at the time, given a general moniker known as 'Jungle Rot'. I have no idea who had it, how many had it, or, how prevalent it actually was among the troops. I only knew that I had it, and I didn't like it.

All these years later I thought to investigate jungle rot and its causes.

I started by checking out the definition on-line and was puzzled to find more information about a mid-west rock band by the same name. Now, there's a bad mental image.

Wikipedia terms 'jungle rot' as a 'tropical ulcer' that normally occurs below the knee.

Someone must have not noticed that hands and arms were not below the knee.

My layman diagnosis is that it is simply a bacterial infection which occurs in tropical weather with conditions such as poor hygiene, diet, and, the lack of an adequate antibiotic, such as penicillin.

Often initiated by minor trauma, such as a cut or scrape that, when exposed to the elements and conditions present, becomes infected and soon fills with odorous goo commonly known as pus.

I'm not sure when it first manifested on my legs and then hands, probably January or February of 1968. Walking patrol through thick vegetation and

elephant grass combined with the leeches in the wet and humid jungle areas were the cause of my 'minor trauma'.

Problem was that proper hygiene would require a bath or shower. We were, at times going some 30 days without bathing because of operational issues (we were in the boonies). At best, if not a helmet washing, a quick wash-up took place in a stream or bomb crater. With enemy nearby this was not done with leisure.

The available food for the majority of the 12 months and 20 days came in a can. Some said that these cans of C-rations were left over from the Korean 'Conflict'. I never tried to verify the age of a meal; just knew that most of the 12 variations of 'food' were not very appetizing. I will admit however, that after a few days without food the canned stuff was delicious~

Were there 'hot' meals prepared in a 'mess hall'? Yes, available in the rear areas. On rare occasions 'hot chow' was choppered to our field positions for consumption. 'Hot chow' came in a large insulated metal container. Scrumptious, even without a table cloth.

Did eating out of a can the majority of the time contribute to 'poor diet'?

Once the infected area would pus up the slightest pressure or bump would cause pain and a breakage in the skin with this caramel colored goo oozing forth. The infected area would then scab up and the cycle would start over, growing a bit

larger with each passing day.

Soon both legs from below the knee were quite tender and sported a series of scabs and pus.

Surely, one would think that this situation could easily be rectified by going to medical personnel and saying, 'hey Doc, can you give me something for this...'

I did this on numerous occasions, and the miracle treatment, penicillin, was not available. I'll bet the Army had plenty.

Penicillin was used as a cure for many maladies in Viet Nam, the foremost being the treatment of 'clap', a venereal disease. I just figured that was the reason there was none left.

It wasn't until I rotated home that, without any medication at all; this vile infection began to disappear. The scars on both legs are my reminder and souvenir.

Ahh, the memories...

tomfenerty@comcast.net

Foxtrot Co, 2/9

RVN '68 - '69

*Editor's Note: Obviously the writer never had the fortune of attending the Bob Embesi School of Crotch Rot Treatment. Gunner Embesi's solution was to tie ones testicals and manhood to the ceiling beam of a softback hooch. It was designed to "lift and separate" and promote air circulation. The most important item after stringing up the family jewels was a pair of scissors in case of incoming. Dr. Embesi is now retired and living in Montana. ♦*

# US Marine: “The Rules of Engagement Prevent Me From Doing My Job”

WRITTEN BY: DIANA WEST

Tuesday, February 02, 2010 2:57 AM



Someday, civilian and military leaders responsible for these rules of engagement, this policy of sacrificing American troops to make the barbarians of Afghanistan “like us” should come before at the very least a Congressional hearing, but at this point an out-for-blood people’s tribunal seems more appropriate. What they are doing to our military, our treasury, our power and our prestige is an unconscionable national betrayal.

The following news story describes the toll these rules, this policy is taking on our bravest young men -- amoebas in a Petri dish to the mad, see-no-Islam social engineers masquerading as American statesmen and generals.

*From the Telegraph:*

On a base near Marjah, a Taliban stronghold in Helmand province, Marines are grieving the deaths of a sergeant and corporal killed by the remote-controlled bombs that have become the scourge of the long-running conflict.

Commanders try to keep the men’s rage in check, aware that winning over an Afghan public wary of the foreign military presence and furious about civilian casualties is as important as battlefield success.

“It causes a lot of frustration. My men want revenge - that is only natural,” says First Lieutenant Aaron MacLean, 2nd Platoon commander of the 1st Battalion, 6th Regiment Charlie company.

This is what happens when you send in the Marines but your policy is Pure Peace Corps.

“But I keep telling them that the rules are the rules for a reason. If we simply go crazy and start shooting at everything, in the long run we will lose this war because we will lose the support of the population.”

Earth to 1st Looney: You don’t have the support of the population, and you aren’t going to “win” it. You will serve it, “protect” it, coddle it, bribe it and sacrifice the blood of your men to appease this population -- a no-win, perpetual work in progress that more closely resembles dhimmi servitude than military action.

He too is frustrated, accusing the Taliban of manipulating the rules of engagement by using women and children as shields and shooting from hidden positions before dropping their weapons and standing out in the open.

“They know we can’t shoot them if they don’t carry guns or without positive identification. They are fighting us at another level now,” MacLean said.

MacLean recently led his unit on a routine foot patrol near Marjah, which is expected to be the scene of a major offensive this month.

What the Marines encountered was a likely precursor of the battle to come.

They were met by fierce gunfire from Taliban gunmen who pinned them down for three hours at the expense of two of their men.

One corporal stepped on an improvised explosive device (IED). Military intelligence officials say that it is possible that 90 per cent of foreign soldiers’ lives are currently being lost in this way.

The corporal’s legs were blown off and he was thrown meters into the air.

The whole of Afghanistan (and you can throw in Iraq) aren’t worth those two legs. Certainly not this ...

A second IED killed a sergeant who rushed to the corporal’s aid as bullets flew everywhere, MacLean said.

Three others were wounded in the clash, making it one of the bloodiest days for US Marines since President Barack Obama’s announcement in December of a fresh troop surge in the war to eradicate the Taliban.

The death toll of foreign soldiers fighting in Afghanistan under US and NATO command reached 44 in January - the most in a month since the war began more than eight years ago. In January 2009 the figure was 25.

The number of Americans who died last month in the conflict now in its ninth year was almost double the number for January last year, at 29 compared with 15, according to the icasualties.org website, which keeps a running tally.

The US and NATO currently deploy 113,000 troops in Afghanistan, with another 40,000 due this year as part

of a renewed strategy that emphasizes development and the “reconciliation” of Taliban fighters.

Most of the incoming troops will be deployed in Helmand, which along with neighboring Kandahar province has been the hub of the insurgency since the Taliban regime was removed from power in late 2001.

MacLean’s unit contains some of the first Marines to be sent into Helmand since the surge was announced.

On the day of the ambush, Marines hunkered down in tents inside the camp as information about the encounter came in.

Some had tears in their eyes as the names of casualties were made known. Others held tightly to their weapons and yelled at their enemy on the horizon.

“We were attacked treacherously. We came under fire from everywhere, but the rules of engagement prevent me from doing my job,” said Lance Corporal Mark Duzick, who was in the unit that was ambushed.

The rules of engagement prevent him from doing his job – under attack in the midst of an ambush that lasted several hours in which two men were grievously wounded and killed. The people behind this order, this whole heinous policy should be summoned to testify in Congress today.

Outside a tent housing the Marines’ unit responsible for firing mortars stands an improvised cross bearing the inscription:

“Here lies the 81st, death by stand down.”

Last year was the worst yet for foreign troops fighting in Afghanistan, with 520 soldiers dead, up from 295 in 2008. More troops will mean more casualties, military experts say.

For the Afghans too 2009 was the deadliest, with the UN putting civilian deaths at 2,412 for the year, compared to 2,118 in 2008.

While most are caused by the Taliban, the insurgents exploit civilian casualties to spread distrust among the public for foreign and Afghan troops.

Bogus, bogus, bogus. To quote the unlamented GWB: You’re either with us, or you’re against us. Period.

As the nature of the fight has changed, with the Taliban increasingly using suicide attacks and IEDs, there had been no traditional winter hiatus and General Zahir Azimi, a defense ministry spokesman, said that spring is likely to be ferocious.

“We will have the most intense clashes come the spring, and will shed the most blood this year,” he said.

*Editor’s Note: The similarities of our war and one that today’s Marines find themselves in are too many NOT to publish this story. Yogi Berra said it best: “It’s déjà vu all over again.” ♦*

## FROM A DOC’S POINT OF VIEW

*As a Corpsman in green and not Navy blue,  
I offer this poem from a Doc’s point of view.*

*We’ve been honored by stories, poems and such  
By Marines we have served with and respected so much.*

*They speak of our honor, bravery and skill,  
And the cry, “Corpsman up” still gives me a chill.*

*When a Marine goes down, what will it be?  
A trache? Tie off bleeders? Start an IV?*

*Only one thing is certain as we rush to the scene,  
Our ass will be covered by our Brothers in Green.*

*You see we’re adopted, “Sons of the Corps.”  
No more “Anchors away” – “Semper Fi” evermore!*

*It’s true when you’re wounded your life’s in our hands,  
And we’ll treat and protect you to the very last man.  
For you are our pointman, our cover, our shield,  
And we count on your skills all our days in the field.  
Many a grunt laid his life on the line  
to make sure Doc got to the wounded in time.*

*So, my brothers, I thank you, as all us Docs Should.  
It’s YOU who make us Corpsmen look good!*

*Semper Fi,*

Doc Hutch – Alpha 1/5  
2nd Platoon ‘68 - 69, An Hoa Basin  
Written by Doc Hutchings – and published in his book,  
*The Names NOT on the Wall*

# “I came to see my son’s name.”

BY JIM SCHUECKLER

My job as a volunteer “visitor guide” was to help people find names on the Moving Wall Vietnam Veterans Memorial. More importantly, I gave visitors a chance to talk. While searching the directory or leading a visitor to the name they sought, I would quietly ask “Was he a friend or a relative?” Over the six days, I began conversations that way with several hundred people. Only a handful gave me a short answer; almost everyone wanted to talk. Each had their own story to tell. For some, the words poured out as if the floodgates of a dam that had been closed for thirty years had just burst open. For others, the words came out slowly and deliberately between long pauses. Sometimes, they choked on the words and they cried. I also cried as I listened, asked more questions, and silently prayed that my words would help to heal, not to hurt.

“I came to see my son’s name.” I heard those and similar words from several parents who came to the Moving Wall. Their son had died in a war that divided our country like no other event since the Civil War. He died in a war that some Americans had blamed on the soldiers who were called to fight it. Some young men had no choice; they were called by the draft. Others, including some 30,000 women, were called differently, by a sense of duty to their family and nation.

Our culture mourns and respects our dead, but in the shadow of that bitter war, the sacrifices of those who died and their families were not allowed to have dignity.



Mothers and fathers came to see that their sons had not been forgotten; that their names were remembered on that Wall; that someone else cares.

A frail and elderly mother came to the Moving Wall in a wheelchair. As we looked for her son’s name, she described his interests during high school, and then the agonizing days when she was first told that her son was injured, then missing, then classified as “lost at sea.” She asked me to thank all the other people who helped bring the Moving Wall to Batavia.

“Til death do us part” came abruptly to thousands of marriages because of that war. I met two widows of men whose names are on the Wall. One woman showed me a picture of her husband and

a separate picture of their daughter – the man never met his daughter – the girl grew up without a father. I was painfully aware that had some Viet Cong soldiers been slightly better marksmen, my wife and son might have come to the Wall to see my name.

Sisters and brothers came to see a name. One brother so close in age that “People were always calling us by each other’s name, and we both hated it.” A sister said “I was so much younger than him I didn’t realize why my Mom was crying when we said goodbye to him at the airport.”

One brother confided that, although he had not been a war protester, his feelings and his first confrontation with the Wall in Washington were almost

identical to those of the brother in the play “The Wall, a Pilgrimage”. He said “It was as if the actor had reached into my soul and exposed every one of my feelings about my brother and the war.”

A group of four people stood near one panel. I offered to make a rubbing of a name. The man pointed to the name Paul D. Urquhart. I asked “Is that Captain Paul Urquhart, the helicopter pilot?” The man nodded and said “He’s my brother.” I explained that I flew with Paul on his first tour in Vietnam and read that he had been shot down during his second tour. Paul’s brother said that he and his family came from Pennsylvania on the anniversary date of Paul’s becoming Missing In Action. I made a rubbing of Paul’s name and added a rubbing of the Army Aviator wings from my hat, a symbol we had both worn so proudly so long ago.

Aunts and uncles also came to see a special name on the Wall. One aunt said “He stayed overnight at our house so much that one neighbor thought he was our son.” An uncle lamented: “I took him hunting. I was the one who taught him to like guns.”

Cousins came to the Wall, and many said “He was like a brother.” One man asked me to look up the name Douglas Smith. I asked back, “Do you mean Doug Smith, a Marine, from North Tonawanda High School?” The man introduced me to his wife, Doug’s cousin. She was pleased to be able to talk about Doug with a classmate who remembered him. I showed her Doug’s name on my own, personal, list.

Veterans came to see the names of their buddies. Most of them were eager to tell me about their friend or how he died. Many remembered the day in great detail; and spoke of what’s called survivor guilt. “He went out on patrol in my place that day.” Or “If I hadn’t been away on R & R (rest and recuperation), he wouldn’t be dead.” Others were bothered that they couldn’t remember much about their friend because they had tried to “block it out” for so many years. Another man said “I lost a few good friends while I was there (Vietnam), but I don’t want to find just their names, because I feel the same about all 58,000 of these names.”

“Tree-line vets” are men or women who have finally been able to go to a Moving Wall location, but are terrified of coming close enough to actually see some names that have been haunting them so many years. One such veteran stood for a long time some fifty feet from the Wall. My brothers Vic and Chris talked with him. After a while he and Vic were able to laugh about some of their common Marine Corps experiences and then they were finally able to approach, see, and touch, those names together.

Many people came to the Wall in the privacy or serenity of darkness. Our security men reported that there were only a few minutes each night that the Wall had no callers at all. One visitor spent several hours in the middle of the night standing in front of a certain panel. Whenever anyone came close, he would move away. When alone again, he would move back to that panel to continue his silent vigil. Still others came in the darkness before dawn to watch the break of a new day over the Wall.

One vet came in a wheelchair. He could not talk or walk, but with great effort, Peter’s shaking hand could scrawl messages on a pad. The nurse who pushed his wheelchair said that Peter had been excited about the Moving Wall visit since he first read about it in the Daily News. Peter came to see the name of his friend he thought had died in 1975, but he could not remember the man’s name. They had been high school buddies and joined the Army together. They went to boot camp and Vietnam together. Peter saw his friend die. At the bottom of panel I West I squatted down and read off the names of the small number of men and one American woman who died in Vietnam in 1975. Peter did not recognize any of the names.

The EDS computer operators ran a search, but found no Vietnam casualties from Peter’s small home town. We asked if his friend might have come from another town, and Peter wrote “Wales.” The computer search gave one name, but he was killed in 1968. I went back to Peter and asked “Was his name Eric Jednat?”. The shock on Peter’s face, and then his tears, told us that we had found the right

name. We moved to panel 53 West where we turned the wheelchair so Peter could touch his friend’s name.

Many people came who were not related, but knew one or more of the men named on the Wall. A high school teacher told me “I taught four of these boys.” Others said: “He was the little boy who lived across the street.”, “We were going steady in high school.”, “He delivered my newspapers.”, “I was his Boy Scout leader.”, “He went to our church.”, “I worked with his mother at the time he was killed.”, “My son played football with him.”, or “We were classmates for twelve years.” There were hundreds of similar personal connections between the visitor and one or more names on the Wall.

To other visitors, the names were not as personal, but still were significant: “I didn’t know him, but I remember how it shocked the town when he died.”, “I just wanted to pay my respects.”, “I didn’t know any of them, thank God.”, “I came to show support for the vets who came back.”, or “My son went to Vietnam, but he came back OK.”

Others expressed amazement: “I wanted to see the names of the seven young men from Holley, I can’t believe our little village lost so many boys.”, “I had no idea so many lost their lives.”, “Such a waste. Such a terrible, terrible, waste.”, “I hope and pray we never go through that kind of war again.”, or “Is this the price of peace?” Some visitors asked rhetorically: “Will mankind ever learn?”

Two weeks after the visit of the Moving Wall to Batavia, a friend told my wife “I don’t understand all the concern about the Moving Wall; why don’t people just forget about that dirty war?” For many, the Moving Wall does not need to be explained. Those who do not understand are, perhaps, more fortunate than those who do.

By Jim Schueckler  
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# THE YANKEES ARE UP THERE BUT NOT AS HIGH

BY JERRY COLEMAN

Ballplayer, sportscaster, baseball team manager, Marine Corps aviator—former New York Yankees second-baseman Jerry Coleman succeeded at all of these.

Guess which one he prizes most?

“By any standard, I’ve had a great career. I played second base for the New York Yankees, was manager of the San Diego Padres, and have been a sportscaster for almost five decades. But the most important part of my life was the five years I spent in uniform. I was a Marine Corps aviator in World War II and the Korean War.”

I made my decision to join when I was 17. The Japanese had just attacked Pearl Harbor, and in my generation the question wasn’t whether to enlist in the military; it was which branch you were going to join.

Then two naval aviators visited my high school to recruit for the V-5 program, which turned out Navy pilots. I decided right then that I wanted those wings of gold.

You had to be 18 to start flight school,

and that was still six months away. I’d already been awarded a baseball and basketball scholarship to the University of Southern California, and a Yankee scout gave me a chance to play with their minor league club that summer. When the season was over, on my 18th birthday I went to San Francisco to enlist.

I barely made it into the V-5 program. My high school grades were mainly Cs, and the recruiting officer was skeptical. But I promised him I’d study hard, and I did. At preflight school, Joe Foss, the war’s celebrated Marine Corps ace, inspired us with tales of his combat experiences, and I

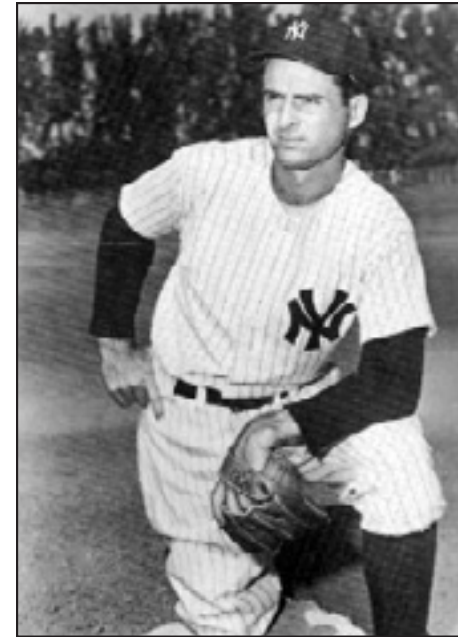


decided to become a Marine aviator.

Like a lot of people, I saw my share of action. Commissioned in April 1944, I spent the next 12 months flying Douglas SBD Dauntless dive-bombers out of Green Island, a speck in the Solomons that had little else besides an airstrip, as a member of VMSB-341.

I never sank a carrier as I’d envisioned as a high school senior. But I flew 57 missions in the battles for the Solomon Islands and the Philippines, including dive-bombing raids and close air support for Army and Marine Corps ground troops. When the Japanese surrendered, I returned home and resumed my baseball career.

In October 1951, I got word that the Marine Corps would want me back for a second tour—this time in the Korean War. I’d been playing second base for the Yankees, and we’d just beaten the New York Giants in the World Series when I was called to Alameda, California. A Marine Corps major offered to take me to lunch.



“What do you think about going back in the service?” he asked. I told him I hadn’t thought much about it. “We’re going to get you,” he said, for a tour of 18 months. I asked if he could take me immediately so I’d miss only one baseball season, but it didn’t work out that way. I traded my Yankee pinstripes for Marine greens in April 1952, with no hard feelings.

I flew Corsair attack planes in Korea. They were magnificent aircraft, but the nose was so far from the cockpit that you couldn’t see right in front of you. If you made a mistake, either taking off or landing, you were in trouble. I had two close calls on a runway, each time carrying 1,000-pound bombs, but I escaped unharmed. I flew 63 missions overall.

I wasn’t the only major league player to go off to war, either in World War II or in Korea. Ted Williams, Bobby Brown, Bob Feller—there were many of them. But I think I was the only one who saw combat in both wars. By the time I returned from Korea, in 1953, my record for both wars included two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 13 Air Medals, and three Navy citations.

The Marine Corps has never left me. I stayed in the Reserve, retiring in 1964 as a lieutenant colonel. I’ve helped with recruiting drives and special assignments that the Corps wanted me to carry out. I married the daughter of a retired Marine colonel. And most of all, I’ve kept in touch with my squadron-mates.

When I came back from Korea, I found myself dealing with the same question that every veteran asks: Why was I returning, when my buddies weren’t? I wasn’t that great a pilot. No one was. But God let some of us come back, and called others. The Yankees’ publicity department gave me a hero’s welcome, but I was uneasy about it.

One of my most disheartening experiences was when, just before a game at Yankee Stadium, I met the wife of Major Max Harper, a great guy who had been my tent-mate in Korea. Max had gotten hit during a raid over North Korea and went straight in. There was nothing anyone could do.

Max’s wife showed up, distraught, on the morning of “Jerry Coleman Day,” which the Yankees had set up to honor my military service. Mrs. Harper had been hoping that Max had been captured and might still be alive. She wanted to know whether he really had died, and said she wouldn’t accept it from anyone but me. I was flying right behind Max. She was devastated when I told her he was dead.

In truth, I left a lot in Korea. I never was as good on the ball field as I’d been before the war. I’d lost my depth perception, and I couldn’t hit anything. A year after I returned home, I broke my collar bone in Yankee Stadium. During my final two years with the team I had to play part-time.

But overall, my career has been a rewarding one. All told, I spent nine years with the Yankees and did a year as manager of the San Diego Padres. Then, too old to play baseball anymore, I became a sportscaster—first for the Yankees and later for the Padres. In 2005 I was elected to the broadcasters’ wing of the Baseball Hall of Fame.

I still look back at my military service as the most important thing I’ve ever done. Sure, it’s a thrill to be part of a championship baseball team, and it’s heady to be a recognized broadcaster. But serving in the military—particularly in the Marines, if you’ll forgive a little partisanship—trumps all that in a flash. The Yankees are up there, but not as high.

Training and going into combat with people imbues you with a sense of loyalty

that makes you put your responsibility to your comrades ahead of everything else—not only while you’re in uniform, but for the rest of your life. The friends I made in the Corps have been like brothers all these many years—and they’ll remain so for life.

My years on active duty left me with a heightened sense of perspective—about life, about my career, and about the preciousness of life itself. The memories of the guys I flew with in World War II and in Korea have never faded, and neither has my pride in the Corps. I was lucky to get home alive. And I was lucky to have been a Marine.

“Answering the Call” is a monthly series of short articles by prominent men and women discussing the impact of their time in the military on their later achievements.



*EDITOR’S NOTE: Lt. Col. Coleman was the only MLB Player to have seen combat in two wars. Ted Williams served in two wars but never saw combat in WWII. “The Colonel” as he was known by players, earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He has a lifetime batting average of .263 with the New York Yankees. ♦*

# The “Hammer”

BY DANIEL J. CONNOLLY

After reading all the stories about DI's I had to relate my experience. I landed in San Diego in May 1969 and like all other recruits I was soon standing on the yellow foot prints in the receiving area at MCRD. After a night of pure hell we were turned over to our three DI's as Platoon 1089. SSgt Frank Acosta was the senior drill instructor. SSgt Acosta had record of producing honor platoons and would take nothing but the best from everyone or he would kill you getting the best out of you . . . at least we thought he would kill us.

Our Jr. Drill Instructor was SSgt. Dennis West. SSgt West had a mean sadistic streak and employed it. We all had fear in our eyes when he was in charge. However, SSgt West was the finest instructor in drill that I had ever seen. He made us such a fine tuned machine that we had the highest drill score in more than four years on our final drill during boot camp. I remember the Sgt Major of our battalion coming out of his office to watch us as we marched by in the evening. He would have each squad going in different directions and bring us back together in perfect drill formation.

The Drill Instructor I am writing about is SSgt. Jim Donner. We were SSgt Donners' first platoon. He had just graduated from Drill Instructor school after having been hospitalized for wounds he received taking a machine gun bunker and receiving a bronze star in Vietnam. SSgt. Donner was a Force Recon Marine and tough as nails. One afternoon, having

just eaten chow at the Mess Hall, we had a class in a metal building on the .45 Caliber pistol. SSgt Donner was in charge of the platoon that day.

Sitting in the hot class room I let my head nod for a fraction of a second. SSgt Donner came out of nowhere and whispered in my ear that he would see me in the duty hut that evening. Later as everything was winding down, I and another recruit were summoned to the duty hut. After knocking and announcing our selves we were given a dressing down about falling asleep in class.

Thinking that just getting our asses chewed would be the worst thing that would happen, SSgt Donner told us that we were going to watch TV. Watching TV requires holding your body up by your elbows on the top of a wall locker. After a couple of minutes your arms are ready to fall off. After 15 minutes we were told to get on our heads. Getting on our heads is a push up position with your head on the floor, your legs spread and your rear end up in the air. For me this wasn't a problem because I had a flat spot on the top of my head. The other guy had a rounded head and he was in misery the whole time. Did I forget to say that the floor was concrete?

After 15 minutes of this exercise we were told to get in push up position. On our knuckles! I had bruised knuckles for more than a week. Another 15 minutes went by both of us in extreme agony all the while we are being instructed in the errors of our way by SSgt. Donner. Finally,

we were instructed to stand at attention with our backs to the wall lockers. We were then introduced to the “hammer”. The hammer is a black leather glove which fits over the DI's hand and gives love taps to the dog tag area of your chest while you are being instructed in the proper Marine Corps procedure of not nodding off in class. All of our DI's employed the hammer at one time or the other.

Fast forward a few months. I'm with 1/5 in Vietnam. We have been humping in Arizona for a couple of weeks. Every night we were on 50% alert after running patrols or sweeps during the day. It seemed like when it was my time to sleep we would get hit or go to 100% alert. One pitch black night during this time I was on watch and it was so dark I couldn't see anything in front of my bunker. I felt myself starting to get sleepy and immediately thought of SSgt. Donner and was wide awake instantly. Charlie made a mistake that night by trying to come through my position as I was the most wide awake Marine on the line. Charlie paid big time.

So thank you SSgt. Jim Donner where ever you are. Not only did you save my life with your lessons to a young recruit but you saved the lives of the other guys in my unit. You are one hell of a Marine.

Sgt Daniel J. Connolly  
H&S 1/5  
Vietnam 1969-70

## VETERANS CHARITIES A REAL EYE-OPENER!

The first time I saw this was about two years ago in a different format. I know it caused me to alter my charitable giving since some of the baddies were orgs I routinely sent money to.

Check out the site and judge for yourselves.

See this web site for ratings:

(<http://oversight.house.gov/documents/20071213131834.pdf>)

Among other things, the rating chart shows fund raising costs per \$100 raised for each charity. Some of the figures are truly shocking!

Americans gave millions of dollars in the past year to veterans charities designed to help troops wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, but several of the groups spent relatively little money on the wounded, according to a leading watchdog organization and federal tax filings.

Eight veterans charities, including some of the nation's largest, gave less than a third of the money raised to the causes they champion, far below the recommended standard, the American Institute of Philanthropy says in a report. One group passed along 1 cent for every dollar raised, the report says. Another paid its founder and his wife a combined \$540,000 in compensation and benefits last year, a Washington Post analysis of tax filings showed.

Richard H. Esau Jr., executive director of the Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation, based in Annandale, said the cost of fund raising limits how much his group can spend on charitable causes. 'Do you have any idea how much money it costs to advertise? It's unbelievable the amount of money it takes to advertise in the print and electronic media,' he said. 'I'm very proud of what we do, and we certainly do look after everybody. The point is we do the right thing by veterans.'

Borochoff said many veterans charities are 'woefully inefficient,' spending large sums on costly direct-mail advertising. 'They over solicit. They love to send out a lot of trinkets and stickers and greeting cards and flags and things that waste a lot of money that they get little return on,' said Borochoff.

The philanthropy institute gave F's to 12 of the 29 military charities reviewed and D's to eight. Five were awarded A-pluses, including the Fisher House Foundation in Rockville, which the institute says directs more than 90 percent of its income to charitable causes.

One group received an A, and one received an A-minus..

Jim Weiskopf, spokesman for Fisher House, said the charity does not use direct-mail advertising. 'As soon as you do direct mail, your fund raising expenses go up astronomically,' he said.

One egregious example, Borochoff said, is Help Hospitalized Veterans, which was founded in 1971 by Roger Chapin, a veteran of the Army Finance Corps and a San Diego real estate developer. The charity, which provides therapeutic arts and crafts kits to hospitalized veterans, reported income of \$71.3 million last year and spent about one-third of that money on charitable work, the philanthropy institute said.

In its tax filings, Help Hospitalized Veterans reported paying more than \$4 million to direct-mail fund raising consultants. The group also has run television advertisements featuring actor Sam Waterston, game show host Pat Sajak and other celebrities.

Bennett Weiner, chief operating officer of the Better Business Bureau, said the agency has 20 standards for reviewing charities, including that a charity's fund raising and overhead costs not exceed 35 percent of total contributions.

The American Institute of Philanthropy, a leading charity watchdog, issued a report card this month for 29 veterans and military charities. Letter grades were based largely on the charities' fund raising costs and the percentage of money raised that was spent on charitable activities. The charities that received failing grades are in RED type.

Air Force Aid Society (A+)  
American Ex-Prisoners of War Service Foundation (F)  
American Veterans Coalition (F)  
American Veterans Relief Foundation (F)  
AMVETS National Service Foundation (F)  
Armed Services YMCA of the USA (A-)  
Army Emergency Relief (A+)  
Blinded Veterans Association (D)  
Disabled American Veterans (D)  
Disabled Veterans Association (F)  
Fisher House Foundation (A+)  
Freedom Alliance (F)  
Help Hospitalized Veterans/Coalition to Salute America's Heroes (F)  
Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund (A+)  
Military Order of the Purple Heart Service Foundation (F)  
National Military Family Association (A)  
National Veterans Services Fund (F)  
National Vietnam Veterans Committee (D)  
Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (A+)  
NCOA National Defense Foundation (F)  
Paralyzed Veterans of America (F)  
Soldiers' Angels (D)  
United Spinal Association's Wounded Warrior Project (D)  
USO (United Service Organization) (C+)  
Veterans of Foreign Wars and Foundation (C-)  
Veterans of the Vietnam War & the Veterans Coalition (D)  
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (D)  
VietNow National Headquarters (F)  
World War II Veterans Committee (D)

*EDITOR'S NOTE: It seems that the organizations that have the most compelling names are the ones with the worst rating. Coincidence? I don't think so. Do your homework before donating to ANY charity. ♦*

# NCOs Endorsed Kalka's Idea

BY TOM SMITH

On July 1st, 1968 while serving as Platoon Commander of 3rd Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 27th Marines. I received orders for a mission. It was a four-day, three-night patrol to establish various PPBs (Platoon Patrol Base), and then conduct numerous small unit patrols out of them. Shortly thereafter I convened a meeting with my squad leaders and my Platoon Sergeant (Sgt. Charles Kalka) to plan that mission. We were going to a part of the TAOR (tactical area of responsibility) that I was unfamiliar with due to my being "in country" less than a month. Since we would be leaving just before dusk my team was concerned about some critical navigation issues. We decided on the lead squad (with our best point man). Then Sgt. Kalka suggested that he and I switch places... that he would go with the lead squad and I would go with the 3rd squad (the opposite of our usual procedure)... since he was very familiar with that patrol area. Initially I rejected that suggestion, but eventually acquiesced when Kalka persisted and all the NCOs endorsed Kalka's idea. It was not a big deal at the time. No one thought anything about it; just a Marine's routine devotion to duty, doing what he thought was best for his Platoon.

Ten minutes after leaving the 3/27 base we were ambushed. Sergeant Kalka, in the exact position where I was supposed to be, and identified by the enemy as a leader due to his proximity to the radio, was killed by small arms fire. As I rushed forward while we assaulted through the tree line, I came upon Kalka. He was already dead, lying

on his back with multiple entry wounds. That image is seared in my memory. I can still see it today. When you're alive because of the dedication, devotion, and selflessness of another, it's something that never leaves you. I am alive and my family exists because of Sergeant Charles Kalka, USMC. I have thought about that quite frequently since my return from combat.

Due to the sentiment in the Country in late 1969 and the "reception" accorded Vietnam Veterans, many of us just buried and repressed... we just moved on... trying unsuccessfully to not think of the memories, although we were quite successful about not speaking of them. So it was some 30+ years later that I started a quest to try and contact Kalka's family. I felt a strong need to tell a family member that I was alive as a result of Kalka's dedication, devotion, and selflessness. At the same time I was reluctant to "open old wounds" and cause the family any emotional pain. It was a long and unsuccessful search involving many phone calls, false leads, and fruitless Internet searches. Often I thought of giving up... wondering if I was being selfish, that I had nothing to offer his family but painful memories. Although often quitting for periods of time, I always seemed to return to the search.

Then one night as I called yet another number, a young lady answered and I recited my usual introduction, "I'm looking for the family of Sgt. Charles Kalka, a Marine who I served with in Vietnam". She said, "wait a minute", muffled the phone and I heard her call

out "Mom". An older woman got on the phone and I recited my intro. She replied, "That was my brother Charles". With my heart in my throat I said, "I'm alive because of your brother Charles". I then proceeded to tell her that Charles was a courageous, brave, dedicated, and devoted Marine. She cut me off with a question... "Did he suffer?" came through the handset. I responded "Absolutely not. He died instantly. I was by his side within 5 to 10 seconds. He did not suffer." There was a silence on the other end of the phone line for about 5 seconds followed by an audible sigh. She then said "Thank God. I've always wondered all these years."

It had never occurred to me that I could bring any solace or comfort to his family after all those years. For that I will be eternally grateful. I am as glad that I persisted in my search, and that I made that phone call, as I am of anything in my life.

Sgt. Kalka's name is on panel 54 West, Row 30 at "The Wall". Whenever I get to Washington, D.C. I visit him to update him on my family, and to say "Thanks" yet once again.

Semper Fidelis,

Tom Smith  
0302 RVN 68-69  
Plt Cmdr Kilo 3/27  
XO Echo 2/4  
CO A Co, 3rd AT Bn  
7468 Myrica Drive  
Sarasota, FL 34241  
Thomas.Smith2@astrazeneca.com

# In Memory of Ricky Dycus & Billy Bloomfield

BY EUGENE "GENO" CSUTI

Ok before I start this In Memory I want to say that the events I am going to share with you in no way reflect ill respect to *any* chopper pilot other than the one associated with this memory. This "In Memory" needs to be told as it is something a grunt had to face up to, I mean it happened. I will not use the exact medevac chopper call sign, I have the call sign etched in my mind and will never forget it. I will also never forget the conversation with that medevac chopper that night. Myron Olson and I looked for this pilot while we were in Nam. Myron was a Marine medevac chopper driver temporarily attached to Golf Company. So with that out of the way I wish to pay respect to my friends.

Ricky Dycus was a California surfer boy type, his nick named "Surfer"; he was married to a great looking blond. Ricky had gotten in county just after I did in July, as it sometimes happened my orders to go home had Ricky's name on it even though he was KIA, I still have a copy of those orders. Ricky was hotheaded, the Hillbilly and he had a couple of knock down drag out fights.

Billy Bloomfield, well we called him "Big Red", we had to distinguish between Big Red and Little Red, because we had both. Big Red, yep, fire red hair, freckles, and about 6'2" but had the coordination of a water buffalo. I did not know Big Red too good, he had gotten in country May 8th of 69. I was showing over 10 months in country on my short timer calendar and did not hang with the new guys, bad Karma.

We were about 5 days into Operation Pipestone Canyon, basically what was going on is we had a funnel of Marines for about 10 miles leading to Go Noi Island. As I have mentioned before is Golf Company was the point of the operation. We had 4 tanks moving with us, 3 Gun Tanks and one Zippo Tank, now I always hated tanks, they attracted B-40's and RPG's and always got stuck in the paddies, so generally they were a pain in the ass. We were walking the 10 miles flushing the NVA southwards through "Dodge City" and "The Arizona" towards Go Noi Island. We had had a few brief fire fights but no real contact and had walked about 6 miles. We took off on the morning of June 2nd and had moved about 1/2 mile when we came upon a river. The tanks could not cross, so we left a platoon with them and the remaining two platoons of Golf Company crossed the river. The tanks and our platoon were going to move to find a crossing the tanks could get across and catch up to us.

We had moved about a mile from the river and were slowly crossing some dried up paddies. We had not expected it so soon but the NVA had decided to quit running and fight us rather than the blocking forces who were dug in. It was mid morning when they sprang their ambush on us, a ambush well laid, they opened up first with their RPD machine guns, 3 12.5's and then started in with their mortar's. It's hard to describe to someone who has not experienced it, how you want to just pull the ground

over your head when you are caught out in the open. We had some cover from the paddy dikes but the machine guns and 12.5's were slowly destroying the cover. I remember hearing the tanks come up asking what was happening, they had found a crossing and they thought they were about 3/4 of a mile from us, and that they were coming fast.

Don't know how long it was but the next thing I remember were the tanks, those beautiful, noisy, pain in the ass, fucking tanks. Just like the movies, dust and black diesel smoke flying behind them, haulin' ass and turning to position themselves in front of us to get the machine guns off us. They had no sooner pulled up to a stop when their 90's started workin' out, the Zippo was torching NVA bunkers and flushing the NVA out. I guess the NVA broke and ran south, I think because of the tanks, when it was all over I could not believe it, we had survived with only 5 wounded. I called the medevacs, send in the sit-reps, got a resupply going and we thanked our Grunt Gods. Battalion came back and told us to dig in there for the night, wait for resupply and they were chasing the NVA south with chopper gunships.

We set up for the night with the tanks facing forward or south, along about 21:00 the NVA hit us hard. They started with their mortar's first then the machine guns and they started on the tanks with their B-40's and RPG's. I think they

*(Continued on page 28)*

## ***In Memory of Ricky Dycus ...***

*(Continued from page 27)*

wanted to get a tank because that opened up the biggest hole in our lines. Ricky and Big Red's fighting hole was close to one tank, I remember seeing this as my hole was 40' to the right and behind them. The first RPG went screaming to the right of the tank and over our heads. Ricky had broke open a LAW and was lining up on where he thought the RPG gunner was. The RPG gunner was faster than Ricky and let he let loose first, the RPG hit the tank, blew up, but it was a glancing blow. Ricky and Big Red were not as lucky as the tank, Ricky and Big Red took the deflected RPG blast. Doc Marshall took off to Ricky and Big Red while I started a medevac. Ricky was missing his right side but was alive, Big Red had torn shrapnel wounds all over him, and a sucking chest wound, both of them were in bad shape.

Ok, no offence intended here after to any branch of service or your job!!!!!! I realize that the chopper driver was responsible for his chopper and men and could make an abort call.

Battalion had came back to me and said they had diverted a Army medevac bird and he would be coming up on our frequency in a minute. I thought this was great, less than 2 minutes and we got our medevac, the guys are going to make it.

Myron Olson (remember my land bound medevac chopper driver assigned to me) was helping Doc Marshall and Doc. Van treat Rickey and Big Red, when the medevac bird came up on my radio.

Most of the below is my radio transmissions of that night, as long as I live, I will never forget those transmissions.

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22 Do you have a visual?*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 I have your lights, vector 120 degrees relative, approximately two miles.*

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22 Is the LZ secure I see lots of muzzle flashes both directions, are you in heavy contact?*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 NVA at the 180 degree 100 to 200 yards from us, LZ will be 300 yards to the north of our position, am lighting up LZ now, contact is light, your LZ will be secure.*

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22. Be advised have spotted 12.5 muzzle flashes and RPG's - you got a hell of a firefight going on down there, Blondie is aborting.*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 If you abort the WIA's will be KIA's before I can get another bird, LZ is secure, I say again LZ is secure, swing around and approach from the north, the north is secure, I say again negative contact to north, the north is secure.*

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22 Sorry your LZ and area looks too hot for approach at this time.*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 The fire fight is 400 yards to be south of the your LZ, We will get the tanks to work out when you come in, your LZ will be safe, I say again your LZ will be safe.*

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22 Negative, Negative that, Blondie is aborting.*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 You Chicken Shit Mother Fucker*

*Golf 28 this is Blondie 22 I will have you busted for that transmission, request your name and rank Golf 28.*

*Blondie 22 this is Golf 28 Fuck You, you want me, come on down and get me chicken shit, I knew we should have gotten a Marine Bird.*

By now Myron has realized what was going on, he asks for the handset, for a chopper pilot to chopper pilot talk. I grab another radio, call battalion and start requesting another medevac bird.

Myron is on the radio talking to Blondie 22

*Blondie 22 this is Marine Medevac Swift 17 Be advised I am a Marine medevac chopper pilot, your LZ is 400 yards to the north of the fire fight and your LZ is safe, I say again your LZ will be safe.*

*Marine Swift 17 this is Blondie 22. Be advised Blondie is aborting now, good luck Marine Swift 17, Blondie 22 out.*

We were left high and dry, it was about 20 minutes before the next medevac bird showed up, about 35 in all...Rickey was KIA by then, Big Red was dying fast. Big Red never made it to NAS, he was KIA a few minutes after leaving the LZ.

Blondie 22, I say this "I am over the frustration of that night 27 years ago, if and when we meet, may it be in this life, or in life afterwards, all I want to know is your side of the story" "To ask you Why"

A toast to my friends, Cpl. Rickey Dycus and Pfc. William Bloomfield, Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division.

Gene'o

# YOU JOINED US!

The short essay below was found on the Jewish Issues Website and was submitted by Jordan Blashek, Princeton 2009, who decided to turn down acceptance to medical school to join the U.S. Marine Corps and enter its Officer Candidate School, from which he graduated in December 2009. Written originally as an explanation of his decision for his high school classmates, it is worth reading – and appreciating – by us all.



"You Joined Us" – That phrase is carved into a steel plaque that tauntingly guards the entrance to the Officers' barracks at Camp Barrett in Quantico, VA. As I hobbled inside, exhausted from another 15-hour day, my roommate half-jokingly pointed to the plaque, "Why did we do that again?" I smiled. Today had been a long day. Waking at 4 AM, we spent the next 9 hours outside in the pouring rain learning hand-to-hand combat and outdated bayonet techniques. Without warming layers, hats or gloves, our hands quickly went numb and our bodies started

shaking uncontrollably in the 30-degree temperature. Finally, we were sent back inside to clean our rifles, which must be spotless before we can wash off our bodies. As 8 PM rolled around and we were still cleaning on a Friday night – when my high school and college friends were out at Happy Hours – I thought about that plaque on the wall: Why exactly did I join, again?

It's a question I have tried to answer many times for my family and friends, but never feel as though I have fully conveyed my reasons. I made the decision to join the U.S. Marine Corps at the start of my senior year at Princeton, turning down an acceptance to medical school in the process. I kept the decision to myself until I broke the news to my shocked parents over Christmas Break. I ran through the litany of justifications for them: I wanted to serve my country. I wanted the camaraderie and the pride of being in the Marine Corps brotherhood. I needed the challenge to test my true capabilities and strength. I would receive the best leadership training on the planet, which would help me in any future career I chose. I wanted adventure and the chance to be a part of history in Iraq or Afghanistan. I wanted to exude that same confidence that I saw in every Marine officer I have met. Whether I convinced them or not, in the end, none of these "reasons" alleviated my parents' understandable anxiety.

When I told my plans to anyone else, I felt as though I were talking to a brick wall – the Military, especially the Marine Corps, was simply outside their reality. My closer friends would nod their heads and say something to the effect of "Wow, that's cool," but since I was the perennial flake of

the group, most did not take my decision very seriously. And to be honest, even I was not quite sure that I would follow through with the choice. In the comfort of my college dorm, the decision to become a Marine Corps officer seemed glamorously abstract. However, on October 1, 2009 my decision suddenly became very real when I arrived at the Marine Corps' Officer Candidate School (OCS) in Quantico, VA.

My OCS experience was surreal. Along with 407 other "Candidates" – all college graduates with newly shaved heads – I ran around for 10 weeks carrying an M16 rifle, while the Marine Corps' famous drill instructors screamed increasingly creative insults at us. In reality, we were beginning the painful, yet deliberate process of transforming from civilians into Marine officers through some of the most intense training that exists in the US military. Meanwhile, the drill instructors continually evaluated our leadership potential as part of the time-honored tradition whereby enlisted Marines select the officers that will eventually lead them in combat. After nearly half of the officer candidates were dropped or dropped out on their own, we emerged from OCS standing a little taller and a little straighter on graduation day, December 11, 2009. That afternoon, I raised my right hand to swear the oath of office and receive my commission as a second lieutenant. That oath obligates me to serve a minimum of four years in uniform.

Ultimately, I joined the US Marine Corps because I believe that officers bear the most solemn responsibility in our nation, and that was a duty I could not, and should not, leave for others to assume. To

## ***This is in Memory of Ricky Dycus and Bill Bloomfield***

### ***Dycus Ricky D.***

*2413367*

*Long Beach Ca.*

*Cpl United States Marine*

*3rd Platoon*

*Golf Company*

*2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment*

*1st Marine Division*

*KIA 2 June 69*

*23W 43*

### ***Bloomfield William D.***

*2456854*

*Springfield Oh.*

*Pfc United States Marine Corps*

*3rd Platoon*

*Golf Company*

*2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment,*

*1st Marine Division*

*KIA 2 June 69*

*23W 42*

say that I wanted that responsibility is not quite right, because being a Marine officer is not about one's self, wants or needs; it is about guiding the young 18 and 19 year-old Marines fighting this country's wars on our behalf. I decided that serving them was the highest honor and responsibility I could have at this point in my life. As one speaker at my commissioning ceremony explained:

*"As second lieutenants, you must have a strong sense of the great responsibility of your office; the resources which you will expend in war are human lives. This is not about you anymore. This is about the young Marines who will place their lives in your hands. It is your job to take care of them, even when that*

*means placing them in mortal danger. That awesome responsibility – the weight which now rests on you – is reflected in those gold bars which you will soon place on your shoulders."*

*That is why the plaque hangs in every portal through which we pass – You Joined Us. We chose to bear this responsibility and we must make absolutely sure we are prepared to fulfill it, because young American lives are at stake. If that means being cold and miserable; studying for ungodly hours; and going for days without sleep, then so be it. That is the price of the salute we receive from our Marines.*

*Five months into my service commitment, I have not regretted my*

*decision for a moment. I already have unforgettable memories from my experience and new friendships with diverse and exceptional peers from all over the country. We have had moments of pure fun together and laughed harder than I ever thought possible. We have also been humbled by the stories and portraits of brave Lieutenants – those who fought and died after roaming the very halls where we now stand and their portraits hang. Most of all, I am immensely proud to bear the title of 'United States Marine,' an honor that I will carry with me my entire life.*

*Semper Fi.*

## ABRAMS UPGRADES TO INCLUDE REMOTE MACHINE-GUN STATION

BY DAN LAMOTHE

Marine Corps Times

The Corps is preparing to upgrade its aging fleet of tanks, with new high-explosive rounds and safer weapons stations on the horizon.

The service plans to field the first of 3,000 new multipurpose 120mm ammunition for the M1A1 Abrams by spring, said Phillip Patch, an analyst for the tanks program at Marine Corps Systems Command, based in Quantico, Va. The rounds will allow tank crews to assist infantry units by consistently blasting holes in reinforced concrete walls and demolishing enemy bunkers with a single shot.

To accommodate the rounds, Marines in Afghanistan already have installed new hardware on their tanks. The munitions are made by Rheinmetall Defence, a Germany-based manufacturer that opened an office near Quantico in 2008.

Additionally, the Corps is planning an upgrade to the M1A1's loader weapons station. It would give the loader, one of four Marines in a typical tank crew, a

motorized gun turret that can be operated remotely from inside the tank or manually from the turret.

The Improved Loader Weapons Station "fills the need for the loader to operate his machine gun from under armor," Patch said.

Currently, the loader operates an exposed M240B 7.62mm machine gun to the left of the tank's main turret, manned by the vehicle commander, with the loader maneuvering his turret manually from a "skate ring." Transparent gun shields have been added to protect the Marine, but he still has significantly less protection than when he is in the tank.

"The ILWS will allow us to get rid of skate rings and gun shields," Patch said. "He'll operate this as a more traditional remote weapon station from within the tank, but it'll have a manual backup mode as well."

In an advertisement to industry, the Corps said it expects to buy up to 500 improved loader weapons stations - enough to equip its fleet of 447 tanks at

a cost of more than \$4 million each. A contract competition will be launched by March, with fielding beginning about a year later, Marine officials said.

Although some of the Corps' tanks are decades old already, the service could keep them in the field for at least another decade. The Army is developing a new tank for the 21st century, but the Corps has no plans to field it, instead dedicating large chunks of its funding to the development of the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle, Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and Marine Personnel Carrier, Marine officials have said.

In the meantime, the Corps plans to increase its fleet of M88A2 Hercules recovery vehicles, which have an Abrams chassis and tow disabled tanks back to base. The service had 68 M88A2s last fall, and plans to eventually expand the fleet to 103.

*Reprinted with permission from The Marine Corps Times, March 1, 2010 ♦*

# The Ammo Can

BY TOM FENERTY

No one was ever decorated with a medal or a ribbon for carrying ammo. But I know that those who did this thankless job performed an essential task in less than desirable conditions without even an 'atta-boy'.

Even a squad size patrol needed firepower when engaging the enemy. The M-60 team (gunner, assistant, & humper) always made the trip because they could fire 900 rounds in 2 minutes if they had to.

After two minutes was there any more

7.62 ammunition left? Can the squad carry extra- just in case?

This is where those cans come in... a can of 7.62 contains 200 rounds. Those 200 rounds won't last very long in a firefight. More cans please.

One possible breakdown—gunner has 300, a-gunner and humper have 400 each, each of the two fire teams carry another 800 or, if it looks like a pucker day 1600 (that's a load). Worst case 2700 rounds. That's 12 cans plus 3 belts ready for use by the gunner.

The 'extra' cans of ammo were normally distributed throughout the squad in a tradition that I was to follow. The belts stayed in the can until needed because they would stay clean and be usable if and when needed. The amount was never the problem—it was the can. It just kicked your ass all day long. Didn't seem to matter how it was carried: by the handle? No thanks, knuckles on the ground in no time—not to mention the ability to scratch places on your back that you never reached before by the end of the day. A harness type contraption slung over the shoulders attached to the cans was the method most observed. Those cans would swing with your movements and bang against the body with those freaken corners digging in with every slap. It made carrying the radio a breeze.

In the wet weather out west the hills were never real sloshy mud; they were just slick as ice and moving up (or down) with those ammo cans and your own gear was a beach.

The ammo can assignment was so dreaded it was, at times, used as a form of punishment. Mostly though, the new guys had the honor--another fine tradition. Time served counted and only a few missed their turn.

No medals needed--a knowing nod of the head will do.

Here's to us long armed ammo humpers. Smoke em if ya got em. ♦





# BEWARE THE GUNNY

The Gunny doesn't sleep with a night light. The Gunny isn't afraid of the dark. The dark is afraid of the Gunny.

The Gunny's tears can cure cancer. Too bad he's never cried.

The Gunny once visited The Virgin Islands. They are now called The Islands.

The Gunny once counted to infinity . . . twice!

The Gunny frequently donates blood to the Red Cross, just never his own.

Superman owns a pair of Gunny pajamas.

The Gunny has never paid taxes. He just sends in a blank form and includes a picture of himself.

If the Gunny is late, then time had damn well better slow down.

The Gunny has the greatest Poker Face ever. He once won the 1982 World Series of Poker despite the fact that he held only a Joker, a 2 of clubs, a 7 of spades, a Monopoly Get-Out-Of-Jail card, and a green number 4 UNO card..

The Gunny once sold his soul to the devil in exchange for his rugged good looks and unparalleled strength. He then beat up the devil and took back his soul. The devil who appreciates irony, couldn't stay mad and admitted he should have seen it coming. They now play poker every second Wednesday of the month.

When the Gunny was in middle school, his English teacher assigned an essay: "What is courage?" The Gunny received an A+ for turning in a blank page with only his name at the top.

The Gunny actually died four years ago, but the Grim Reaper can't get up the courage to tell him.

The Gunny once ate three 72-oz steaks in one hour. He spent the first 45 minutes having sex with the waitress.

The Gunny clogs the toilet even when he pisses.

The Gunny refers to himself in the fourth person.

The Gunny can divide by zero.

If the Gunny ever calls your house, be in! The Gunny doesn't leave messages; he leaves warnings.

If you come home and find the Gunny in bed with your wife, it would be a good idea to fetch a glass of water in case the Gunny gets thirsty. There is no future in any other course of action.

The Gunny can slam a revolving door.

The Gunny was sending an email one day, when he realized that it would be faster to run.

One time in an airport a guy accidentally called the Gunny "buddy." He explained it was an honest mistake and apologized profusely. The Gunny accepted his apology and politely shook hands. Nine months later the guy's wife gave birth to a baby with a birthmark that looked like five stripes and crossed rifles. The guy knew exactly what had happened, and blames nobody but himself.

When the Incredible Hulk gets angry, he transforms into the Gunny.

Jesus' Birthday isn't December 25th, but the Gunny once sent him a birthday card for that day and Jesus was too scared to tell him the truth. That's why we celebrate Christmas in December.

When the Gunny exercises, the machine gets stronger.

The Gunny once played Jenga. The result was the Empire State Building.

Bullets dodge the Gunny.

The Gunny once took an entire bottle of sleeping pills. They made him blink... once.

The first lunar eclipse took place after the Gunny challenged the sun to a staring contest. The sun blinked first.

The Gunny never used a question mark in his entire life. He believes that the interrogative tense is a sign of weakness.

Submitted by (Cpl) Doug Scrivner  
USMC 1967-1970 Semper Fi RVN 68-69  
BLT 2/7 B & C Co. 1st Tanks 1st Mar.Div.

# An Ontos Story

BY SCOTT BERRY

I started out 28 Oct 66 on a finger of Hill 55 near DaNang, where Charlie Company HQ, (3rd AT Bn) was located at the time. End of Nov 66, I was assigned to Charlie Company's 2nd Plt, 3rd AT Bn, which was at An Hoa. End of Dec 66, 2nd Plt. of Charlie Co. left An Hoa and went to Bn HQ at DaNang in preparation to going on a BLT with 3/9 to Okinawa. I saw the 1966 Bob Hope Christmas Show in DaNang. Some time around the middle of Jan 67, we boarded a ship with our Ontos, and headed for Camp Hansen, Okinawa.

We were at Camp Hansen for five weeks. We then boarded another ship with our Ontos, and headed back to Vietnam on a BLT with 3/9. By this time, the 3rd Mar Div had moved up north to the DMZ area. The 1st Mar Div moved into the DaNang area, and covered the area previously occupied by the 3rd Mar Div. We arrived back at Vietnam around March 1, 1967, and off-loaded our Ontos at the port of Cua Viet, which is east of Dong Ha. We went to Camp Carroll. We were no longer part of Charlie Company, 3rd AT's, as we were then attached to Alpha Company, 3rd AT's, as their 2nd Platoon when we arrived back in Vietnam. We were at Camp Carroll, where Alpha Co, HQ, (3rd AT's), was located at that time, before they later moved to Khe Sanh a few months later. We were at Camp Carroll for a couple of weeks. We originally had five Ontos in 2nd Platoon at An Hoa, but when we left Vietnam for Okinawa on the BLT with 3/9, we only had four Ontos and four crews. One of our Ontos was TAD

somewhere, and didn't go with us. (Terry McCracken and his crew were on that left behind Ontos). Two of our Ontos and 1st Lt. Philip Howard Sauer, our Platoon Commander, left Camp Carroll and went to Khe Sanh. Two Ontos (one that I was on), went to Gio Linh around the 3rd week of March 1967 (It was before the first of two big artillery attacks on Gio Linh).

While my Ontos and another were at Gio Linh, we got the word that Lt. Sauer had been KIA on April 24, 1967, on Hill

105mm guns, and they were targeted and eventually taken out, along with both of our ammo dumps, which burned and detonated ordinance all night, adding to our misery. Our lines were probed early on. We had two tanks, two Ontos, two Army "Dusters" (Twin 40's), and two Army Quad Fifties, plus one remaining 81mm mortar. It was a long night, and I wasn't convinced I would see the light of the next morning. The NVA arty rounds were point detonating and delayed fuses.



Because we got mortared every night, everything at Gio Linh was either in a dug out deep hole or in a bunker, but the delayed fuses of the incoming weren't challenged a bit by any bunker there, and the point detonating were powerful enough to do frightening damage upon impact. It was as close to Hell that I ever want to come. There were close ones that rang our bell with the concussion, but the one incoming artillery round that would have

definitely taken me, a grunt Lt., and a grunt Sgt. out and maybe vaporized us into a spray of red mist, landed within ten feet of me. The Lt. was behind me and closer to the impact point. The poor Sgt. was the closest. It landed about six feet behind him. I remember hearing that Lt. asking the Sgt. where that round landed. The Sgt. told him, "Don't move, I must be sitting on it!" He just about was. If you have ever been the target of close incoming artillery rounds, you know the sound of them coming in is absolutely

definitely taken me, a grunt Lt., and a grunt Sgt. out and maybe vaporized us into a spray of red mist, landed within ten feet of me. The Lt. was behind me and closer to the impact point. The poor Sgt. was the closest. It landed about six feet behind him. I remember hearing that Lt. asking the Sgt. where that round landed. The Sgt. told him, "Don't move, I must be sitting on it!" He just about was.

If you have ever been the target of close incoming artillery rounds, you know the sound of them coming in is absolutely

*(Continued on page 34)*

**An Ontos Story**  
(Continued from page 33)

terrifying. It reminded me of an F-4 Phantom coming in on top of me with its afterburners on. And what's more terrifying, you have no control over it hitting you and taking you out, even if you are in a hole in the ground or in a bunker. You have no control over if you are going to live or die. The rounds just keep coming in, and you wonder which one is going to get you. The only thing you can do is pray. Obviously, that round didn't detonate, or I would be a "ghost writer" right now. After awhile, there was a brief lull in the NVA incoming artillery. I was under the

rear of my Ontos which was in a large hole dug out for us by a bulldozer, for our south perimeter position. The Lt. and Sgt. were crouched down behind the Ontos. The Lt. and Sgt. ran back to their unit during the short lull. I headed to join my OC and Loader in our small bunker 40 feet from our Ontos. I observed a neatly cut hole in the dirt where the NVA arty round buried itself deep into the earth without detonating. That was close, way too close. After about ten hours of enduring NVA incoming artillery, they quit firing on us before it started to get light. I have written about this event before, and there are more details and events, but I don't want to draw this out any further.

Late morning of 28 April 1967, we drove our two Ontos in a small convoy out of the ruins of the Gio Linh firebase and went to Camp Carroll. We were at Camp Carroll at Alpha Co. HQ, 3rd AT's, for a couple weeks, and then we went to Khe Sanh, and joined our other two Ontos already there. This would have been around the second week of May 1967. I was at Khe Sanh until the end of Nov 1967, when my tour was up, and went back to The World. Luckily my tour was up, as two months later, Khe Sanh was under siege by 10 zillion NVA.

Enough. ♦

# Eat Your Words

BY EVERETT L. TUNGET

Shortly after assuming command of a Marine tank company in Vietnam, I was disturbed to find all too often the tanks were not utilized effectively in support of infantry operations and had become part of a static command post defense system.

It was my job to educate infantry commanders about the value of tanks as mobile gun platforms to reinforce their tactical operations. Before all this could happen, however, I realized I had to get the attention of my troops. Because of all the inactivity many of the tank crews had become lazy, and their tanks were not combat ready to my satisfaction.

On an early inspection trip, I found the tanks in one of my platoons to be in especially sad condition. They were filthy inside, record books were not up-to-date, and there were serious mechanical deficiencies. I knew the young platoon leader had not been in country much longer than I, but he

needed to be reminded immediately of his responsibility to ensure that he and his tank crews were prepared to do their job. Using the leadership principle of, "whenever possible, praise in public and censure in private," I called my lieutenant aside and read him the riot act. I told him I would be back in a week and expected his tanks to be fully squared away to the extent that I wanted to be able to eat off the deck of the turrets!

When I returned a week later, it was obvious my lieutenant had passed the word that I was a bit upset regarding the previous week's inspection. The turnaround in the condition of the tanks was dramatic. Most of the mechanical repairs had been made or scheduled, tank record books now were up-to-date, and the interiors of the tanks were spotless and repainted with the required fire-retardant white paint.

Either my lieutenant had shared my

comment about wanting to be able to eat off the deck of the turrets or some of the troops had overheard me, because as I dropped down inside the turret of the last tank I was inspecting, I saw a C-Ration hamburger patty lying on the sparkling clean white deck.

Recalling my statement from the week before, I realized I had three options: display displeasure at what some might call insubordinate humor; ignore the challenge to praise in public, censure in private; or pick up the hamburger patty and literally "eat my own words." I chose the third option and proceeded to munch on the hamburger patty during the rest of the tank inspection. From the smile on the face of this particular tank commander, he knew the platoon had passed my test.

Reprinted with author's permission from Military Officer, October 2009.

# small wonder

(This article originally appeared on MilwaukeeMagazine.com by Dick Dickinson, Monday 3/2/2009)

**Decade after decade, a Milwaukee-made can opener served generations of soldiers.**

Even with billions of dollars spent annually on defense technology, the most iconic piece of military equipment might be a 1.2-cent can opener.



• Beginning in World War II, the P-38 was standard issue in every box of rations. Veterans carried it to Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East, and with its elegant simplicity, indestructibility and versatility, it was treasured by soldiers.

• "I opened a lot of culinary delights with my P-38," says Fernando Rodriguez of Watertown, Wis., a Marine in Vietnam. But that's not all. "It was a screwdriver, a bottle opener, and you could cut things with it. I carried it on my key chain for years. I still have it."

In 1942, the U.S. Army Subsistence Research Laboratory in Chicago was presented with the challenge of creating an opener small enough to carry in the pocket. Moreover, it couldn't break, rust,

need sharpening or polishing. It took the lab 30 days to invent what was originally dubbed "Opener, Can, Hand, Folding." U.S. Army Col. Renita Menyhart once called it "The Patron Saint of Army Inventions."

The J.W. Speaker Corp. of Germantown, Wis., was one of the first companies to manufacture the P-38, and it produced millions. The company's



founder, J.W. Speaker, actually improved the design by adding tabs for the hinge, which held the blade securely open or closed as needed. J.W. passed away in 1960 and his son Jack Speaker took over.

"The first contract I bid on was a Department of Defense solicitation for 10 million P-38s, with a rider for 10 million more," Jack Speaker says. "The bid was about \$12 per thousand." He estimates that between 1960 and the late '80s, his company made around 50 million P-38s.

Luther Hanson, curator at the U.S.

Army Quartermaster Museum in Fort Lee, Va., estimates that "750 million P-38s were produced for WWII" and "at least a billion" from Vietnam to the present.

Beginning with the first Gulf War, the P-38 was phased out. Today, the Speaker Corp. manufactures electrical lighting components for vehicles, but still has about 100,000 P-38s in stock. Or you can buy one at most Army surplus stores for about 50 cents.

This article on the P-38 can opener was submitted to the Officer Review Magazine by Col. Fremont Piercefield from the Chicago, Illinois Chapter. His comments are as follows: "I read the enclosed article (see above) about a GI can opener fondly known as the 'P-38' to literally millions of American servicemen beginning in 1942 until probably 2001. It brought back to me possibly 30 years of mostly pleasant memories that I may not have had reason to recall.

After reflecting on what I had read, I felt that the article should be shared with your many readers, who undoubtedly will recall the many times the P-38 came into play in peace and war. Often times the P-38 was hung on a chain with the dog tags so as to be readily available at meal time. It took me a bit of rummaging in my memorabilia to find my surviving P-38. I was thankful to be reminded."

As an aside, Major Thomas Dennehy USA was the inventor of the P-38 can opener. ♦

# Vindication of the Vietnam Veterans

## You Were Right America Was Wrong

BY RESA KIRKLAND

One of my beloved Vietnam Veterans, Michael Galindo, sent me an email the other day with a humorous idea for a T-shirt: If the Vietnam Veteran lost the Vietnam War, how come we don't speak Vietnamese?

I laughed. It was logical, it was reasonable, and it was undeniable. But it got me to thinking a lot about my Vietnam Vets. Actually, the real time war coverage of Gulf War II had already done that, because there before me were so many of the impossible paradoxes that these men had tried to deal with 30 years ago, played out in full color with no leftist slant.

What had caused the Vietnam Vet to shed many a bitter tear and fight for his broken heart with a vigor unique to his war was finally being made indisputably clear to the civilian pukers who had the audacity to judge and condemn these good and decent men placed into an impossible situation.

I was a baby when the war was going on. I can remember being about six or seven, seeing the long-haired, scrawny, filthy and vile hippies, united in their utterly useless existence, carrying their placards, shouting angrily and smelling funny. They were a sharp contrast to the few minutes of news reports a week from a steamy jungle in a strange land, and those focused, determined, and courageous men who were having the truth of what they were trying to do twisted, perverted, and bastardized by a media and film industry who hated them and all that they stood for, and for some reason beyond my child-like reasoning, had chosen to side with the bottom-dwellers of society. Putting aside the sins of the politics and politicians who had put the khaki warriors in that strange place, it was plain to an innocent child-even back then-who was to be admired, who truly believed what they claimed to believe,

who was honorably right and doing what was right--and who was wickedly, treacherously, despicably wrong.

I would listen to the moral dilemmas presented to these good and decent young American boys--stories of the VC using civilians as human shields, dressing up as civilians--or worse, forcing women and children to do their dirty work! -- and pretending to be innocent bystanders just long enough for one of our boys to let his guard down and pay for it with his life, terrifying and demoralizing those who saw it, rendering them impotent as they struggled between the innate human need for their own self-preservation, and that decent, Godly side of Americans which can scarcely bring us to kill an innocent.

Oh what a wretched, horrible thing to ask of young men raised in a land of Judeo-Christian principles, a love for the individual human life, and the freedom to choose between right and wrong!

I remember, even with the limited understanding of a little girl, thinking as the soldiers tried to present their side, begging us to try to comprehend the situation they were in: They're right. What are they supposed to do when the enemy uses civilians as attackers, pretending to be just a pawn in the war one moment and murdering them the next? It was an impossible situation, confusing and terrifying, and one that called for empathy, understanding, answers, help, or at least forgiveness, but was instead misrepresented and outright lied about to the world back home by the malevolent media and the Hollow Heads of Hollywood for decades to come.

What we Americans chose to ignore--then and now--is the fact that the enemy will always use our strengths against us, not just our weaknesses. And the American love for human life and the innocent face of war is a well-known and glorious strength.. The best illustration of this was the treacherous and fabricated No Gun Ri story from the early days of the ongoing Korean War. I never saw a single report that even came close to explaining the truth of that situation--and certainly no stories that would go on to receive the now-tarnished Pulitzer Prize!

I had long heard from my Korean War Veterans who were there in the early days of the war that the North Korean Army was ordered to go into villages as they scoured south, forcefully conscript the young men, and then use the elderly, women, and children to form circles around them from which they would fire upon the Americans and ROK soldiers. Kim Il Sung -- Fearless Leader and Major Dic -- understood the "foolish sentimentality" that American soldiers attached to the individual human life. "They will hesitate to fire upon unarmed and screaming civilians," he explained to his generals. "We will use their hesitation to gain the upper hand right from the start."

I remember Jimmy Bowen of El Paso, Texas, telling me that the dreams that haunt him now are not so much the offenses against his buddies or himself, but the dying screams of those women

and children and old men who cried out when he finally had to make a horrifying choice--shoot back or die. It was from his story that I decided that the greatest evil of war isn't what our men have done to them by the enemy, or even to their friends--although that is evil enough. No, the evil of war is what it forces good, decent, Godly men to do and become; not because they want to, but because in order to heed the powerful survival instinct, they have to. Now Mr. Bowen had friends who died--whose faces remain forever youthful and in front of his eyes--but his sacrifice of never forgetting what he had to do all those years ago was a far more agonizing and lingering one.

This was the genesis of the No Gun Ri tale. There were no trigger-happy CO's, no murderous GI's playing with their big-boy toys, no generals on power trips. It was, as always, decent American boys forced into indecent situations by an evil enemy.

This is why the cries of "Baby Killers!" and "Murderer!" so wound the heart of the soldier--especially the Vietnam Vet. It is because he knows the truth behind the lie, and wants only for us to understand, and for God to redeem. It is because even though he knows the truth--that he had to do what he had to do based on the logic and reason of the situation--deep down, the anguish of it all causes him to believe for a moment that he is what they say he is. And he weeps bitter tears.

It is for his sacrifice, his pain that I say this now: My brothers who fought in Vietnam, you were right; America was wrong. Forgive us, Vietnam Vet. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to be manipulated and lied to by Walter Cronkite and CNN and Martin Scorsese and Hanoi Jane. Forgive us for defying logic and reason and asking you to make impossible choices for which we would hold you brutally and unfairly accountable. Forgive us for being so easily led, even in the face of logic and truth. Forgive our cowardice in not fighting for your vindication when you had fought so very hard for what we had taught you to believe. Forgive us for setting you up, abandoning you, and then being too gutless to admit it and carry some of

your burden for you that you might heal and move on. Forgive us for accusing you of being cry-babies, whiners, and cowards when all you wanted was for us to see what you had no choice but to see. This was our failing, our sin, not yours, but we made you carry it anyway. I am so sorry that I had my perception of you colored by the leftist-controlled media and entertainment industry who went to any means--and gleefully so--to hammer the final nail in your coffin. In spite of such treachery, you not only survived, but banded together like the brothers that you are, and did what we should have done: recognized and appreciated one another and what you tried to do--and remembered, honored, and revered those who knew because they were there. And still are. You served America and freedom gloriously; we failed you miserably, and I am so very sorry.

There can be no denying now, as we watch the children of the Vietnam generation acting reasonably in the face of the exact thing their fathers and grandfathers faced. It is because of the determination of the Vietnam Vet that this new generation of American warrior will be cheered, not vilified. It is because of technology and the mistakes we made with these past vets who had their gift bastardized that we see what they see, face what they face, react the way they react. It is a new war, a new age, but an old and at long last vindication for those who tried in vain to get us to understand what we now watch on FOX. It is for this--today's war and yesterday's agony--that I humbly thank and beg the forgiveness of those who fought and weren't allowed to win, and had to pay so heavy a price. You deserve this peace, this rest that should at least partially come with this vindication. You will never get it from Hollywood Hell or the Perverted Press, but I swear to you now, you will get it from those of us who actually matter.

You were then the Vietnam Veteran. You are now the Vietnam Victor.

Keep the faith, bros, and in all things courage.

Semper Fi

# People in photo Identified



Front row (L to R) John French - Died of a heart attack in (I believe) 2000 or 2002, Unknown, **Manuel Garcia** - KIA July 27, 1967 at Con Thien, and Lee Semon.

Second row (L to R) Warren Kyser, Carl Sutherlin, L. A. Clark and John Hahn.

Third row standing (L to R) Carrol George, Bill J. J. Carroll, Charles Poteete and standing in the back is Ed Herbold.

## Charlie Co. 3rd. Tanks Platoon Roster & Status

Name	Address	City	State	Zip	Remarks
Brock, John B.	6 Payson Rd.	Belmont	MA	02178	WIA July 27, 1967
Buchmann, Henry O	need to locate	Globe	AZ	85547	
Carroll, William F. ("J.J.")	2398 Heath Ave. N.	Oakdale	MN	55128	WIA Sept 2, 1967 - Retired Sergeant Major
Clark, L. A.	need to locate	Memphis	TN		
English, Richard B. ("R.B.")	3724 Border Avenue	Joshua Tree	CA	92252	WIA July 27, 1967 - Retired Sergeant Major
Flanigam, David	////////////////	Rockford	IL		KIA July 27, 1967
French, Johnny R.	3322 Logan Ave	Loveland	CO	80538	WIA July 27, 1967 (deceased)
Garcia, Manuel	////////////////	Los Angeles	CA		KIA July 27, 1967
George, Carroll M.		Las Vegas	NV		WIA July 10, 1967
Hahn, John S.			FL		WIA July 27, 1967
Hamby, Alvin L. ("Leroy")	16224 2nd Street	Channelview	TX	77530	WIA March 6, 1967
Herbold, Edward J.	RD 3 Box 158	Linesville	PA	16424	WIA July 27, 1967
Holmes, Johnny L.	929 Rogers Rd	Darlington	SC	29532-7549	
Hullings, Walter	////////////////		MD		KIA March 6, 1967
Jansen, Miles E.	1264 Albemarle St.	St. Paul	MN	55117	KIA July 27, 1967 (mother's address)
Johnson, Michael M.	need to locate		CA		
Knosky, Ronald W.	////////////////	Elizbeth	NJ		KIA May 14, 1967
Kyser, Warren D.	19120 S. Badger Dr.	Oregon City	OR	97045-9602	WIA July 27, 1967
Langley, Richard G.	901 W. Hickory Ave.	Lompoc	CA	93456-6505	WIA March 6, 1967
Ludwig, Raymond J.	////////////////	Wilmington	DE		KIA July 27, 1967
Milos, Joseph Louis	////////////////		NY		KIA March 6, 1967
Otto, Dale L.	////////////////	Ellensdale	MN		KIA May 14, 1967
Poteete, Charles M. Jr.	3124 Blazer Rd.	Franklin	TN	37064-9444	WIA July 8, 1967
Rigsby, Robert M.	need to locate	Simi Valley	CA	93063	
Ritter, William E.	need to locate		NY		WIA July 10, 1967
Roberts, Roger W.	100 Washington St.	St. Marys	GA	31558	Retired Master Sergeant
Sellers, Robert B.	Box 2	West Union	WV	26456	WIA May 17, 1967
Semon, Lee B.	P.O. Box 1457	Lake Wales	FL	33859-1457	
Siva, T.J.	////////////////		CA		WIA March 6, 1967 (Deceased)
Sutherlin, Carl H.	291 Club Ln.	Oceanside	CA	92054	

If you want to make a correction to this list, call Bill Carroll (JJ) at 651-773-3497 or Email: sgtmajwfc@aol.com

## V. A. News

### FLASH NEWS!

**The Department of Veterans Affairs publishes proposed rules on Agent Orange Exposures**

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations  
Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
www.va.gov  
NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
March 25, 2010

### VA Proposes Change to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange

Proposed Regulation Change Adds Illnesses to List of Diseases Subject to Presumptive Service Connection for Herbicide Exposure

WASHINGTON - Well over 100,000 Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to qualify for disability pay under a proposed regulation published by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that adds three new illnesses to the list of health problems found to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures.

"This is an important step forward for Vietnam Veterans suffering from these three illnesses," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "These warriors deserve medical care and compensation for health problems they have incurred."

The regulation follows Shinseki's October 2009 decision to add the three illnesses to the current list of diseases for which service connection for Vietnam Veterans is presumed. The illnesses are B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia; Parkinson's disease; and ischemic heart disease.

The Secretary's decision is based on the latest evidence of an association with widely used herbicides such as Agent Orange during the Vietnam War, as determined in an independent study by the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

Even though this is a proposed rule, VA encourages Vietnam Veterans with these three diseases to submit their applications for compensation now so the Agency can begin development of their claims and so they can receive benefits from the date of their applications once the rule becomes final.

Comments on the proposed rule will be accepted over the next 30 days. The final regulation will be published after consideration of all comments received.

"We must do better reviews of illnesses that may be connected to service, and we will," Shinseki added. "Veterans who endure health problems deserve timely decisions based on solid evidence."

Over 80,000 of the Veterans will have their past claims reviewed and may be eligible for retroactive payment, and all who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible.

During the Vietnam War, the U.S. military used more than 19 million gallons of herbicides for defoliation and crop destruction in the Republic of Vietnam. Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

Used in Vietnam to defoliate trees and remove concealment for the enemy, Agent Orange and other herbicides left a legacy of suffering and disability that continues to the present.

The new rule will bring the number of illnesses presumed to be associated with herbicide exposure to 14 and significantly expand the current leukemia definition to include a much broader range of leukemias beyond chronic lymphocytic leukemia previously recognized by VA.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness don’t have to prove an association between their illnesses and their military service. This “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process for benefits.

Other illnesses previously recognized under VA’s “presumption” rule as being caused by exposure to herbicides during the Vietnam War are:

- AL Amyloidosis,
- Acute and Subacute Transient Peripheral Neuropathy,
- Chloracne or other Acneform Disease consistent with Chloracne,
- Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, (now being expanded)
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2),
- Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma,
- Porphyria Cutanea Tarda,
- Prostate Cancer,
- Respiratory Cancers (Cancer of the lung, bronchus, larynx, or trachea), and
- Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma, or Mesothelioma).

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services for Veterans exposed to the chemical are available at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange).

To view the proposed rule go to: <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-6549.htm>

### **VA Health Care Enrollment Update 02:**

Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 1722(c) requires that on 1 JAN of each year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs increase the means test (MT) threshold amounts by the same percentage the maximum rates of pension benefits were increased under 38 U.S.C. Section 5312(a) during the preceding calendar year. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has announced that there will be no increase in VA pension for 2010. Thus, there will be no increase in VA Means test thresholds in Calendar Year 2010. The following new Means Test (MT) Thresholds are effective 1 JAN 2010, through 31 DEC 2010:

#### **Veterans with No Dependents:**

- (a) Below MT Threshold: \$29,402.
- (b) Above MT Threshold; \$29,403.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$32,342.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$32,343.

(e) Above GMT (i.e. household income amount that is below the geographically-based income threshold for their resident location) Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site: [www.va.gov/healtheligibility/library/pubs/gmtincomethresholds](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/library/pubs/gmtincomethresholds).

#### **Veterans with One Dependent:**

(a) Below MT Threshold: \$35,284.

(b) Above MT Threshold: \$35,285.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$38,812.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$38,813.

(e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

#### **Veterans with Two Dependents:**

(a) Below MT Threshold: \$37,304.

(b) Above MT Threshold: \$37,305.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$41,034.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$41,035.

(e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

#### **Veterans with Three Dependents:**

(a) Below MT Threshold: \$39,324.

(b) Above MT Threshold: \$39,325.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$43,256.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$43,257.

(e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

#### **Veterans with Four Dependents:**

(a) Below MT Threshold: \$41,344.

(b) Above MT Threshold: \$41,345.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$45,478.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$45,479.

(e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

#### **Veterans with Five Dependents:**

(a) Below MT Threshold: \$43,364.

(b) Above MT Threshold: \$43,365.

(c) Above MT Threshold by 10% or Less: \$47,700.

(d) Above MT Threshold by more than 10%: \$47,701.

(e) Above GMT Threshold by more or less than 10%: Calculate using GMT Threshold at GMT Web site.

Note: Veterans with over Five Dependents add \$2,020 for each additional dependent.

Veterans who qualify under Title 38 U.S.C. 1710(e)(1)(D) as combat Veterans are not required to report their financial information for conditions potentially related to their combat service. However, unless otherwise exempted, combat Veterans must either provide their financial information or decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable co-payments for hospital and outpatient care that VA determines to have resulted from a cause other than their combat service. (NOTE: While income disclosure by a recently discharged combat Veteran is not a requirement, this disclosure may permit VA to determine if the Veteran is eligible for additional benefits such as beneficiary travel reimbursement, cost-free medication and/or cost-free outpatient or hospital care for services unrelated to combat). On 15 MAY 09, the Department of Veterans Affairs published a rule in the Federal Register which added additional sub-priorities within enrollment priority category 8. This rule became effective on 15 JUN 09, and required VA to begin enrolling Veterans into priority category 8 whose income exceeded VA’s National or geographically-based income thresholds by 10% or less. [Source: VHA Directive 2009-072 dtd 29 Dec 09 ++]

### **VA Claim Error Rate Update 02:**

A new report from the Veterans Affairs Department inspector general will help fuel complaints about an error-filled disability claims process in need of a complete overhaul. Investigators looking at claims processing at the VA regional office in Roanoke, Va., found that 25% of the case files they closely studied had serious mistakes. Some veterans were denied benefits they deserved, and disability compensation was given to others who were not eligible. Many errors involved Vietnam veterans with disability claims related to exposure to the defoliant Agent Orange. In one case, a veteran was underpaid \$21,857 because the claims staff did not properly consider a physician’s opinion that coronary artery disease was a complication of service-connected diabetes. In another, a veteran was overpaid \$15,640 for a diabetes-related amputation below the knee that he said was related to exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. His claims folder contained no evidence that he had served in Vietnam, the IG report says. The report, released in mid-JAN, found similar problems with claims involving traumatic brain injuries. In addition to reviewing claims, investigators looked at the work stations of claims employees to determine if they were following strict rules to protect veterans’ personal information, and they also looked at mail handling procedures. Problems were discovered in both areas, the

report says. Thirty percent of the desks inspected contained information that should not have been left unsecured. Investigators found six boxes of unsecured returned mail, about 4,200 pieces in all, containing personal information on veterans. In response to the report, VA officials provided refresher training on handling personal information and stepped up inspections of work stations to make sure policies are followed. More training also is being arranged for claims processors, the report says. [Source: ArmyTimes Rick Maze article 20 Jan 2010 ++]

### **SBP Lawsuit Update 06:**

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2003 restored eligibility for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) to military surviving spouses who remarry after age 57. However, DoD continued to apply the offset to these widows – until three of them, NAUS members Patricia Sharp and Margaret Haverkamp along with Iva Dean Rogers, won a recent court decision. The decision restores full SBP and DIC if a widow has remarried after age 57. The Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) finalized the implementation and repayment plans for the original three widows and another approximately 800 known survivors who fall into the category. All SBP annuitants who are entitled to both DIC and SBP because of their remarriage after age 57 are currently being identified. DFAS will no longer deduct DIC payments from annuitants’ monthly annuity that meet these criteria and they will begin receiving their full monthly SBP annuity entitlement in addition to the full monthly DIC. The first group of eligible annuitants will have their SBP annuity increased in FRV 2010. Following are answers to some frequently asked questions these widows may have:

- **Is common-law marriage considered valid for this change?** Yes, if it is recognized by the state in which the marriage occurred. If entitlement to this benefit is based on a common-law marriage, sufficient proof of a valid marriage will be required.
- **Do I have to apply for this new benefit?** You will automatically be notified if DFAS can determine your eligibility. If on or before April 1, 2010, your SBP annuity payment is not increased and you believe you may be eligible to have your SBP payments adjusted due to a remarriage after age 57, you will need to provide DFAS proof of status and request a review of their record.
- **Will I be able to apply online?** There is no application process since DFAS will determine from existing records whether an individual is eligible. Eligible annuitants will be notified if additional documentation is required.
- **Will this benefit be retroactive?** If so, what is the date? This benefit becomes effective on the date of remarriage, but not earlier than 1 JAN 04, which is the effective date of the entitling legislation.

- **Will I be taxed on any retroactive SBP?** Yes, taxes will be withheld in an amount equal to 10% of the retroactive benefit, unless the individual submits a new W-4P, "Withholding Certificate for Pension or Annuity Payments," that requests no withholding from the retroactive amount.
- **Will I have to repay the partial refund of premiums that I received?** Yes. Any refund of SBP premiums, not previously recovered by DFAS, will be collected first from any retroactive entitlement and then from the increased monthly SBP entitlement.
- **How do I get the taxes back that I paid on the partial refund of premiums?** You may or may not be able to recover the taxes. For each year in which repayment is made, you may claim the amount of the repayment as a miscellaneous itemized deduction if you itemize deductions on your tax return. This deduction will be subject to the 2-percent floor of your adjusted gross income. In some circumstances, you may be able to claim a tax credit under section 1341 of the Internal Revenue Code if the amount of repayment exceeds \$3,000. It is recommended that you consult with an accountant or a tax advisor.
- **If I remarried after the age of 57, but before the effective date of the law, will I qualify to receive this benefit?** Yes, provided you made application to the VA to restore Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) before 16 DEC 04 and were granted such entitlement by the VA. However, if your DIC payments were restored because the post-57 remarriage ended prior to 16 DEC 03, then you are not eligible to receive full SBP without offset for DIC.
- **If my first husband died in 1990 and I remarried after 57, but my 2nd husband died will I qualify?** If you qualified under the criteria of the previous question, the death of your second spouse will not result in loss of entitlement.
- **If I remarried after 16 DEC 03 and after the age of 57, and my second marriage is terminated, will I continue to receive full SBP and DIC?** The entitlement to DIC by reason of remarriage after age 57 is the single criterion for entitlement to SBP without offset. If you qualify based on remarriage after age 57, dissolution of your subsequent marriage will not result in loss of the dual entitlement unless, upon investigation, the circumstances of the remarriage reveal intent to defraud the government.
- **Is there a web site that I can track about the progress of implementation?** Due to the limited scope of this court ruling (there are about 800 widows affected) there will not be a dedicated web site. However, DFAS has posted some information at <http://www.dfas.mil/retiredpay/survivorbenefits/dicandsbp.html>, and will

communicate progress and status through NAUS, SMW and other military survivor organizations.

[Source: Gold Star Wives & NAUS Weekly Update 29 Jan 2010 ++]

#### **VETERANS CONSORTIUM PRO BONO PROGRAM:**

In 1991, the US Court of Veterans Appeals, later to be renamed US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, responded to the problem of its large pro se caseload by asking Congress to reallocate part of the Court's own budget into efforts to secure representation for needy claimants. As a result of the ensuing and subsequent legislation, a consortium of four organizations received a grant to operate a pro bono program. The program recruits attorneys willing to volunteer to represent needy individuals at the Court. The program screens appeals so that pro bono representation can be provided in meritorious cases, and offers comprehensive training and support to participating attorneys. The organizations comprising the consortium are The American Legion, the Disabled American Veterans, the National Veterans Legal Services Program, and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. Upon request veterans and their qualifying family members who have an appeal pending at the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (Court) will be provided attorneys at no charge to review their BVA decision and their Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) claims file. Applicant must meet all of the following criteria:

- You are a veteran (or qualifying family members of a veteran)
- You have received an adverse decision from the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA);
- You have appealed that BVA decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims (the Court);
- You do not have an attorney to help you; and
- You ask them for their assistance and you meet their program's financial eligibility guidelines; and
- At least one meritorious issue to be argued before the Court can be identified.

#### **The program will not:**

- Provide general legal advice or information about the VA or the Court;
- Provide legal advice or representation concerning a claim pending at the BVA or at the VA regional office;
- Provide general legal advice or representation concerning a Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA) claim;
- Provide general legal advice or representation concerning correction of military records or upgrading a military discharge.

To request assistance go to [www.vetsprobono.org/newsite/forms.htm](http://www.vetsprobono.org/newsite/forms.htm) and download, complete, sign the Retainer Agreement and Power Of Attorney Form plus the Financial Disclosure Form and mail to: The Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program, 701 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 131, Washington, DC 20004. To contact the Case Evaluation and Placement Component send mail to the same address or call (202) 628-8164; (888) 838-7727; or Fax: (202) 628-8169. Appellants who wish to contact the Veterans Consortium Pro Bono Program via electronic mail at [mail@vetsprobono.org](mailto:mail@vetsprobono.org) should use the phrase "Veteran's Request for Assistance" in the message subject line to avoid blocking by the Program's security software. If a docket number has already been assigned by the US Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims, that number may be included. [Source: [www.vetsprobono.org](http://www.vetsprobono.org) Jan 2010 ++]

#### **VA CLAIM DENIAL Update 06:**

A leading Republican senator on 16 MAR asked Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki to explain why so many veterans' benefit claims are wrongly denied, resulting in a high rate of reversal on appeal. Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, top Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, said that figures cited in a case argued before the Supreme Court last month showed that between 50% and 70% of veterans' benefits claims had been unjustifiably denied. In a letter to Shinseki, Grassley asked what the Department of Veterans Affairs is doing to improve the quality of VA claims decisions and reduce unnecessary appeals. "The fact that the VA's decisions are not only overturned on appeal frequently, but that a majority of claims were so wrongly decided in the first place shows me that there are serious, systemic problems with the process for approving veterans' claims," Grassley said. "After providing substantial increases in taxpayer dollars to the VA to address the claims backlog, it's clear that devoting more money alone is not the answer. The VA needs to tackle this problem head on, because without substantial reform, thousands of veterans will continue to face needless delays and red tape." Veterans who are wrongly denied benefits often suffer significant harm, Grassley said, even if they eventually prevail. So does the taxpayer, he added, because when the government loses on appeal, it must not only pay the benefits in question, it also must cover the veteran's attorneys fees when the court finds the government's position to be unjustified. [Source: CQ Politics News 16 Mar 2010 ++]

#### **VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS:**

Veteran service organizations (VSOs) are designed for the benefit of the veteran and community. Most areas of the country have a local American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, or Veterans of Foreign Wars post/chapter. There are many more service organizations, such as the Marine Corps League, Viet Nam Veterans of America, Non-Commissioned Officers Association, Military Order of the

Purple Heart, Fleet Reserve Association and others geared to particular groups of veterans. Each organization has its own individual requirements for membership, of which some are more stringent than others. The requirements range from honorable service during any time period to service in a combat zone to requiring a service-connected disability. These VSOs welcome any eligible member, regardless of age, race, religion or gender. Many of these organizations host auxiliaries so that spouses and other family members can also participate. These organizations provide countless hours of local community service. You'll see veterans proudly marching with our nation's flag at the forefront of parades or donating time and money to local causes. The firing squad and the person who presents the flag at a military funeral are members of veteran service organizations. Sometimes it's as simple as going to the VA hospital to play cards or bingo with the patients. Although they are all separate organizations, there is commonality in their goals:

- They are a voice for returning and currently deployed service members and their families;
- They monitor and lobby for legislation that directly impacts our veteran community;
- They help to develop the next generation of patriots through character-enhancing programs. VSOs sponsor Boy Scout troops, Badger Boy's State, Legion Baseball, scholarships and the annual oratorical contests.

Virtually all of our veteran's legislation has been driven by these VSOs or the combined efforts of 36 of them through the military coalition (TMC). The United States wouldn't have the GI Bill if not for them. Each of these groups has service officers who assist and advocate for veterans in filing claims for service-connected disabilities and negotiating the ways of the Veterans Administration. VSOs are responsible for getting post-traumatic stress disorder and the Agent Orange related diseases, among others, recognized by the Veterans Administration. VSOs are at the forefront of public policy related to national defense, services for homeless veterans, adequate funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, concurrent receipt of retirement pay and disability compensation by disabled military retirees, veterans employment and training, POW/MIA accountability and flag protection. What can you do for them? Simply put, join one and participate. Contribute your time, energy, and assets. Take advantage of the camaraderie unique to military veterans. Help out at a fundraiser. There is strength in numbers. When the National Commanders go to Congress to lobby for veteran-friendly legislation, numbers count. Large organizations have clout. Nationwide, memberships in veteran service organizations are down. In order for these organizations to be around when you need them, they must be self-perpetuating. Joining one is something to consider the next time you are concerned about a veteran

related issue. They are a voice for all of us. [Source: Jackson County WI Service Officer Randy Bjerke article 24 Mar 2010 ++]

### **VA SPINA BIFIDA PROGRAM:**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides monetary allowances, vocational training and rehabilitation and VA-financed health care benefits to certain Korea and Vietnam Veterans' birth children who have been diagnosed with spina bifida. For the purpose of this program, spina bifida is defined as all forms or manifestations of spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta). Effective 10 OCT 08, there was a change to Public Law 110-387, Section 408, which outlines the benefits available under the Spina Bifida Program. As a result of this change, medical services and supplies for spina bifida beneficiaries are no longer limited to the spina bifida condition. This program now covers comprehensive health care considered medically necessary and appropriate. The VA's Health Administration Center in Denver, Colorado, manages the Spina Bifida Health Care Program, including the authorization of benefits and the subsequent processing and payment of claims. At their Hotline number 1(888) 820-1756 Vietnam veterans can get their questions answered about health care benefits for their children who have spina bifida. Callers can speak to a benefits adviser M-F, 1000 to 1330 and 1430 to 1630 EST.

If you are the birth child of a Vietnam veteran and you have been diagnosed with spina bifida you may already be receiving monetary allowances, vocational training or rehabilitation due to your condition. However, you might also be entitled to VA-financed healthcare benefits. To be qualified you must be diagnosed with spina bifida as the VA defines it, basically, as all forms or manifestations of spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta), including complications or associated medical conditions related to spina bifida. Healthcare benefits you would receive under this program are limited to those necessary for the treatment of your spina bifida and related medical conditions. You should however, be aware that this program is not a comprehensive healthcare plan and does not cover medical services unrelated to spina bifida. In general, the program covers most healthcare services and supplies that are medically or psychologically necessary for the treatment of conditions related to spina bifida. While some services require specific advance approval or preauthorization, the following services are specifically excluded from coverage

- Care unrelated to spina bifida.
- Care as part of a grant study or research program.
- Care considered experimental or investigational.
- Drugs not approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for commercial marketing.
- Services, procedures or supplies for which the

beneficiary has no legal obligation to pay, such as services obtained at a health fair.

- Services provided outside the scope of the provider's license or certification.
- Services rendered by providers suspended or sanctioned by a federal agency

While administration of the program is centralized to VA's Health Administration Center (HAC) in Denver, Colorado, applications must first be made through the Denver VA regional office. Contact the Denver regional office by calling 1 (888) 820-1756. Once the Denver VA regional office determines eligibility, spina bifida awardees (or guardians) are automatically contacted by the Health Administration Center and registered for healthcare benefits. Beneficiaries receive detailed program material from HAC specifically addressing covered and noncovered services and supplies, preauthorization requirements, and claim filing instructions. Once registered, the HAC assumes responsibility for all aspects of the spina bifida healthcare program, including the authorization of benefits and the subsequent processing and payment of claims. Providers should use a standard billing form (UB-04, CMS 1500) to provide the required information. Beneficiaries who are filing claims for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses should use the HAC supplied form, Claim for Miscellaneous Expenses (10-7959e) which can be downloaded at [http://www4.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-7959e-fill\\_110308.pdf](http://www4.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-7959e-fill_110308.pdf). Mail claims for payment to: VA Health Administration Center, PO Box 469065, Denver CO 80246-9065. [Source: <http://www4.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/spina/spina.asp> Mar 2010 ++]

### **TRICARE HELP:**

Have a question on how Tricare applies to your personal situation? Write to Tricare Help, Times News Service, 6883 Commercial Drive, Springfield, VA 22159; or [tricarehelp@militarytimes.com](mailto:tricarehelp@militarytimes.com). In e-mail, include the word "Tricare" in the subject line and do not attach files. You can also get Tricare advice online anytime at [www.militarytimes.com/tricarehelp](http://www.militarytimes.com/tricarehelp). For basic information refer to the latest Tricare Handbook at [www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/Download/Forms/Standard\\_Handbook\\_LoRes.pdf](http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/Download/Forms/Standard_Handbook_LoRes.pdf) or call your regional contractor. Following are some of the issues addressed in recent weeks by these sources:

(Q) Do I have to sign up for Medicare Part B to get TFL if I am still working with job related health insurance? I got Tricare when I turned 60, and now I'm signing up for Medicare and Tricare for Life. Medicare told me that because I'm still working and have health insurance from my job, I don't have to sign up for Part B until I retire. Then, the Navy told me that is true, but that I cannot get Tricare for Life until I sign up for Part B. The only coverage I will have will be my employer's plan and Medicare Part A. I'm confused by the mixed messages. Who is right, Medicare or the Navy?

(A) Both are right. You're dealing with two different laws concerning Part B enrollment — and you must choose between them. The Medicare law says that if beneficiaries have a creditable health insurance policy through employment, they can delay enrolling in Part B without penalty for as long as they work for the employer who sponsors the insurance. A creditable health insurance policy is one whose benefits Medicare agrees are at least as good as what Medicare provides. Some people choose that way if they feel their employer's plan meets their needs, because they can avoid having to pay Part B's monthly premium. But they must understand that when a retiree, or a retiree family member, gets Medicare, Tricare law requires immediate Part B enrollment in order to retain Tricare eligibility. Without Tricare eligibility, they can't have Tricare for Life. They have only Part A and their employer's insurance plan, as you were told. To be eligible for Tricare for Life, Medicare beneficiaries must be enrolled in Medicare Part B. That way, they will have their employer's plan as their primary coverage, Medicare Parts A and B as secondary and Tricare, which is always last, as required by law. Only you can decide what is best for you. If you're married, your loss of Tricare eligibility (if you decide not to enroll in Part B yet) will not affect your spouse's Tricare eligibility in any way.

(Q) How does coordination of benefits work for medical care and prescriptions if my spouse has her own civilian health insurance? I'm a retired reservist with Tricare For Life. My wife has her own civilian health insurance, as well as Tricare Standard, since I am her sponsor. Her drug plan has higher copay for some drugs than Tricare has. Can she use Tricare to get the lower co-pay, or does she pay the higher co-pay and file a claim with Tricare to get the difference? And can my wife and I use the Tricare mail order drug plan?

(A) As required by federal law, Tricare is always last payer to all other health insurance, medical plans such as an HMO, or medical payments such as one might receive for medical bills resulting from an auto accident, slip-and-fall injury, or the like. The beneficiary must file first with all other plans. When the other health insurance (OHI) has paid its maximum and issued the beneficiary an Explanation of Benefits, a Tricare claim may be filed. The only exceptions to the rule making Tricare last payer are if the OHI is a bona fide, specially written Tricare supplement, or if the OHI is a welfare-related plan such as Medicaid (not Medicare), Indian Health Service, and the like. Your wife must use her OHI first for all medical and pharmacy services. For medical care, to file with Tricare as second payer, she must do the following:

- Complete an official Tricare Claim Form DD2642.
- Attach copies of exactly the same bills (the same sheets of paper) that were sent to the OHI.
- Attach a copy of the OHI's Explanation of Benefits that reports details of its processing of each of those charges.

- Make copies of all the documents for your records.
- Send Tricare's copy of the package to the proper Tricare claims processing contractor for your Tricare Region.

Your wife must use her commercial plan's pharmacy benefit first. To be reimbursed a portion of the OHI's pharmacy deductibles and copayments, contact Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303 for instructions. Note that because of the way federal law requires pharmacy benefits to be coordinated, Tricare beneficiaries who have OHI are not eligible to use the Tricare Mail Order Pharmacy Plan.

(Q) Social Security says if you were born from 1943 through 1955, you must be 66 to receive monthly Social Security payments. Tricare says we have to join Tricare for Life and have Medicare Parts A and B at age 65. How can you get around that one-year gap in coverage?

(A) Congress changed only part of the Social Security law. Only the age required to receive Social Security payments was changed. The age for Medicare entitlement was not affected — that still begins at age 65. People who apply in a timely manner will become entitled to Medicare on the first day of the month of their 65th birthday. If they were born on the first day of that month, their Medicare entitlement will begin on the first day of the previous month. That is true regardless of when they become entitled to Social Security payments. If Tricare beneficiaries are properly enrolled in Medicare Part A and Part B, and if their Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System registration is properly updated, DEERS will report their eligibility for Tricare for Life effective on the same date their Medicare entitlement is effective. Medicare will bill beneficiaries every 90 days for their Part B monthly premiums. When the Social Security beneficiaries become old enough to receive monthly benefit payments, the Part B premium will be deducted monthly as an allotment.

[Source: NavyTimes James E. Hamby Jr. column 1 Apr 2010 ++]

## **HELP WANTED**

We are looking for someone who can post articles to a new website we are developing. It does not take a computer guru to do this; if you know how to copy and paste articles on a word document you can apply to be our new webmaster. We need news articles and already filled out forms posted to the new website about once a month. It shouldn't take a couple of hours a month. If you can help us, please Call John Wear, 215-794-9052. The new format we will be using makes it very easy and doesn't require any web experience ♦

## Come, visit my grave

I am a veteran laid under the sod  
I'm in good company; I'm up here with God.

Come to my grave and visit with me,  
I gave my life so you could be free.

Today is Memorial Day throughout this great land  
There's avenues of flags, parades and bands.

I can hear music, the firing squad and taps,  
Here come my comrades, the legionnaires, the bluecaps.

One of them just put a flag by my stone,  
Someday he'll have one by his own.

Some think of this day as just a day free from toil,  
While others are busy working the soil.

They say they have plans, other things to do,  
Don't put us aside as you would an old shoe.

Come visit my grave in this cemetery so clean,  
This is what memorial day means.

There are many of us lying in wakeless sleep,  
In cemeteries of green and oceans of deep.

It's sad that for many who fought so brave,  
No one comes to visit their grave.

They died so you could have one whole year free,  
Now can't you save this one day for me?

There are soldiers, sailors and airmen up here,  
Who went into battle despite all their fear.

I've been talking up here to all those women and men,  
If they had to do it over, they'd do it again.

Look! Someone is coming to visit my grave,  
It's my family, for them my life I gave.

(This poem was written by a legionnaire from Indiana and has been distributed to American Legions throughout the world as a reminder of what Memorial Day is all about)

My wife, I remember our last embrace,  
As I left, the tears streamed down your face.

I think you knew the day I shipped out,  
I wouldn't return, your life turned about.

There's my daughter that I used to hold,  
Can it be that you're 22 years old?

Next month is to be your wedding day,  
I wish I could be there to give you away.

My son's here too, dad's little man,  
Always love your country, do for it what you can.

There's one thing that really did bother,  
Is seeing you grow without the aid of a father.

I wish you could all hear me from above,  
That a father's best gift to children is love.

And what better way to prove my love to the end,  
Is that a man lay down his life for a friend.

I see it's time for you to go home,  
Your visit made it easier to remain here alone.

Don't cry honey, you look so sad,  
Our children are free, you should be glad.

Daughter, thanks for the bouquet so cute,  
Thank you son, for that sharp salute.

Come again, I forgot, you can't hear from up here,  
But I know you'll come to visit next year.

I hope all veterans are treated this way,  
On this day to remember, Memorial Day.

# ABV TO PROTECT COMBAT ENGINEERS

Combat engineers use line charges to blast a path through minefields, but they don't always work. If a line charge fails to detonate, someone has to walk into the minefield, place an explosive manually, light the fuse and run like hell. Engineers call it the Medal of Honor run, but the Corps intends to make it a thing of the past by training and equipping engineers with a new Assault Breacher Vehicle designed to keep them safe in the midst of a minefield.

"It's basically a tank with a different turret on it and

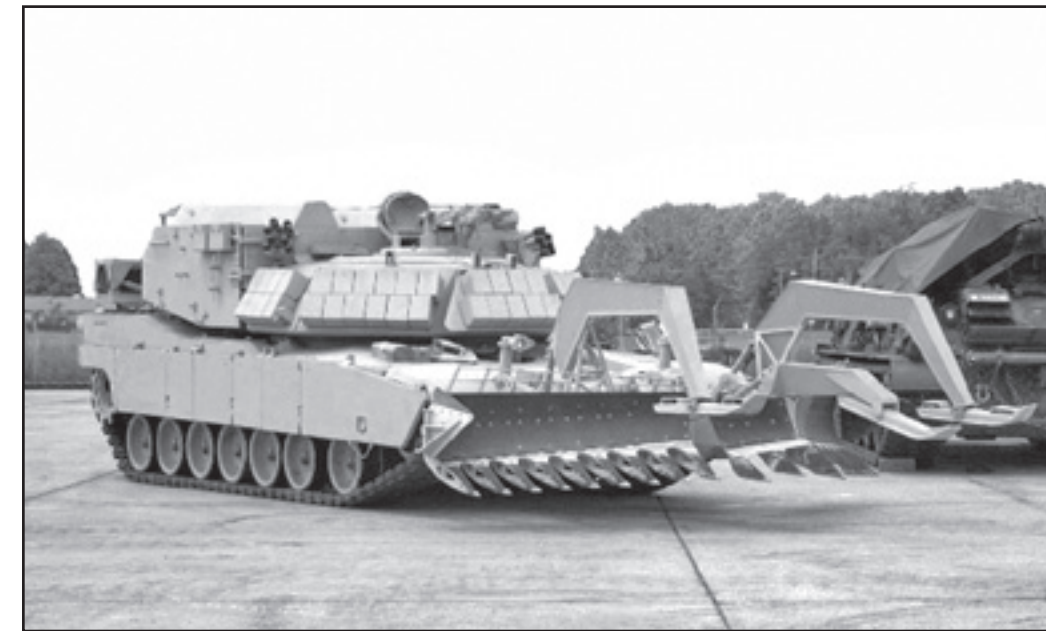
protection and vehicle survivability while having the speed and mobility to keep pace with the maneuver force."

"The big thing is our combined arms, and mechanized breaching is a pretty dangerous business," Gill said. "As a young lance corporal, when I trained to mark minefields, I would run behind the back of an amtrac through a breach lane, putting my field marker poles in the ground."

Though combat engineers also specialize in bridging and construction, it's their role as demolition experts that puts them

at most risk because "you're dealing with live minefields and you assume an enemy obstacle is always covered by observation and fire," Gill said.

Gill, who begins instructor training in August to prepare for his first students, said the combat engineers he'll train as operators this year will get 53 days of classroom and field instruction on each of the vehicle's mechanisms, followed by a weeklong exercise in the field. Once they graduate, they will earn an ABV-specific military occupational specialty as a skill designator. The engineer equipment mechanics slated to maintain the vehicles will earn their own skill designator MOS after a 35-day course familiarizing them with the parts of the ABV that



several plow instruments," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Epperson, the academics officer at the Corps' student detachment at Fort Knox, Ky., where the first 12 operators and eight maintainers will get their hands on the ABV when classes begin Oct. 1.

### Assault Breacher Vehicle in action

Built on the same chassis as the General Dynamics-built M1A1 Abrams main battle tank, the ABV is "a tracked, armored engineer vehicle specifically designed for conducting in-stride breaching of minefields and complex obstacles," according to briefing slides published on Marine Corps headquarters' Web site. Rather than a main gun, it has a .50-caliber machine gun to make room for a line charge launching system on the back. A plow mounted on the front of the ABV lets it construct hasty earthworks for cover and to barrel through enemy obstacles.

As the vehicle moves through a cleared lane in a minefield, a marking system thrusts poles into the ground on either side "to let follow-on vehicles know to stay in between the poles," said Gunnery Sgt. Bradley Gill, an instructor at Fort Knox who will teach Marines how to operate the new vehicles once classes start. According to the briefing slides, "the ABV will provide crew

differ from the Abrams tank.

"My first couple classes are going to be a mix of [noncommissioned officers] from the fleet and privates coming out of engineer school," Gill said. Once the ABV arrives in the fleet, maintenance will be a joint effort between the engineer equipment mechanics and Marines who keep the Corps' tank battalions rolling.

The fielding plan for the ABV begins next month, when the first two vehicles arrive at the schoolhouse at Fort Knox, said Marine Corps Systems Command spokeswoman 1st Lt. Geraldine Carey. On May 25, SysCom commander Brig. Gen. Michael Brogan authorized full-rate production of another 31 ABVs that will arrive at fleet commands beginning in February, with delivery expected to be completed by September 2009, Carey said.

The Corps' combat engineer battalions at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Camp Lejeune, N.C., will each receive five ABVs under the fielding plan. Six will be sent to the enhanced equipment allowance pool in Twentynine Palms, Calif., and the remaining 15 will be dispersed throughout the world as part of the Corps' maritime pre-positioning force, Carey said. ♦



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

If you haven't already, please send your 2010 dues (\$30) to:  
John Wear, USMC VTA, 5537 Lower Mountain Road, New Hope, PA 18938

